It seems like we are continuously bombarded with prophecies about how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and all of its permutations—from quantum computing and machine learning to RPA and Skynet—will radically change just about everything we do.[1] However, much of its potential (whether as promise or pariah) remains prospective, more speculative than real.

That is especially true with regard to the impact of AI on organizations and those who lead them, and given the title of Brigette Hyacinth's work, *The Future of Leadership: The Rise of Automation, Robotics, and Artificial Intelligence*, this reviewer was hopeful that it would contribute more to the discussion. Unfortunately, while it lays a foundation for that discussion, it does little to further it, especially for those who must lead in the public sphere.

The book itself has three main parts, ostensibly connected by the challenges of AI and what to do about it. The first part is an extensive catalog of those challenges, with the author opting for breadth rather than depth. Thus, the reader is treated to list after list of AI applications, ranging from the way we work (and work out) to the way we drive and eat and sleep. In so doing, the author proffers a paradox; that is, that this particular technology—like so many others—is very much a "two-edged" sword, making lives easier but bringing with it threats anticipated and otherwise.

And when it comes down to where AI falls on that promise-to-peril continuum, the author is clearly on the "Danger, Will Robinson!" end of the scale. Thus, despite chronicling all the benefits of AI, she predicts that it will ultimately cause the massive (indeed, historic) displacement of people as its principal consequence, with many millions of us left without meaningful work, our hard-earned skills and education rendered obsolete by faceless governments and corporations looking to cut costs at all cost.

I have a different, less pessimistic view; that is, that we will muddle through . . . that technologies like AI will emerge and advance as they always do, usually with unplanned, unanticipated, and even unimagined consequences. Take the advent of the smart phone and the internet—both are significant in their own right, affecting the way we live our lives and even how we fight our wars—but taken together, they have produced culture-changing phenomena like social media that many of us never saw coming. However, we adapted to those (for better or worse) as we always do, and I am not yet convinced that AI is so fundamentally different that it will have the economic and societal equivalent of an asteroid strike.

In the author's gloomy future, this mass displacement spares no country, developed or developing. It will be global, its impact so pervasive that the author wonders how all of those un- and underemployed workers will afford the goods that AI produces for them. This leads to an extended (and in my view, seemingly out of place) discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of Universal Basic Income, something the author clearly disdains but believes may be the only solution to the survival

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of the masses. . . in other words, those of us replaced by AI may need it to remain "happy" consumers of AI-derived products and services.

Plausible? Perhaps. Debatable? To be sure, but with that as a backdrop, the second and third parts of the book try to fulfill the much-anticipated promise of its title: "the future of leadership" in this brave new world. The good news here is that the author believes there is a future…she acknowledges that there will still be organizations (after all, who will find applications for AI?), and that those organizations will still need leaders, at least at the top of them. Indeed, according to the book, leaders are among the few organizational denizens that AI will not displace, though the author believes that those leaders will have machines rather than people reporting to them.

And how should those leaders respond to the challenge of AI? Much like part one, parts two and three of the book treat the reader to an exhaustive catalog of leadership prescriptions. . . lists and lists of dos and don'ts, the sum and substance of which may be summarized as "put people first."

Thus, as a general matter, the author argues that if we are to combat the tumultuous effects of AI, we must embrace humanism as a core leadership value. This is undoubtedly good advice in any context, and maybe this is the way ahead, the very one that those in the humanist school of leadership have been advocating since the Industrial Revolution.

But while the book offers AI-age leaders literally dozens of ways to do so—even as they replace millions of workers with this new technology!—it makes some implicit assumptions that may undermine its prescriptions for 21st century leaders.

For one, the book assumes that as those leaders confront AI (and a whole host of other challenges), they will do so at the helm of classic bureaucracies. Thus, although the author makes a few oblique references to a post-bureaucratic world, she implicitly defaults to hierarchy—and formal, chain-of-command authority—as the context for AI-age leaders and leadership, and this clearly influences the prescriptions that the book offers to them.

However, I believe that AI and all of its permutations will demand (and derive) different ways of organizing what we do, ones that are less hierarchical and more "netcentric" in nature. And in turn, those post-bureaucratic organizations will require a different paradigm for those who lead them.

That is certainly the case with organizations charged with achieving some public purpose, a distinction that the book does not address. Thus, 21st century elected officials, community leaders, career civil servants, and especially those in the military must lead in a world where no one of them has the formal authority to just say "make it so" and expect other countries, governments, institutions, and publics to obey. Rather, those leaders must be able to build and leverage networks—of other leaders, other organizations, other institutions, other governments—if they are to achieve unity of effort without reliance on unity of command. And AI will only exacerbate this reality.

Thus, in my view, this post-bureaucratic world—where AI is as much progeny as progenitor—requires a different leadership paradigm, one that is more complex than putting people first. What is that paradigm? I do not claim to have that answer (although I do have some ideas), but this is more than a practical or even a theoretical question. To me, it is existential, so our best minds—perhaps like those at NDU—best start thinking about it.

### Notes

1 For brevity's sake, and with apologies, I will refer to all of these technologies collectively as AI, even though I know better.