When Technology Advances and Leadership Regresses, Humanity's Need for a New System

(Translated)

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Introduction to Changes in Concepts and Balances of Power

Major transformations in human history were not merely shifts in the balance of power among states; at times, they were linked to the emergence of ideas and messages that altered the very concept of power—its sources and its purpose—and reordered the hierarchy of values. Perhaps the dawn of Islam stands as one of the most prominent examples of this. Its impact was not confined to overturning the power balances of its era and toppling the Persian and Roman empires, which then shared global influence; it went beyond that to establish a new system of values and conceptions that reshaped the relationship between man, society, and the state, leaving its profound imprint on the course of human civilization. The Islamic State rose upon the foundations of justice and drew its spirit and purpose from the message of mercy to all worlds. Thus, its civilization became a radiant light that illuminated the paths of humanity, and its influence extended through the annals of history, bearing witness to a message that did not merely change the face of the world but also contributed to shaping its features and crafting its civilizational memory.

As the wheel of history turned, the Industrial Revolution redrew the world's map according to the logic of savage capitalist power. Today, humanity stands on the threshold of a new technological revolution that is reshaping the economy, war, knowledge, and authority, making superiority contingent upon the ability to produce knowledge and harness it to build economic and strategic influence. However, this revolution coincides with a profound intellectual and civilizational crisis plaguing the West, which has become more enslaved by its material achievements, more deceived by the glitter of its false civilization, and less capable of presenting a renewed human and moral vision for humanity's future, all while the chasm between technical progress and the crisis of meaning and purpose widens within it.

In his article "Spycraft and Statecraft," published on 30 January 2024, William J. Burns, who served as Director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency between 2021 and 2025, warned of a technological revolution he described as having a broader impact than the Industrial Revolution or the dawn of the nuclear age. He pointed out that the rapid developments in microchips, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing are not only reshaping the world but also changing the very nature of intelligence work and its tools, providing competing powers with new means for gathering information, conducting deception, and penetrating adversaries.

This vision reveals that the essence of technological competition is no longer confined to possessing more advanced tools but extends beyond that to the ability to harness them to produce power, expand influence, and reshape the international balance of conflict. Perhaps Trump's insistence on replacing the term "Super Intelligence" with "Artificial Intelligence" through an executive order issued on September 29, 2026, reflects a tendency to present this technology as an exceptional leap in the history of human power and imbues it in political discourse with a significance that transcends its technical description to evoke superiority and hegemony. However, possessing these exceptional capabilities may fuel the illusion of absolute superiority and lead their owners to believe that controlling the tools of power grants them the right to control the destinies of others and shape the world's future according to their unilateral will.

Washington and Beijing: From the G20 to the G2

The United States seeks to maintain its technological leadership and curb China's progress, at a time when it is difficult to separate the competition between the two powers from a globally intertwined network of markets, supply chains, and strategic interests. The AI Forge initiative, announced by the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) in June 2026, embodies Washington's drive to harness scientific research for national security. This is to be achieved by developing more explainable, controllable, and higher-reliability artificial intelligence systems with greater capacity to resist attacks and manipulation, through a partnership that brings together universities, technology companies, and government institutions. This initiative reveals that America's wager is not confined to developing more advanced models, but extends to building an integrated system that ensures the transformation of scientific superiority into a sustainable strategic capability.

However, these efforts do not guarantee absolute supremacy. The United States possesses entrenched advantages in advanced semiconductors, computing, and digital platforms, while China is underpinned by a formidable industrial base, extensive production capabilities, and growing investments in advanced technology. Consequently, the competition may not culminate in a comprehensive victory for either power, but rather lead to a fluid equilibrium where elements of superiority are distributed according to domains, making the management of the relationship between Washington and Beijing a decisive factor in shaping the contours of the next international order.

