

Anticipating AGI

The Future of Work / Tech 2050 Scenarios – Revisited Through an AGI Lens

By Moritz von Stetten, Future Impacts and the German Node of the

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“Governing AGI could be the most complex, difficult management problem humanity has ever faced.”

(Glenn 2025, p. 2)

Introduction

In 2020, the Millennium Project Team published a study entitled “Work/Technology 2050: Scenarios and Actions”. The main aim of the study is to **stimulate an international discussion on the future of work against the backdrop of massive technological developments** in the field of artificial intelligence. Based on a three-year research process, the study develops three scenarios for the future of work in 2050. Furthermore, the study also addresses manifold political, technological, economic and cultural aspects that will be relevant for developments in the coming decades and concerning future-oriented actions today. Here, I bring together key insights from new research by the Millennium Project (MP), especially a recent book publication, connecting them to the questions on the future of work as addressed in the “Work/Technology 2050 study”, aiming to make recent MP insights accessible and reflecting on needs for action.¹

One of the outcomes of recent activities of the MP on the future of AI is the book “**Global Governance of the Transition to Artificial General Intelligence**” (Glenn 2025). It joins a series of efforts by the MP to draw the attention of the United Nations and policy in individual nation states to the challenges and dangers of AGI – not to be confused with GenAI – and to encourage them to take appropriate concrete steps to address them. Jerome Glenn, lead of the Millennium Project, himself engages intensively within the UN structures in order to establish an UN AGI agency. The **latest initiative** is a report titled “Governance of the Transition to Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) Urgent Considerations for the UN” (UN report 2025). This **UN report** is prepared by an expert panel on AGI which was established during the 2024 meeting of the Council of Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly (UNCPGA) in Seoul. The Council had agreed to commission a report dealing with the risks and threats of AGI; Glenn is chair of the expert panel responsible for the report.

The new book on AGI now serves to support efforts to establish a UN AGI agency and to address national parliaments and governments with a corresponding foresight study. The central theme of the publication is **the regulation and governance of AI**: „Governing AGI could be the most complex, difficult management problem humanity has ever faced.“ (Glenn 2025, 2) This view also sets the tone for the entire book: if this is such a complex undertaking, then we should get on with it as quickly as possible. We must address the key issues surrounding AI regulation in order to prevent a major human catastrophe. The “Work/Technology 2050” study has made it clear that unregulated artificial intelligence will not only lead to increasing social division, greater social inequality and a rise in unemployment, crime and quality of life. Rather, the emergence of artificial super intelligence (ASI) could pose a threat to human existence as a whole.

This paper presents key considerations from the book in light of the Work/Technology 2050 scenarios, **focusing in particular on two points**:

¹ The paper thus does not look further than these sources, even though this would be highly relevant and could be the topic of further analysis, e.g. covering how and why the discourse on AI has developed so far, which ideas about the future dominate popular opinion etc. We encourage readers to dive deeper into the growing body of especially critical analysis on this topic; two examples of such publications are FEPS 2025 and EESC/CEPS 2025.

- 1) the characteristics of a self-actualised economy that benefits from AGI, and
- 2) the regulations and governance measures required for its implementation.

Methodologically, **the book is based on a multi-stage research process**. In a first step, The Millennium Project identified 22 AGI-critical questions and 55 AGI experts and thought leaders from a literature review. Subsequently, a list of potential regulations and global governance structures was compiled in interviews, which in turn was evaluated by an international panel of 299 people from 47 countries. The book presents the results with numerous quotes and assessments. Finally – and this is the heart of the book – this information is distilled into recommendations that can serve as guidelines for possible political intervention.

A State of Limbo: the Politics of AGI

The book's starting point is the assumption that forms of AGI do not yet exist, but will bring about **major social changes in the near future**. AGI is distinguished from two other forms of artificial intelligence. This distinction is important because AGI is not only often confused with ANI and ASI, but especially with advanced generative AI (like ChatGPT, DALL-E, Midjourney, or Stable Diffusion) which is still a form of ANI (Glenn 2025, p. 171).

