Data Invasion: Google Matches Physical Store Purchases With Browsing History To Deliver Ads

All of your data from brick-and-mortar store purchases via credit card are readily available to corporate giants like Google. They match you with your browser history and online purchases and then charge advertisers big bucks to deliver personalized ads to you. This is not funny or cute. This is Technocracy. Did I mention that the head of Google, Eric Schmidt, is a member of the elitist Trilateral Commission? 

TN Editor

Google has begun using billions of credit-card transaction records to prove that its online ads are prompting people to make purchases – even when they happen offline in brick-and-mortar stores, the company said Tuesday.

The advance allows Google to determine how many sales have been generated by digital ad campaigns, a goal that industry insiders have long described as “the holy grail” of online advertising. But the announcement also renewed long-standing privacy complaints about how the company uses personal information.
To power its multibillion-dollar advertising juggernaut, Google already analyzes users’ Web browsing, search history and geographic locations, using data from popular Google-owned apps like YouTube, Gmail, Google Maps and the Google Play store. All that information is tied to the real identities of users when they log into Google’s services.

The new credit-card data enables the tech giant to connect these digital trails to real-world purchase records in a far more extensive way than was possible before. But in doing so, Google is yet again treading in territory that consumers may consider too intimate and potentially sensitive. Privacy advocates said few people understand that their purchases are being analyzed in this way and could feel uneasy, despite assurances from Google that it has taken steps to protect the personal information of its users.

Google also declined to detail how the new system works or what companies are analyzing records of credit and debit cards on Google’s behalf. Google, which saw $79 billion in revenue last year, said it would not handle the records directly but that its undisclosed partner companies had access to 70 percent of transactions for credit and debit cards in the United States.

“What’s really fascinating to me is that as the companies become increasingly intrusive in terms of their data collection, they also become more secretive,” said Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center. He urged government regulators and Congress to demand answers about how Google and other technology companies are collecting and using data from their users.

Google said it took pains to protect user privacy.

“While we developed the concept for this product years ago, it required years of effort to develop a solution that could meet our stringent user privacy requirements,” Google said in a statement. “To accomplish this, we developed a new, custom encryption technology that ensures users’ data remains private, secure, and anonymous.”

The announcement comes as Google attempts to weather an outcry from advertisers over how their ad dollars are spent. Google is working to
move past an advertising boycott of YouTube, its lucrative video site, after news reports that ads for mainstream brands were appearing alongside extremist content, including sites featuring hate speech and violence.

Read full story here...

Busted: Vermont DMV Caught Using Illegal Facial Recognition Program

Busted! Data is the holy grail of Technocracy, and Technocrats are too busy collecting, sharing and social engineering to bother with following the law. Even after being slapped down, other violations will take their place. ▪ TN Editor

The American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont has obtained internal Department of Motor Vehicles records describing a DMV facial
recognition program that is banned by Vermont state law and compromises the privacy and security of thousands of Vermonters. In a letter delivered yesterday to DMV Commissioner Robert Ide, the ACLU demands an immediate end to the program, which was first implemented in 2012.

Vermont DMV records provided to the ACLU show the agency using facial recognition software (FRS) to search and share with other state and federal government agencies the photographs and personal information of Vermont ID holders. That violates a 2004 state law barring the use of technologies that “involve the use of biometric identifiers.”

ACLU of Vermont staff attorney Jay Diaz: “DMV’s program is patently illegal—there is nothing in the legislative history or administrative record we reviewed to indicate that this program should be exempt from the statute’s requirements. To the contrary, the extensive problems uncovered by the ACLU show exactly why the Legislature was right to adopt this law to protect Vermonters’ privacy from government surveillance.”

Under the DMV’s facial recognition program, state and federal government agencies are invited to submit photographs and video images to Vermont DMV for analysis. DMV uses facial recognition technology to conduct a search, drawing on the 2.6 million images in DMV’s photo database. DMV then hands over Vermonters’ photo images and “any associated information stored with the photo[s]” to the requesting entity.

Since 2012, DMV has run at least 126 FRS searches at the request of a variety of local, state, and federal government agencies, and secretly shared the photos and “associated information” of potentially thousands of Vermonters with those agencies. DMV has responded to search requests from the FBI, ICE, the U.S. State Department, and state and local police departments from around the country.