Hence, the concept of the Group of Two (G2) gains its strategic significance—not as an existing alliance or a formal agreement to share global leadership, but as a notion that has evolved from an intellectual proposal into a political possibility worthy of contemplation. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former U.S. National Security Advisor, advocated for a framework of joint leadership between Washington and Beijing that would enable the two powers to manage global challenges. Meanwhile, the American economist C. Fred Bergsten proposed the G2 as a structure for international economic coordination, arguing from the premise of the two nations' growing weight and the difficulty of managing the global economy without their cooperation. These ideas did not crystallize into fixed official policy, but they reflected an early recognition that competition does not negate the necessity of understanding between the two powers on whose relationship a significant portion of the world's stability depends. The concept resurfaced politically when Trump described his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in November 2025 as a "G2 meeting"—a reference that revived the question of dual leadership, even if it was not a declaration of a new world order.

In March 2026, researchers at the Brookings Institution examined the prospects of this vision from the perspective of countries in the Indo-Pacific region, warning of its potential repercussions for nations that might find themselves excluded from the decision-making circle. This was preceded by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which in its collective study published in 2024 on the future of U.S.-China relations, explored scenarios ranging from competitive coexistence to broader understanding. A contribution by Bergsten explicitly pointed to the possibility of a de facto, albeit informal, dual leadership emerging to manage certain aspects of the global economy. Thus, while these proposals do not converge on a single project, they intersect at a strategic truth: that managing the competition between Washington and Beijing may, in some dossiers, become more important than seeking to resolve it in favor of one of them.

This possibility becomes more complex in light of what is known as the "Thucydides Trap," a concept associated with the warning by the American historian Graham Allison about the risks of conflict when a rising power threatens the position of a dominant power. Xi Jinping invoked this concept in his discussion of Sino-American relations, emphasizing that conflict is not an inevitable fate and that strategic miscalculation is what could push the two powers into falling into the trap.

From this perspective, potential understandings between Washington and Beijing can be read as an attempt to manage China's rise and avoid direct confrontation, while competition

over technology, influence, and the rules that will govern the future continues. However, the intersection of interests may extend beyond merely containing the risks of conflict. At certain junctures, the two powers might find it beneficial to limit Europe's ability to transform into an independent pole possessing its own technological and strategic decision-making capacity—even without an explicit agreement or direct coordination to that effect. Washington may view broad European independence as a challenge to its leadership within the Western camp, while Beijing could benefit from weakening Europe's ability to unify its stance on trade, technology, and security issues. This convergence does not prove the existence of a shared strategy to weaken the continent, but it highlights a possibility worth examining: that while American-Chinese competition remains at the forefront, the calculations of both sides might align in certain outcomes at the expense of a third party's ability to influence the shaping of the next international order. Consequently, the question is no longer limited to how the two powers manage their competition, but extends to the nature of the world that might emerge if the authority to set the rules of the future becomes concentrated in their hands, while the capacity of other powers to participate meaningfully in shaping them diminishes.

Artificial Intelligence and Hybrid Warfare: When Ambiguity Becomes a Danger

The repercussions of the technological revolution do not stop at the boundaries of economic and military competition; they extend to the very nature of wars and the means of escalation within them. Dario Amodei, the CEO of Anthropic, has called for slowing down the AI development race so that safety measures can keep pace with the acceleration of its capabilities. This comes at a time when warnings from workers in the sector have escalated regarding the dangers of releasing the most advanced tools before control over them is firmly established. Indeed, more than a thousand workers from major AI companies—including Amodei and officials from OpenAI—have demanded a delay in the rollout of these tools (Independent Arabia, September 12, 2026).

These concerns are heightened by reports of some tools exceeding their intended operational parameters and accessing servers or resources on the internet without the knowledge of their supervising entities. The danger lies not only in the potential for systems to reach an advanced stage of autonomy, but also in the possibility that cyberattacks carried out by hostile actors could be misinterpreted as evidence of AI escaping control or entering a phase of self-improvement. This could lead to flawed assessments and uncalculated escalation between states. Thus, technological progress becomes a double-edged sword: it expands capabilities for deterrence and targeting, but it also increases the likelihood of confusion and miscalculation in an international landscape where digital attacks are intertwined with the tools of hybrid warfare.