In brief, the three forms of artificial intelligence can be summarised as follows:

- **Artificial narrow intelligence (ANI):** ANI has the ability to devise and pursue logical steps within a manageable scope in order to achieve a given goal. AI agents, cognitive architectures and transfer learning are considered as grey areas between ANI and AGI because, although they do not yet set their own goals, they lay the foundations for forms of AGI. They are elements of a transitional phase that can already be observed today.
- **Artificial general intelligence (AGI):** AGI is capable of learning to improve its own code and acting autonomously with regard to existing problems. It is based on large language models (LLMs) and large multimodal models (LMMs) using text, pictures, videos or sounds. AGI can independently collect data, for example by calling people on the phone or processing different kinds of material.
- **Artificial super Intelligence (ASI):** ASI differs from AGI in that it has the ability to set its own goals and act independently of human control and perception. It could not only be a much more technically advanced artificial intelligence, but might also take the form of a „nonbiological, vastly more intelligent species“ beyond any human control (Glenn 2025, 20).

AGI is a form of artificial intelligence that would far exceed the current forms of ANI in terms of effect and scope. At the same time, it would leave room for advancement towards ASI. Fundamentally, the distinctions presented here are still highly controversial among experts in the field. However, **the**

introduction of three forms of AI serves the actual purpose of the book: to highlight the enormous upheavals that will probably accompany the introduction of AGI technologies. In connection with this, the book reflects a state of limbo, a kind of transitional phase in which it is not yet clear whether AGI actually exists and/or will come to exist or not. This is not only due to technological developments themselves, but also, in particular, to the political and business assessments that accompany them.

The most prominent example concerns Microsoft and OpenAI. A 2019 agreement between both companies states that OpenAI can withdraw Microsoft's access to its technology as soon as the OpenAI board determines that AGI has been developed. OpenAI wants to retain this clause and announce AGI as soon as possible so that it can continue to promote its own independence.

And this is where one of **the study's major insights** becomes apparent. The book quotes numerous other chief executive officers, researchers, and experts who are involved in the development of AGI. The results of his collection of interviews, background discussions, and quotations present a situation that seems overwhelming at first glance. Whatever position one takes on the existence and introduction of AGI, the political classification of new technologies, and the significance of big tech companies, it is inevitably **the responsibility of all stakeholders to advocate for regulation and control of AGI**. Here, given the many opinions on the matter, the book maintains a clear focus on the actual future challenge we must address. It emphasizes **the necessity of governing AGI**, even if we cannot yet foresee when, in what form, and with what effects AGI will have an impact on our social coexistence.

The Normative Scenario: a Self-Actualisation Economy

The "Work/Technology 2050" study presented three scenarios to outline the future of work with regard to the development of AI and robotics. As a reminder, the three scenarios can be summarised as follows:

- **„It's complicated – A mixed bag"** (first scenario): A Universal Basic Income (UBI) was introduced with mixed results, and government intervention to regulate new technologies has brought some success, but has not been able to prevent high unemployment and to create fully successful new job markets and a new work culture.
- **„Political/Economic Turmoil – Future Despair"** (second scenario): The regulation and governance of AGI has fundamentally failed, leading not only to high unemployment, but also to political chaos and social division. Terrorism and organised crime have become threats to the existence of humanity.
- **„If people were free – The Self-Actualizing Economy"** (third scenario): The dangers of AGI

were recognised early on by nation states and contained through regulations and the introduction of a UBI, enabling a cultural shift towards a self-actualisation economy.

The AGI book maintains an open attitude towards all three scenarios presented in the “Work/Technology 2050” study, but devotes **an entire chapter to the scenario of a “self-actualisation economy made possible by AGI”**. Thus, it continues the tradition of **countering the many dystopian visions of the future that have emerged since the 1970s with a normatively desirable scenario** (Daheim/Rampacher 2024, 22). The intention is to make it clear to all stakeholders that A//AGI can bring us tremendous benefits, provided we take the dangers of unregulated AGI seriously and address them appropriately. In this sense, the book is the result of a foresight perspective from a pragmatically minded optimist who believes in a credible and steadfast commitment to a positive future.