James Lyall, executive director of the ACLU of Vermont: “Once again, we see Vermont DMV overstepping its authority and thumbing its nose at
state law. In addition to violating Vermont law, DMV’s facial recognition program invades Vermonter’s privacy, disproportionately targets people of color, places immigrants at increased risk of harm, and lacks due process protections to prevent further abuse. This program was banned for a reason, and must be halted immediately. The ACLU is calling on legislators to hold DMV accountable and take action to protect Vermonters from runaway government surveillance and discrimination.”

In its letter to Commissioner Ide, the ACLU highlights the program’s disproportionate impact on people of color. DMV’s records indicate that since 2012, searches for African-Americans occurred seven times more frequently, and searches for Hispanics were nearly twelve times more frequent, relative to those groups’ respective share of Vermont’s driving population.

Though originally justified as necessary for preventing identity theft and fraud, from its inception the FRS program has been made available to law enforcement agencies around the country for uses unrelated to theft or fraud detection. According to DMV records, the agency has conducted searches involving people merely alleged to be involved in “suspicious circumstances.” Other requests have been submitted on the basis of minor offenses such as trespassing or disorderly conduct, while others fail to reference any criminal conduct.

DMV records describe the FBI sending one man’s image to DMV for facial recognition scanning after the man allegedly asked “unusual and suspicious” questions at a local gun shop. DMV records show the FBI listed the charges as “N/A.” Nonetheless, DMV responded by sharing Vermont ID photos and associated information with the FBI. In another case, DMV scanned and sent Vermont ID holders’ photos and information to U.S. Marshals, ostensibly to locate the girlfriend of an alleged fugitive based upon a photo of the girlfriend. The program has also been used to search for immigrants alleged to have overstayed their visas, another troubling example of DMV’s continuing entanglement in federal immigration operations.

Commissioner Ide has provided assurances that outside agencies would only receive Vermonters’ biometric information if they met “stringent
criteria,” but in practice that has not been the case. Of the more than 100 times government agencies have sought a FRS search, the DMV has never declined a request. DMV’s records show most requests do not include a warrant or other indicator of probable cause or valid investigation. DMV does not take steps to ensure the information provided is protected from further distribution, and provides no notice to the individuals targeted.

Jay Diaz: “DMV forces Vermonters to give up the equivalent of a fingerprint in exchange for the ability to drive, then allows their personal information to be disseminated without any meaningful oversight or limitations in place. Since 2012, DMV has approved every single request by outside agencies to hand over Vermonters’ photographs and personal information. The DMV’s ‘ask and you shall receive’ policy is unlawful, and it fails to protect against misuse and abuse.”

DMV records indicate that the FRS program regularly sweeps up innocent people. When DMV receives a request from an outside agency and scans its database for matches, it provides ID photos of up to fifty Vermonters at a time—most or all of them innocent of any wrongdoing. In June 2013, DMV’s director of enforcement wrote that after six months of FRS operation, twenty-six applicants were referred for fraud investigation, but nearly one third were exonerated.

A 2016 report by Georgetown Law’s Center on Privacy and Technology showed that Vermont’s DMV possesses more than 1.8 million applicant photos, all of which are potentially subject to FRS searches. Responding to that report in October, DMV clarified that it actually possesses 2.6 million images of 709,782 unique individuals.

ACLU policy director Chloé White: “At a time when the Trump administration has already shown extreme disregard for the rule of law and constitutional norms, it’s disturbing to imagine what administration officials might do with a surveillance program so lacking in basic oversight, due process, or other protections. Vermont must take immediate action so as not to be an unwitting accomplice in the Trump administration’s campaign of intolerance and abuse, and to ensure Vermonters’ private information is truly secure.”
The ACLU’s letter to DMV warns there is “significant potential” that the FRS program will chill free speech or be used to retaliate against Vermonters expressing their First Amendment rights, cautioning, “There is currently nothing to prevent FRS from being used to surveil religious, cultural, or political organizations.”

The letter also notes that FRS is a notoriously inaccurate technology. For example, a 2012 study showed the FBI’s facial recognition software has a 14% error rate, its inaccuracy 5-10% greater in searches involving African-Americans, women, and adults 18-30 years old. The ACLU also points to the “significant potential” for abuse, citing a review performed by the Associated Press showing that nationwide hundreds of officers have been disciplined for accessing government database systems for improper reasons, including personal grievances.

The Vermont law banning the use of biometric identifiers was passed in 2004 in response to concerns that new photo ID requirements would accelerate government surveillance and undermine Vermonters’ privacy. Ironically, the statutory language was crafted by then-DMV Commissioner Bonnie Rutledge specifically to address legislators’ concerns that DMV would eventually use facial recognition technology on license applicants’ photos.