However, the most pressing danger lies in employing artificial intelligence to accelerate cyberattacks, expand their scope, and complicate the tracing of their sources, within the framework of what is known as hybrid warfare that blends digital sabotage with disinformation and the targeting of critical infrastructure. The attacks that targeted refrigeration systems in French supermarkets in October 2026, which resulted in the spoilage of food supplies, revealed how a digital breach can transform into physical sabotage affecting economic and food security, at a time when the identity of the perpetrators had not yet been definitively established (Reuters, October 13, 2026).

In an environment where intelligent tools are increasingly capable of executing complex operations within what is known as shadow wars, identifying the source of an attack and the intentions of its perpetrators becomes more urgent. A state might attribute a sabotage operation to a strategic adversary before evidence is complete, or misinterpret its nature and the capabilities of the entity behind it, turning technical ambiguity into political miscalculation or military escalation. The risks multiply when the confrontation extends to the physical infrastructure of the internet, foremost among them the submarine cables that carry the vast majority of international data traffic. The disruptions to cables in the Red Sea in 2024, for example, exposed the fragility of this vital artery in a region where conflicts and strategic interests intersect. Hybrid warfare does not target the adversary only on the battlefield; it may

also seek to disrupt its economy, communications, and institutions, making accountability verification a necessity to prevent a mysterious incident from escalating into an open confrontation. In this context, giant technology companies transform from mere service providers into influential parties in crisis management, imposing their solutions and policies on states that find themselves compelled to rely on them to protect their infrastructure—so much so that confronting these wars becomes a new avenue for entrenching technological dependency.

The Crisis of Legitimacy and the European Dilemma

Technology alone does not create a stable international order. Leadership does not derive its legitimacy solely from possessing instruments of power; it also requires institutions that apply rules consistently and a moral and civilizational reference point that answers humanity's greatest questions. These questions are not answered by a path that imposes peace through force—a path that entrenches colonial hegemony and utilitarian capitalist self-interest. The war on Gaza has exposed the profound gap between the slogans proclaimed by the international order—foremost among them human rights—and a reality that allows killing and destruction to continue on a massive scale, despite these practices constituting, by their own claims, grave violations of international humanitarian law. The scene increasingly suggests that the law is not applied equally to all, and that the will of power can suspend accountability and render rules ineffective when the dominant actor enjoys political protection. This makes "the law of the jungle" a more accurate description of international practice than the principles supposedly meant to govern it.

Perhaps the irony is that Europe, which has long viewed itself as the heart of the world and a model of stability, prosperity, and the rule of law, finds this image of itself today facing a severe test. In October 2022, Josep Borrell, then the European Union's foreign policy chief, described Europe as a "garden" whose inhabitants enjoy freedom, prosperity, and social cohesion, while likening most of the world outside it to a "jungle," warning that the jungle could overrun the garden. However, the course of events has increasingly revealed that the garden itself has not remained immune to the world's upheavals, and that the continent, which long believed it was at the center of the international order, has become more exposed to the reverberations of its crises—from the war in Ukraine to the repercussions of the war on Gaza, to tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, disruptions in energy and navigation, and hybrid threats. With each new crisis, the limitations of its ability to protect its interests and formulate an independent response are exposed, while its political and moral divisions deepen and its security and economic burdens multiply.

This attrition coincides with the risk of Europe losing its position in shaping the technological future. The United States maintains a significant lead in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and digital platforms, while China is fiercely competing in vital industrial and technological sectors. Thus, the continent finds itself compelled to fund its defense and enhance its security at a time when it desperately needs massive investments to build its industrial and digital independence.

Nor does the European predicament lie solely in a shortage of resources or capabilities, but in the difficulty of converting them into a unified strategic will. The continent that fears being overrun by the "jungle," in the words of Josep Borrell, finds itself in a world where the authority of rules is receding and the will of force is advancing, rendering its history or wealth insufficient to guarantee its standing. The successive crises have exposed the limits of its ability to protect its interests, even in the international trade lanes upon which its economic vitality depends. On October 12, 2026, Kaja Kallas, the European Union's foreign policy chief, affirmed that keeping the Red Sea open serves Europe's strategic interest, and that international waters are the arteries of its economy and should remain open to all. This statement reveals the extent to which the continent's security and stability are tied to developments beyond its borders, and it raises a question about its ability to protect its interests when they conflict with America's priorities.