This short section from the book gives us an idea of the **central content of this positive, normative scenario**:

„With UBI taking care of their physical needs and social media helping with their love and belongingness, and self-esteem needs, people can explore their self-actualization needs while finding buyers around the world for what they want to do, following their passions to become themselves. Granted, this is quite an optimistic view along with the global governance of the transition to AGI, but it is a direction to consider, as an alternative to masses of unemployed at the mercy of out-of-control ASI.“ (Glenn 2025, 180)

The scenario suggests that a self-actualisation economy could be established in the future, involving **a new understanding of work and human-machine interactions**. The current social contract (people educate themselves and work, and in return society finances their retirement and possibly health insurance) could then be further developed and supplemented by new technologies. AI, robots, synthetic biology, driverless vehicles, and other new technologies replace labour and become a new source of income for national taxes. This will help to build up a financially sustainable UBI. The key message regarding the role of new technologies for the future is: **AGI will eliminate jobs, but the UBI can free people from being poor, and gives them the freedom to find out what their place will be in society, and how they can contribute**.

Thus, AI (and potentially AGI) serves as a tool and lever for achieving this scenario on several levels.

- **AI/AGI helps to reduce the cost of living.** It takes on tasks such as infrastructure maintenance and the establishment of a circular economy through new technologies. AGI-supported free public education opens up opportunities for people to acquire the skills they need to find their feet and establish themselves in a new world of work.
- **AI/AGI serves as a new source of income.** Not only are tax havens reduced, but new taxes are also levied on carbon, pollution, wealth growth, national resources, and financial transactions (Tobin Tax).
- **AI/AGI enables the development of a new work and economic culture, as well as new**

- opportunities to give meaning to one's own life.** This is primarily about networking via social media, creating new realms of experience and the development of AI-supported education.
- **AI/AGI can be used to establish ‘trans-institutions’.** These new forms of institutions anticipate dangers, minimise risks, and open up opportunities. These are institutions that make decisions and establish structures beyond companies, government institutions, and NGOs.

The **takeaways** are as follows:

An environmentally sustainable global economy achieved by AGI is possible, but only if AGI is used effectively and regulated by national and international institutions. For this, the three central building blocks of a desirable future (a well-functioning AGI, human capabilities to deal with it, and political and economic policies for regulation) must work well together. One of the most important building blocks for this, and the core of the book, is the establishment of appropriate governance structures for regulating AGI.

“The reason the Soviet Union and the United States were able to stop the arms race was a shared terror of it getting out of control. Well, that's going to be the same motivation now.”

(Jerome Glenn)

Future Perspectives: the Governance of AGI

The centrepiece of the new study is the question of AGI governance. Following on from the Work/Technology 2050 report, the study believes that **a lack of regulation and governance of AGI will lead to further social division, a concentration of wealth, an increase in organised crime, and even a threat to humanity's existence.** The book argues that the efforts of the UN and of national initiatives should focus on the specific characteristics of AGI, which differ significantly from the requirements for ANI and GenAI (Glenn 2025, 171).

So, what recommendations does the book develop in light of the challenges posed by AGI? What are the **regulations and forms of governance we need for AGI?**

