

Early in the month I generally start thinking about what might interest you for the next issue. When appropriate, I try to relate to the Step Forward America mission advocating universal national service and/or civics education leading to good citizenship. And I usually have something new to think about from one of my primary newspaper or other newsletter sources.

Now I, like most of you, find myself inundated with the rapidly evolving developments in AI. So, let me start here with some commentary on this.

I will not get into the weeds regarding the benefits and threats of AI as admittedly it's difficult for this old dog to learn this new trick. But I will take the words of the various pundits warning us that the threats are existential, over the words of our President who posted "The only control or 'guardrails' that AI needs is a STRONG AND SMART (High IQ!) PRESIDENT. And the U.S.A. has that in spades!" In another post he indicated that the warnings are all "a HOAX..." Government officials and officials of the big tech companies involved have all been recommending guardrails especially after the first report of a renegade attack with no human input on AI platform Hugging Face, followed shortly by 6 more renegade attacks, and then another 4 against federal government institution websites. And what got the attention of most of us were the resignation of Anthropic researcher Jacob Coxon warning that "the people building AI could kill us all by the end of the decade", Dario Amodei, a founder of Anthropic, proposing that the industry pace itself and bring in independent inspectors, and The Guardian reporting

that “Anthropic researchers say AI could cause human extinction by 2030.”

To be sure, all of this was questioned very quickly by others including Brian Gross in his *Wall Street Journal* article “The Hugging Face Hack Wasn’t What IT Was Cracked Up to Be.”

Heather Cox Richardson reminded us that in 2023 President Biden issued an Executive Order calling for the “Safe Secure and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence” saying that “the government must make sure the technology is deployed responsibly.” But in January 2025 Trump revoked the order calling for reviewing all policies, regulation, and other actions taken under it, and “suspending, revising or rescinding them.”

The New York Times editorial board’s article “How To Rein In An Existential Threat” laid out a compelling plan for action using as an example our response to the threat of nuclear proliferation after WW II, the establishment of a new regulatory commission, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) signed into law by President Truman. That Commission was run by five members nominated by Truman and approved by the Senate and subject to oversight by a joint House-Senate Committee. The AEC had a committee of nine technical experts including J. Robert Oppenheimer and Enrico Fermi to advise them. The AEC’s regulatory duties were subsequently assigned to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and nuclear proliferation has been successfully controlled at least to the extent that nuclear war has been prevented ever since.

The AI commission envisioned by the Times editorial board would require companies licensed by the commission to follow three principals---first, all AI models would have a government constitution reflecting appropriate national societal values---second, complete

transparency, i.e. when AI is involved, all interactions must clearly identify AI as the source of AI generated information or images---and third, safety by mandating “independent safety testing for AI models before they can be released, as well as regular checkups.”

We just looked at what has transpired over the past decades to control one of our existential threats, nuclear proliferation. Now let’s look at what life could resemble, if we had followed up in similar fashion and hadn’t largely ignored our plan to control global warming, another threat considered by most experts as existential,

Imagine if Congress had taken more seriously and we had acted more aggressively regarding the global warning threats that Al Gore presented 20 years ago in his report “An Inconvenient Truth”. Many of the wildfires, floods, most recently notably in Nepal, and heat spells that are killing so many, devastating so much land, destroying forests that capture carbon, and destroying the habitat of so many animal species threatening their extinction would have been avoided. We would be receiving most of our energy, industrial, automotive, and residential, from sustainable sources, solar and wind, The money and effort that we now continue to spend drilling and destroying drill sites would instead have been applied to sorely needed energy transmission facilities and lines. We would be healthier from cleaner air and water. Government threats against clean air and water would not be tolerated. The climate protection policies of Presidents Biden and Obama and the Paris accords would have remained intact. President Trump’s EPA erasure of power plant pollution limits would not occur---in the unlikely event that he would still be president in this environment. We would not be in forever wars with Iran and others in the middle east over oil. With fossil fuels no longer required for energy, drilling expenses would be prohibitive so we would wean ourselves

away from our massive use of plastics and the resultant disposal fouling our ocean, bay and landfill nests.

Congress must act now to guarantee that appropriate guardrails, both corporate and governmental, are in place as we go forward with AI. Self-policing alone as recommended by Trump and opposed by the public is insufficient, and we and the rest of the world don't have 20 years to linger over this.

The US and China having the most to gain and the most to lose should lead the way as most experts are recommending with policies that cooperate and others that compete. The world is already being assured that Xi Jinping will do his part, if only to ensure that their AI programs include guard rails to preserve his autocratic control. Trump, on the other hand, while clearly stating that the United States must beat China in the A.I. race, has other concerns more conducive to his self-aggrandizement---literally rolling out the red carpet for Xi Jinping, our brutal dictatorial rival with whom he yearns for worldwide equal standing, and lavishing him with praise and state dinners. Instead, he should have taken the opportunity to seriously discuss mutual AI safety concerns, keeping the shipping lanes in the middle east open, the shared threat of global warming which he has already taken so many steps to exacerbate while China leads the world in renewable energy industries, and setting trade policies that will result in affordability for our consumers as well as protection for materials, supplies and services vital to our security interests. In the words of the editorial board of the New York Times, the low expectations and the even lower results of that meeting underlined "the damage that Mr. Trump is doing to American Influence and global well-being."

As John Garnaut, former China correspondent for the Sydney Morning Herald, expressed in his recent New York Times guest essay, "Trump's

free market attitude misses the larger contest taking shape. The race over A.I. is no longer only about technological superiority. It is also a contest over whose concept of freedom, security and the role of the state become imbedded in the powerful systems that are increasingly shaping how societies think, make decisions and wield power.”

Obviously, in some AI aspects we must try to keep ahead of China, but, as the overarching goal, wouldn't it be better, if we work to achieve superiority in certain specific aspects that we value regardless of China's stance, e.g. moral leadership, humanitarian aid, and the safety net for the disadvantaged. Saint Peter for Humanity, a “nonprofit organization founded on the belief that every person is a member of one human family” offers a good starting point in their full page ad in the Journal: “AI should serve people, protect human dignity, expand human potential and advance the common good.”

While we're at it, as if his support for Xi Jinping wasn't damaging enough, Trump next invites Vladimir Putin to the December G-20 meeting in Florida. As the Wall Street Journal recently opined, “Mr. Putin has been persona non grata since he invaded Ukraine in 2022.... The U.S. invitation will give the Russian a photo-op to show Russians that he's no longer a pariah on the world stage.” Trump previously “hosted Mr. Putin at a bilateral summit in Alaska in August 2025. But the Russian merely pocketed the public-relations blessing from Mr. Trump and changed nothing. He made Mr. Trump look like a chump for thinking that their personal ties could change the Russian's power calculations. That's not how Mr. Putin thinks.... Inviting the dictator to the G-20 is morally offensive.”

In closing---food for thought that might well be pursued by A.I.

The article “Nashville Tries New Housing Ploy” in the September 14 Wall Street Journal says that as a “new \$2.2 billion Tennessee Titans stadium rises in Nashville, the city is running an experiment few others have dared: building the neighborhood around it with affordable housing first.” Wouldn’t it be great if this were mandated in zoning regulations, just as parking is, for all new commercial, industrial, educational and other construction above a certain capacity.

For comments, further information or requests to unsubscribe, contact me at tedhol@charter.net

Ted Hollander

www.StepForwardAmerica.com