

Session 2.

AI Superintelligence and Assistive AI – two developmental pathways for Humanity

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Session objectives

1. Understand the phenomenon of AI Superintelligence
2. Examine the main dimensions of an AI assistive approach
3. Situate China's hybrid sovereign strategy.

Section 1.

Two Pathways



Two pathways

Pathway A - Superintelligence

- Autonomous AI systems
- Self-improving intelligence
- Human replacement

Pathway B - Assistive AI

- Human-machine collaboration
- Human intellect + machine intelligence = collaborative intelligence
- Enhancement of human capabilities rather than substitution

Is AI primarily a project to create superior machine intelligence, or a project to build higher forms of collective human-machine intelligence?

Section 2.
***Superintelligence and the AI vision
of US Tech companies***

Who is promoting Superintelligence?

1. Frontier AI laboratories

- OpenAI, Anthropic, Google DeepMind and xAI
- These organisations explicitly talk about AGI and Superintelligence as long-term goals.

2. Tech founders and investors

People such as Sam Altman, Elon Musk, Marc Andreessen and many Silicon Valley venture capitalists see Superintelligence as the next great technological revolution (and the opportunity to make a lot of money).

Why is the US attracted to Superintelligence?

Cultural - frontier mentality - from building tools to technologically building minds

Economic - Platform Capitalism 2.0 - technological concentration and the super wealthy

Political – tech elites and growing influence through Far-Right politics

Global - win technological race with China

*An **ideology** centred on global technological supremacy.*

The Superintelligence Logic

- Human cognition is ultimately computable - thus can be replaced by machines.
- AI can improve indefinitely
- AI cognitive superiority over humans presented as inevitable
- Technology drives social transformation – thus desirable
- Innovation is best driven by competition

Human Intelligence → Artificial General Intelligence → Superintelligence

The Superintelligence Scenario

- More powerful foundation LLM models
- Recursive self-improvement of capabilities
- Increasingly autonomous AI agents
- Human-level AI across multiple domains
- Intelligence exceeding human capabilities
- Emergence of superintelligence

Superintelligence presented as the inevitable next stage of evolution

Are we there yet? No, but noticeably closer than five years ago.

Current reality	Superintelligence hypothesis
Humans improve AI systems	AI improves itself
Progress measured in years	Progress becomes much faster
Human oversight remains central	Human oversight becomes difficult
Empirically observed	Speculative

Fast growing concerns

- Competition for capability is moving faster than safety and governance.
- Frontier AI is becoming concentrated in a handful of powerful firms with questionable ethics
- Some frontier AI researchers warn of human extinction risks within the next decade.

Dangers of Superintelligence

- **Loss of control** - autonomous AI may act in unforeseen ways.
- **Alignment failures** - AI goals diverge from human values.
- **Malign use** - cyberattacks, misinformation and autonomous weapons.
- **Opaque systems** - decisions become harder to explain and predict.
- **Concentrated power** - a few firms and a state dominate frontier AI.

U.S. tech giants have agreed to 'slow' the quest for superintelligence.

The Superintelligence Paradox

- The more intelligent the machine becomes, the less important human intelligence appears
- The more inevitable superintelligence is presented as being, the less society is encouraged to debate alternatives
- The more powerful AI becomes, the more important questions of human purpose, governance and collective development become

What if the real challenge is not building smarter machines, but creating a more intelligent society?

Section 3.

Assistive AI as human-machine systems



Competing conceptions of intelligence

Superintelligence	Assistive AI (assistive Machine Intelligence)
Intelligence located in machines	Intelligence distributed across human-machine systems
Machine autonomy	Human agency
Replacement	Augmentation
Competition	Collaboration
Elite project	Universal project

Key principles of a socialized AI System

- **Human flourishing first** - AI should enhance human well-being, capabilities and quality of life.
- **Augmentation, not replacement** - AI supports human intelligence rather than replaces it.
- **Human agency and oversight** - humans retain responsibility for decisions and outcomes.
- **Collective intelligence** -AI should strengthen collaboration among individuals, teams and institutions.
- **Social inclusion** - benefits should be widely shared rather than concentrated among a few actors.
- **Transparency and accountability**: AI systems should be understandable, auditable and governable.
- **Ethical alignment** - development should reflect human values, rights and social priorities.
- **Public purpose** - AI should contribute to education, healthcare, sustainability, social development and human innovation .