The DMV records at issue were obtained by the ACLU of Vermont through a public records request submitted in 2016.

Read full story here...
Many tech moguls have joined the apparent cult that seeks to leave planet earth and colonize other planets like Mars or the Earth’s moon. Amazon’s Bezos is the second-richest person on earth and wants to use robots to build out the moon. Don’t worry, he says, Amazon will be able to deliver products to the moon. Bon voyage, Jeff. — TN Editor

SpaceX billionaire Elon Musk may have his heart set on building a city on Mars, but Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos’ space vision looks closer to home. He’s gazing at the moon.

“I think we should build a permanent human settlement on one of the poles of the moon,” Bezos said today during a Q&A with kids at Seattle’s Museum of Flight. “It’s time to go back to the moon, but this time to stay.”

Bezos has talked about moon missions before, and he’s even told NASA that his Blue Origin space venture could make Amazon-like deliveries to the moon, as part of a program called Blue Moon.
Today he went into more detail about his space aspirations when students asked him questions at the Museum of Flight’s “Apollo” exhibit. Bezos’ backdrop for the event included the decades-old pieces of Saturn V rocket engines that he arranged to have recovered from the Atlantic Ocean, plus an intact, never-flown engine of the same type.

Bezos said his dreams of spaceflight were fostered at the age of 5 when he watched NASA astronaut Neil Armstrong take humanity’s first steps on the moon in 1969. Now he’s able to follow through on those dreams - in large part because of the success of Amazon, the online retail company he founded in 1994.

A couple of months ago, Bezos acknowledged that he’s funding Blue Origin to the tune of a billion dollars a year, fueled by his sales of Amazon stock.

Blue Origin is ramping up its employment count and making progress on two big projects: the New Shepard suborbital spaceship, which has made five successful test flights to space and back; and the New Glenn orbital rocket, which will make use of Blue Origin’s BE-4 rocket engine.

New Shepard could start flying passengers as early as next year, which would provide opportunities for suborbital space experiments as well as space tourism.

“There’s a long history of tourism and entertainment driving innovations in technology,” Bezos pointed out. For example, barnstorming and joyrides helped sustain pilots and airplane-makers in the early days of aviation. Today, advances in machine learning, computer vision and artificial intelligence are being driven by improvements in graphics processing units, or GPUs.

“Why were GPUs invented? For one purpose, and one purpose only: They were invented by Nvidia for playing video games,” Bezos said.

On the orbital front, Blue Origin is currently testing the BE-4 engine and building a multimillion-dollar production facility and launch center in Florida to accommodate New Glenn rockets.
“That vehicle will fly in in 2020 for the first time,” Bezos said. Blue Origin already has lined up its first customers for New Glenn satellite launches in the early 2020s.

Read full story here...

Scientists: We Can Photograph People In 3D Through Walls Using Wi-Fi

Using radiation from your own home Wi-Fi router, devices outside you home can see what is inside. Leave it to German scientists to dream this one up. Technocrats invent only because they can, not because it is smart or useful. Only over-aggressive authorities will benefit from this technology and citizens will be stripped of their last corner of privacy in
Wi-Fi can pass through walls.

This fact is easy to take for granted, yet it’s the reason we can surf the web using a wireless router located in another room.

But not all of that microwave radiation makes it to (or from) our phones, tablets, and laptops. Routers scatter and bounce their signal off objects, illuminating our homes and offices like invisible light bulbs.

Now, German scientists have found a way to exploit this property to take holograms, or 3D photographs, of objects inside a room — from outside it.

“It can basically scan a room with someone’s Wi-Fi transmission,” Philipp Holl, a 23-year-old undergraduate physics student at the Technical University of Munich, told Business Insider.

Holl initially built the device as part of his bachelor thesis with the help of his academic supervisor, Friedemann Reinhard. The two later submitted a study about their technique to the journal Physical Review Letters, which published their paper in early May.

Holl says the technology is only in its prototype stage and has limited resolution, but he is excited about its promise.

“If there’s a cup of coffee on a table, you may see something is there, but you couldn’t see the shape,” Holl says. “But you could make out the shape of a person, or a dog on a couch. Really any object that’s more than 4 centimeters in size.”

Read full story here...
Google Plans To ‘Fix’ Toronto By Building Smart City

When someone comes to your city and says, “Hi, I’m from Google and I am here to fix your city!”, you should slam the door and call the police. Google has a big enough ego to think that the whole of cities are just waiting for deliverance. Not. ☐ TN Editor

Google has its sights set on piloting its vision for the smart city of the future in Canada’s largest urban centre. But its reasons for picking Toronto are not necessarily the ones we might first assume.