- **National regulation:** The most urgent measure is that national parliaments must take care of regulating AGI because international governance will probably come too late. To this end, they must establish future-oriented expert committees and investigate the long-term consequences of AGI. This requires close monitoring of the legal situation in the European Union, the United States, and China, as well as briefing parliamentarians on current developments.
- **Decentralisation of power:** The centralization of power in just a few corporate or government hands will sooner or later cause major problems for the regulation of AGI. All stakeholders (national, international, corporate, NGOs) must therefore develop concepts that avoid a concentration of power and responsibility.
- **Establishment of an UN (or comparable) AGI Agency:** Glenn describes the governance of AGI as a “multistakeholder hybrid human-AI United Nations organization or agency” (Glenn 2025, 169). It is designed as a system to anticipate and adapt to new challenges. However, this organisation has the characteristics of an assertive institution in that it is able to “authorize sanctions, freeze assets, charge fines, and restrict compute capacity (total amount of computer hardware and software resources available), and energy access” (Glenn 2025, 169). AGI threats could also be interpreted as crimes against humanity and thus be tried before the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- **Alignment Reliability:** An internationally and nationally coordinated strategy for regulating AGI is needed to avoid heterogeneity in regulations. Without such a strategy, AGI could repeatedly be used in e.g. organised crime to prevent such alignment. This would lead to a vicious circle of insufficiently coordinated governance and rising crime. The book suggests that, as a stopgap solution, a Plan B is needed that ultimately amounts to a “global pause or ban” that would halt all development activities with immediate effect (“for possibly 20 to 30 years”) in order to avert a worse catastrophe (Glenn 2025, 182f.).

To put it in a nutshell: a normatively desirable, positive scenario for integrating artificial intelligence into human coexistence on this planet will depend on the **establishment of a powerful and effective UN agency supported by national licensing systems and decentralisation regulation** in the coming decades. The book makes it clear that there might not be any conceivable alternative to this.

The central concern of the report is the draft of **further steps towards the introduction of a UNI AGI agency**. The report not only underlines the need of a feasibility study on a UN AGI agency, but also the need of tracking the progress in a global AGI Observatory, the urgent need of best practices for an international governance system, as well as a UN framework convention on AGI to establish shared objectives.

Conclusion

The **central message of the book** is that the positive scenario of the Work/Technology 2050 study of a self-actualisation economy can only be achieved if effective regulation and governance of AGI is established in the near future. **National regulations**, intensive **international coordination** with the aim of establishing **a UNI AGI agency**, and **the introduction of UBI** are needed to support the development of a new economy and the associated work culture.

In addition, the book also points out the similarities between the current situation and the context in which the methods of scenario construction were developed in the 1950s by Herman Kahn at the Rand Corporation (Glenn 2025, 149). The aim back then was to find ways out of the escalating military-political situation between the USA and the Soviet Union in order to prevent a Third World War, including the use of nuclear weapons. **Similar to the 1950s, we are now seeing heightened conflicts between major powers** (the United States versus China versus Russia), involving technologies that pose an existential threat to all of humanity. In conversation with me, Glenn emphasises the **analogous situation with AGI in the present day**: “The reason the Soviet Union and the United States were able to stop the arms race was a shared terror of it getting out of control. Well, that’s going to be the same motivation now.”

At the same time, we find ourselves in a situation where this motivation will probably not be enough. AGI governance is far more complex than the handling with nuclear weapons because AGI is a self-replicating, self-improving technology barely understood even by scientists (Glenn 2025, p. 25). The “shared terror” can thus only be the starting point for a **comprehensive effort towards regulation and governance that goes far beyond the existing structures of international cooperation**.

At the end of our conversation, I ask Jerome Glenn **what gives him the most hope for the future**. Glenn replies:

“**Chips**. Chips can have software essentially. Now, can we say, here is a long string of rules, long string of regulations, a long string of all things, and that’s part of your boot up. So you’re ready. Then when

somebody over here says, make me an atomic bomb, it stops working. In other words, the off switch, most realistically, should be controlled by the chip itself. Now one of the advantages of this is that, as you know, the advanced stuff requires the advanced chips. So if we make the chips the enforcer, you don't need humans to reinforce it. Now, the other advantage is that even if organized crime gets into the game, they got to use the same chips.”

That is the answer of a pragmatic, optimistic futurist who firmly believes in the positive progress of AGI.

Then I ask him what **his greatest fear** is.

“My biggest fear is that we won't do any of this shit! That's the biggest fear. We won't do anything, or we'll be too late.”

That is the answer of a futurist who does not want to be distracted from this pragmatic idealism.

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