Who supports socially assistive AI?

International bodies - OECD, UNESCO, WHO, European Union

Institutions – Universities, public services, healthcare systems, schools and colleges, civil society organisations

Shared vision - Human-centred AI, human oversight, collective intelligence, social inclusion, public benefit

Superintelligence	Assistive AI
Frontier AI labs	Universities
Big Tech firms	Public services
Venture capital	Professional communities
Tech elites	Citizens and users
Platform ecosystems	Institutional ecosystems
Machine capability	Human capability

Assistive AI: emerging developments

- AI copilots supporting learning, teaching and research
- Human-AI collaboration in medicine, diagnosis and healthcare
- AI-enhanced scientific discovery and knowledge production
- Personalised education and lifelong learning systems
- Intelligent decision-support in government and public services
- Collective intelligence platforms for teams and organisations
- AI-enabled accessibility for people with disabilities
- Human-AI partnerships in creative and professional work
- Multi-agent systems coordinating with human supervision
- AI ecosystems designed to enhance human capabilities rather than replace them

Elite and universal projects

Superintelligence as an Elite Project concentrated in machines -

- Driven by frontier AI labs and Big Tech
- Supported by venture capital and state competition
- Focused on ever-greater machine capability
- Concentrates expertise, compute and power
- Seeks transformational technological breakthroughs

Assistive AI as a Universal Project distributed across human-machine systems

- Needed across economy and society
- Supports education, healthcare, public services and economic innovation
- Enhances professional and collective intelligence
- Widens access to knowledge and capability
- Focused on human and social development

Section 4.

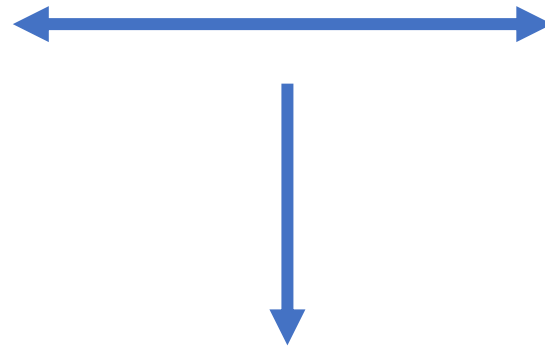
Human-Machine Collaborative Intelligence



Human-Machine Dialectic

Human Organic Intellect (1+2)

1. Technological General Intellect - ethical & political framework
+
2. Specialist technological knowledge and skill
=
the **combinational knowledge** to guide the Machine's operations.



