

## MACHINES, POWER AND DESTINY: AI ASCENDANCY AND GEOPOLITICAL FLUX IN THE RACE TO 2025

### THE SINGULARITY

#### 1. **Moore's Law**

- for the past half century, power of computers has doubled every two years and halved in price every two years
- this is 1965 "Moore's Law" (Gordon Moore 1929-2023, one of the founders of Intel)
- not enough public attention has been paid to this issue (except in Hollywood movies)
- there is now speculation about when computers will equal the brain power of a human being: the "year of singularity"
- two books by IT genius Ray Kurzweil (1948- ): *The Singularity is Near* (2005), *The Singularity is Nearer* (2024)
- AI will reach human-level intelligence by 2029; Turing Test will be passed (Alan Turing: 1912-54)
- super-humans/ trans-humans will arise by 2045 (with brains merging with the cloud)
- OR
- computers will then continue to double in power, leaving humans well behind
- so, will computers tell humans they are now redundant, or will they just keep humans on as pets? Have we created our own replacements?

#### 2. **Rise of "inorganic" life: a new form of life**

- Yuval Noah Harari
- organic life (eg humans, cats and dogs) lives by cycles, activity followed by rest; companies have set trading hours
- IT is "inorganic"; it never needs to rest, it is "on" constantly
- humans have to try to keep up; are humans designed to last the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

#### 3. **Movie *2001***

- made in 1968! (Stanley Kubrick)
- one of the greatest movies of all time
- computer HAL-9000 was a warning that computers might not follow orders

### A NEW GEOPOLITICAL ORDER

#### 4. **Bottom line: a new geopolitical order is emerging**

- based on global corporations that are derived from information technology (such as Google/ Alphabet, Facebook/ Meta, Apple, Microsoft, Samsung, LinkedIn, and Amazon)

**5. Sense of history: previous world orders**

- empires/ tribes
- 1648: Treaty of Westphalia: based on nation-states (such as Australia, US, and UK); everyone has to have a nation-state; this is based on national borders, clearly laid-out territory, national defence forces, national government control, (ideally) national control of the use of violence; separate “national” histories, celebration of “national days”
- currently: about 200 nation-states (countries) share power with international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and transnational corporations

**6. New Digital Geopolitical Order**

- emerging new digital world order is not as tangible and yet it makes modern life possible, e.g. banks are disappearing from city streets, with more banking being done online; throughout much of COVID pandemic much schooling was done online
- as we make use of all those services, so those services are also learning a great deal about us – if information is free, you are the product
- look how closely people guard their iPhone, which now knows so much about them
- latest IT breakthrough: Artificial intelligence (AI), which now does some of the thinking for us e.g. Chat GPT can now write a student’s essays; essays may not be all that good at present, but AI is now the dumbest it will ever be, everyday it is becoming more intelligent, learning from its mistakes, and building on its strong points

**DESTINY**

**7. *Future Shock***

- in 1970 US author Alvin Toffler warned in *Future Shock* that humans were having difficulty coping with the extent and rate of change
- situation has become much worse in the last half century, with change accelerating and many of our traditional ideas becoming out of date
- for many: life is getting better and better, worse and worse, faster and faster
- an example of this reaction is the growth of political movements calling for a return to old ideas on how society should be organized

**8. Implications**

- i. software eats the world: how will the IT implications affect my company?
- ii. good news: AI will take some of the drudgery out of life, such as repetitive tasks
- iii. bad news is that it will soon start to wipe out many jobs
- iv. technology of social control; George Orwell’s novel *1984*
- v. abolition of cash and cheques, all payments will be traced
- vi. China’s social credit system
- vii. big corporations are more economically powerful than some national governments. Apple, for example, has a larger national turnover than more half of the member-nations of the United Nations
- viii. We have international arrangements – albeit far from perfect – to regulate the behaviour of national governments, such as international law, and international institutions like the UN, European Union, and NATO – we need to think about how

we are going to govern the emerging new digital geopolitical order. Or have we left it too late?

**9. Do not overlook the casualties of change**

- Universal Basic Income (UBI): a regular sum of money paid to everyone over the age of 18 until they die; it will replace many welfare payments; an affluent person will surrender that money via their tax
- need to maintain effective consumer demand; consumption is the driving force of the economy and so has to be maintained

**10. Opportunity Watch**

- "opportunity watch": instil a belief that (despite the doom-laden media), there are always opportunities: "Now where is the opportunity in this?" (rather than a negative defeatist mindset)
- Charles Handy "Elephants and Fleas": children should be taught how to run their own businesses; schools should be run as a "business"
- education reform: STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and HEAL: (health, education, administration, and literacy)
- in short: overhaul of school and university programmes to focus on business skills and resilience to make the most of the new era of business opportunities
- education alone is no guarantee of wealth, but it is a guarantee against failure
- in short: a new era is emerging, and we need to be prepared for it

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