Alphabet, Google’s parent company, is eyeing Toronto for its foray into digital city-building. At first glance, it makes perfect sense. After all, Toronto is Canada’s largest city and Canada is having a moment right now. The city has a lot going for it: it’s a growing metropolis, a multicultural epicentre, and a new tech hotbed.

But to understand the real reason Google is eyeing Toronto, it’s important to look at their intent and take them at their word. Google says it wants to use technology to “fix” cities. Before news of the Toronto
plans leaked, the company was said to be eyeing Detroit, a city of another era, now devastated by the fallout of a crumbling auto industry.

Through that lens, the allure of Toronto as a venue for piloting a vision shifts slightly. One of the greatest appeals for Google isn’t what Toronto has built, but what it hasn’t. Namely, the city’s under-developed industrial waterfront. Even if you’ve been to the city, you may not know that this part of the city even exists; with few businesses and fewer attractions, there’s little to bring people to the area, despite its proximity to both the city centre and to stretches of Lake Ontario beach front. In other words, it is a 12-acre ghost town, inside of a growing, urban metropolis.

“Toronto has all of the conditions of being an innovative city that Google would be looking for,” says Christopher De Sousa, the Director of Ryerson University’s School of Urban and Regional Planning, adding that this “could be the catalytic spark that the city needs to get them to act on this inactive and underdeveloped area once and for all. There has been disagreement about what to do with the area for a hundred years, whether it is residential or business-driven — a smart city would bring both employment and housing — and do it in a futuristic innovative pilot model.”

The premise of Google’s smart city is appealing. A city built from the ground up promises not just the convenience that comes with new technologies, but also the potential of environmental sustainability, health benefits, and even affordability of housing. The vision entails high-speed internet access and free wifi across the hub, self-driving cars, ride-sharing, and sensors throughout that automate the way people engage with their surroundings, making everything from street lights to air conditioning smarter and more efficient.

Read full article here...
UN Chief: Climate-Aware Businesses Will Dominate Tomorrow’s Economy

Vladimir Lenin said, “A lie told often enough becomes the truth.” Hitler followed suit: “If you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed.” The world has believed the UN’s lies now accepts them as truth. This is the grand Technocrat delusion. TN Editor

Antonio Guterres, who took over the reins from Ban Ki-Moon at the start of the year, described climate change as the “defining element of our time”. In an interview with Channel 4 news this week, the former Portuguese Prime Minister warned the world could ill-afford to waste any more time on reversing the impacts of global warming.

“Climate change is, to an extent, the defining element of our time,” he said. “These are critical moments. We know that either we act now or we will create irreversible damage to our planet that will make our grandchildren suffer a lot.”

Business dynamism
Guterres was selected to lead the global body after seeing off a fierce challenge from the likes of former UN climate chief Christiana Figueres. He has pledged to work closely with Figueres’ successes, former Mexican diplomat Patricia Espinosa to increase “strategic cooperation” with governments and the private sector to decarbonise the global economy.

Speaking on Wednesday (10 May), he expressed his belief that the US will remain an active player in the global low-carbon transition, despite a clear political disinterest in the early phases of the Donald Trump administration. Speculation has risen in the past week over a potential US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement – a landmark deal spearheaded by Guterres’ predecessor – which aims to keep global average temperature to “well-below 2C” above pre-industrial levels.

A host of business leaders, investors and politicians have urged the White House to reconsider its apathy towards the deal. These calls were echoed by Guterres, although the UN chief stressed that the business community was readily equipped to take on the mantle should federal support falter.

“I can only encourage all countries, and of course the US, to stay in the Paris Agreement,” Guterres said. “But today, governments are not the only entities that matter in climate change. We have seen more and more that those who are betting on technologies that allow us to fight climate change will be those that dominate the economy of tomorrow.

“I am a strong believer in the dynamism of the business community, the cities, the states, the American society, to make sure that the US stays the course in relation to the reduction of emissions.”

Guterres’ message reflect the beliefs of former President Barack Obama, who claimed earlier this week that the clean energy revolution in the US had been “locked-in” by the actions of the private sector.

Read full story here...
There are serious doubts that Trump or his EPA head, Scott Pruitt, will be able to push back against ‘green’ regulations inspired by Agenda 21, 2030 Agenda, etc. Technocrats have woven regulations so tightly, that undoing them would cause as much damage as they are causing right now.