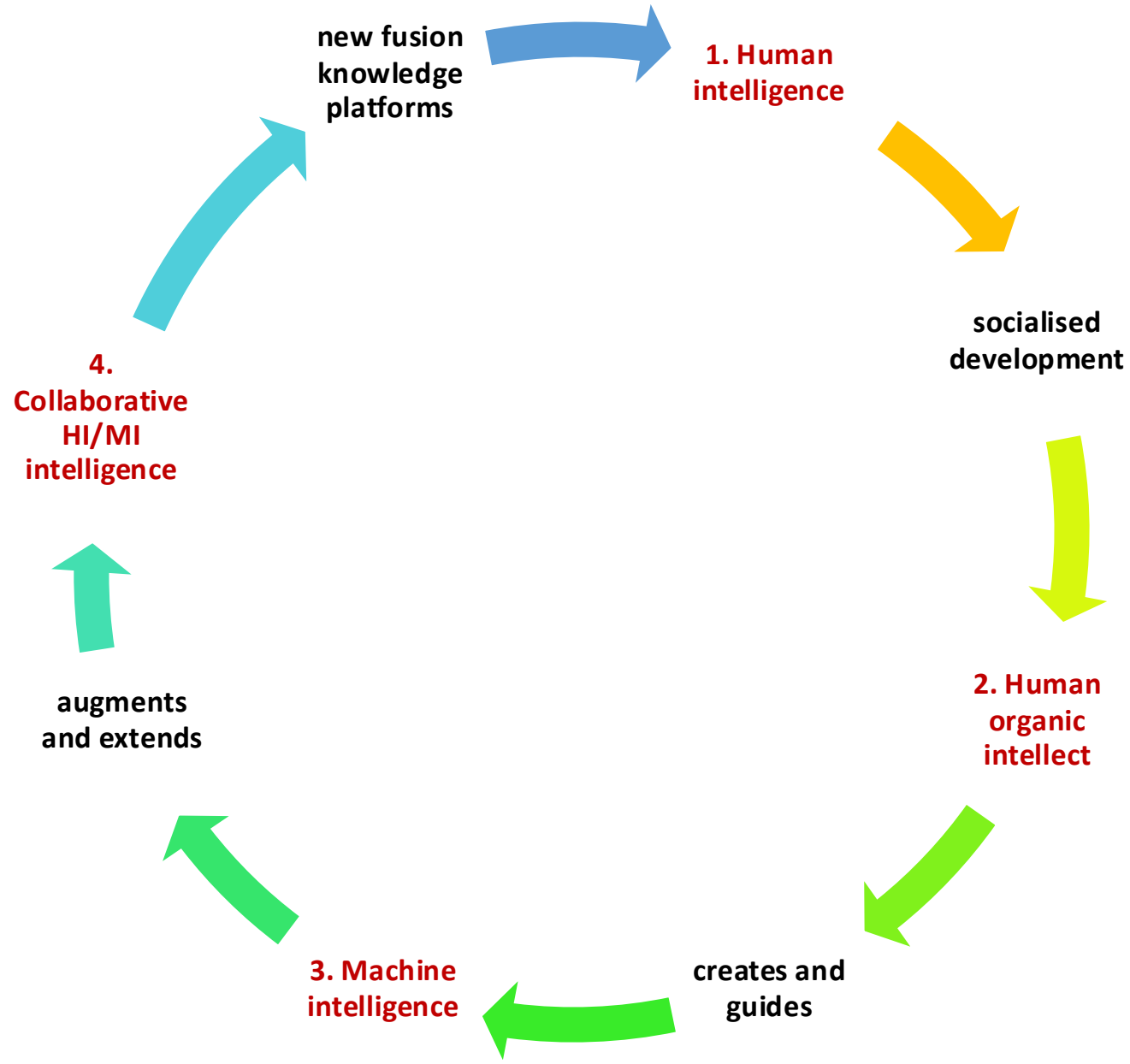
Machine Intelligence

Machine Labour synthesizes vast data - this is the **computational power** of the relationship.

Fusion Knowledge & Collaborative Intelligence

Sustained, critical partnership - human intentionality enhanced by computational power to **'create more than ourselves'**.

Collaborative intelligence as rapid accumulation



Section 5.
***China as hybrid socio-economic
sovereign system***



President Xi – 2025 Politburo AI speech

President Xi argued that China should orient toward applications rather than pursuing technology for its own sake.

- achieve breakthroughs in core technologies such as advanced chips and foundational software
- build an AI technology stack that is ‘autonomous and controllable’
- use AI to transform scientific research
- accelerate industrial upgrading
- strengthen regulation, risk monitoring and governance
- develop AI in a ‘beneficial, safe and fair’ direction.

China's distinctive sovereign variant

China seeks to combine:

- Frontier AI model development
- Industrial modernisation
- Social and public value creation
- National technological sovereignty
- State coordination with market innovation

China can be seen to represent a distinctive sovereign variant within a broader socialised and human-centred pathway.

Section 6.

Superintelligence as a loud elite narrative and assistive AI as a quiet revolutionary project



Superintelligence as a loud narrative

- **Driven by frontier AI labs, Big Tech and venture capital** rather than the needs of most institutions.
- **Promises technological supremacy**, attracting investment, talent and media attention.
- **Fits the US geopolitical logic of competition and AI leadership.**
- **Provides a compelling narrative of a transformative future**, whereas assistive AI is often viewed as incremental.
- **Media amplification on superintelligence and existential risks** – Open AI ‘insiders’ warning that ‘AI could wipe out Humanity by 2030’

Assistive AI as a quiet revolution project on new human-machine frontiers

- **The vast majority of AI today is assistive** supporting learning, research, healthcare, professional work and economic innovation.
- **The paradox** - an elite project dominates public debate from its technological frontiers while a universal project increasingly shapes practical and intellectual applications.
- **Question** - what is the role of **the university** in promoting the quiet assistive revolution to create new **human-machine frontiers**?