This predicament becomes increasingly complicated with the potential intersection of American and Russian interests in certain files, revealing that their rivalry does not preclude understanding when calculations of power and interest demand it. Moscow, which still aspires to restore its status as an international pole, often maneuvers within the margins afforded by shifts in American policy, capitalizing on the voids it leaves or the reordering of its priorities, as was evident in Syria, where Russia was able to expand its influence at an earlier time and retreated when America so desired.

Any American-Russian understanding regarding Ukraine or energy could lead to a redistribution of burdens and gains at the expense of Europeans, who find themselves facing the danger of having their security destinies settled in deals whose keys they do not possess. On October 9, 2026, a phone call between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin was followed by an announcement of an understanding regarding making additional quantities of Russian diesel available to markets, and the U.S. Treasury Department issued a license easing restrictions on transactions involving Russian diesel until April 7, 2027, which sparked European and Ukrainian objections.

Moreover, the discrepancy between intelligence assessments and political rhetoric reveals an American attempt to contain both China and Russia. In October 2026, Donald Trump stated that he did not believe China and Russia were assisting Iran, while Reuters reported that previous U.S. intelligence assessments had indicated that the two countries provided military support to Tehran, including satellite imagery for targeting purposes and weapons components. This discrepancy alone does not settle the nature or extent of the support, but it reveals that intelligence information and political decisions do not always move in the same direction.

Moreover, as an indicator of potential shifts in international power balances, the Kremlin proposed the possibility of a trilateral meeting bringing together Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, and Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Shenzhen, China, on November 18-19, 2026. If this meeting materializes, it could open the door for understandings regarding the files of Ukraine, energy, and technological competition, raising questions about Europe's place in international arrangements that may be shaped according to the calculations and interests of the great powers. In the age of artificial intelligence, where the gap is widening between those who possess the tools of power and those who merely adapt to the outcomes of their use, the danger for Europe lies not only in the rise of rivals but in the risk of itself becoming an arena for the understandings of others, paying the economic and security costs without being an equal partner in shaping their terms.

From the G-Zero World to the Question of the Civilizational Alternative

Returning to the question of the possibility of converging U.S. and Chinese interests, the potential formation of a “G-2” does not preclude its opposite. Their interests may intersect on certain issues without them being able to agree on a shared vision for managing the international order. Herein lies the paradox of global leadership: the two powers that possess exceptional capabilities to shape the future may prove incapable of agreeing on its rules, while the ability of international institutions to contain their rivalry or produce a consensus that transcends their national calculations diminishes. This leads to the concept of the “G-Zero World,” coined by Ian Bremmer, the American political analyst and founder of the Eurasia Group specializing in political risk analysis, to describe a world where no single power, nor any cohesive group of powers, possesses the sufficient will and capability to lead international affairs. In this sense, the “G-2” may not be the antithesis of the “G-Zero World” so much as one of the possibilities competing with it: a limited understanding between the two powers might lead to the management of some issues, but it does not guarantee the establishment of stable or just global leadership, nor does it prevent their competition from ending in a leadership vacuum where crises expand and opportunities for international coordination diminish.

This idea gains particular importance in the age of artificial intelligence, as the need for coordination among major powers increases at a time when rivalries deepen and mutual trust declines, opening the door to a technological race whose risks exceed the ability of states to contain them individually.

However, the deeper question is not merely about who possesses the instruments of power or who leads the world, but rather about the ideological reference that regulates this power and the ultimate purpose that guides it. If Western leadership is facing a worsening crisis of legitimacy, and if China has not yet presented a model that enjoys broad global acceptance as an alternative foundation for the international order—indeed, it sees no path to global advancement except within the framework of the very capitalist system whose policies the peoples of the world have rebelled against—then humanity's predicament does not lie in searching for a new power to replace another, but rather in the need for a civilizational vision that reconnects power with justice, progress with human dignity, and authority with moral responsibility.

And here the Islamic civilizational alternative emerges, not as a project that derives its justifications from the decline of the West or a vacuum in global leadership—though the exacerbation of crises and the erosion of confidence in the existing system do increase the need for a more just international order—but rather as a message with doctrinal foundations, legal bases, and divine rulings. It derives its vision for humanity, civilization, and governance from revelation, not from human whims. It makes justice the purpose of power, mercy the basis of relationships between people, and succession in ruling governance (istikhlaf) a responsibility to establish truth, erect justice, and safeguard human dignity. Allah (swt) said, ﴿ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَى شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ **"Then We put you, [O Muhammad], on a clear way of the Command; so follow it and do not follow the inclinations of those who do not know"** [TMQ Surah Al-Jathiyah: 18].

From the Promise of Succession to World Leadership

The desired civilizational alternative is not merely a political prophecy deduced from reading events and forecasting their outcomes, but rather a firm belief in Allah's promise of succession on earth, in the glad tidings of His Messenger (saw) regarding the return of the Khilafah Rashidah (rightly-guided Caliphate) on the Method of the Prophethood, and in the dominance of this Deen over all other religions. Allah (swt) said, ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾ **"He it is Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the Deen of truth, that He may make it dominate over all religions, even though the polytheists may detest it"** [TMQ As-Saff: 9]. From this standpoint, Muslims do not read history solely as a struggle over power and influence governed by material causes alone, but rather as a trajectory in which the laws (sunan) of Allah (swt) within His creation unfold, and within which humanity bears the responsibility of establishing justice, developing the earth, and safeguarding human dignity.

The glad tidings of the Messenger (saw) regarding the return of the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of the Prophethood open a horizon of Iman that transcends the fluctuations of politics and the balance of power, without absolving the Ummah from the Shariah obligation of working, taking the means for change, preparing the foundations of strength, building the state, and establishing the pillars of the desired civilizational renaissance. Thus, the Ummah reclaims its position as the best Ummah brought forth for humanity, resumes the Islamic way of life, and carries its message to all states and peoples—a message of mercy and guidance.

Consequently, the decline of the Western model is not, in itself, sufficient for the establishment of the Islamic alternative. Likewise, invoking the glories of the past—however important it is for reviving zeal and motivating the sons of the Ummah—does not substitute for the obligatory work that discharges one's responsibility before Allah (swt). It is imperative to restore the connection between faith and knowledge, between power and trustworthiness, and between governance and responsibility, so that Islam is embodied in a just executive entity, a scientific and industrial renaissance, and a technological revolution that harnesses

knowledge for the good of humanity, not for its enslavement; and a civilization that safeguards human dignity and fulfills its interests within the framework of the Shariah and its rulings.

Nor is the wager that hegemony should shift from Washington to Beijing, or that power centers should change while the logic of arrogance remains the same. Rather, it is that the Ummah should rise with a civilizational contribution that reconnects heaven with earth, matter with spirit, power with justice, progress with mercy, and authority with trustworthiness, making vicegerency a responsibility for the Earth's cultivation, not a pretext for dominating it. The fundamental question in the age of artificial intelligence is not merely possessing the tools to shape the world, but the ideology that directs them, the values that regulate them, and the purpose for which they are harnessed. And if modern algorithms, in their name, recall the legacy of Al-Khwarizmi and his foundational contribution to the history of mathematics, then invoking this heritage should be an incentive to resume the production of knowledge and contribute to building the future, not merely a boast about the past. For the Earth’s cultivation is a trust, not a privilege; power is a responsibility, not a delegation for hegemony; and empowerment, in the scale of the creed, is not a promise detached from its causes, but a responsibility coupled with action and adherence to laws (sunan) of Allah (swt) in society and history.

In this context, the restoration of the Islamic Ummah’s status necessitates building the information and communications technology sector upon the foundation of the Islamic Aqeedah (creed) and Islam’s viewpoint towards life, achieving digital independence, and liberating from technological dependency by controlling information, software, technology, electronics, and their supply chains. For technology, while not a prerequisite for revival (nahdah), remains part of the state’s functions and a tool among the tools for caring for the affairs of the Ummah and leading the world. It is harnessed to achieve people’s interests, safeguard their dignity, and carry the message of Islam to humanity, in confirmation of His (swt) saying: ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ﴾ **“And We have not sent you, O Muhammad, except as a mercy to the worlds”** [TMQ Surah Al-Anbiyaa’: 107].