The man who led President Donald Trump’s transition team for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Myron Ebell, told a conservative conference last month that the new administration is moving too slowly to unravel climate change regulations.

In closed-door remarks to members of the conservative Jefferson Institute in Virginia on April 18, a recording of which was obtained by Reuters, Ebell said Trump’s administration had made a series of missteps, including delays in appointing key EPA officials, that could hamper efforts to cut red tape for industry.
“This is an impending disaster for the Trump administration,” Ebell, a prominent climate change doubter, said in the recording provided to the Center for Media and Democracy and shared with Reuters.

Ebell was chosen by Trump’s campaign to lead the EPA’s transition until the Jan. 20 inauguration, a choice that had reinforced expectations Trump would follow through on promises to rescind Obama-era green rules and pull the United States out of a global pact to fight climate change.

Ebell had been seen as a candidate for the EPA administrator job, a post that ultimately went to former Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt.

Ebell no longer works at the agency but remains influential within a faction of the U.S. conservative movement with ties to the Trump administration. His criticism reflects a broader disappointment by some conservatives about Pruitt’s focus and commitment to scrapping even more complex Obama-era regulations.

Since taking office, Trump and Pruitt have moved to unwind environmental regulations, including former President Barack Obama’s Clean Power Plan to reduce carbon emissions from electricity generators.

But his administration has frustrated some conservatives by entertaining the idea of remaining in the Paris Climate Agreement, and hesitating to tackle the Obama-era “endangerment finding” that concludes carbon dioxide is a public health threat and underlies many U.S. regulations governing emissions. Lawyers have said challenging that scientific finding could be time consuming and legally complex.

Pruitt has said he does not want the United States to remain in the Paris agreement but he has not yet decided to tackle the endangerment finding. At least three conservative groups have filed petitions asking the EPA to overturn the finding.

“Paris and the endangerment finding are the two big outstanding issues. It’s the first wave of things that are necessary to turn this country around, particularly in the heartland states,” Ebell said at the
Ebell cited the slow pace of key EPA appointments, including deputy administrator and various assistant administrators, a lack of experienced personnel at the White House, deep ideological divisions between the president’s close advisers, and an “imperfect choice” of EPA administrator, as the main reasons Trump was not acting more aggressively on climate rules.

Read full story here...
You must pay attention to Fintech because it is the core of the Green Economy or Sustainable Development (aka Technocracy). There are 409,000 search results for ‘fintech+2030+Agenda’. Many are saying that Fintech will enable Smart Cities and the New Urban Agenda. ⌛ TN Editor

A “paradigm shift” is taking place in financial technology.

Venture capital firms, which poured $117 billion into fintech startups from 2012 to 2016, have been pulling back on their investments. Meanwhile, established financial firms are positioned to step up their spending.

In a big note out to clients on May 18 titled “Fintech: A Gauntlet to Riches,” a group of equity analysts at Morgan Stanley said this shift will lead to an environment where legacy firms, or incumbents, “take the reigns” of financial innovation.

“Financials and payments incumbents are likely to be emboldened to step up R&D and take the investment lead, and this combination of VC/incumbent behavior represents a paradigm shift that should benefit incumbents’ [return on investment],” Morgan Stanley said.

The role of VCs will continue to diminish

Financial technology companies experienced a surge in funding from 2012 to 2015, during which time venture capital firms poured $92 billion into the space. Now it looks like those VC firms are experiencing a bit of a hangover.

In 2016, global venture capital investment in fintech companies dipped to $25 billion, from $47 billion in 2015.

In a recent interview with Business Insider, Amy Nauiokas, the head of Anthemis Group, a New York-based venture capital firm, described the
time leading up to the dip as a “period of exuberance.”

“Big firms just sort of piled on a bunch of, let’s say, happy money,” Firms were thinking, we have money, we have capital, we have to spend it,” she said.

This environment of “happy money” sent valuations for fintechs to levels that some investors view as unreasonably high. For instance, Andy Stewart, a managing partner at Motive Partners, said at the International Fintech conference in London that valuations in fintech were “frothy,” or not connected to performance.

“Pullback in fintech investment over the past year is indicative of a realization of lower [return on investments] than initially hoped due to some unique challenges to disrupting in the financials industry, and our suspicion is that VC investors will continue to scale back investing,” Morgan Stanley said.

Read full story here...
World Leaders Gather In Beijing While The US Sinks Into Irrelevancy

Remembering that a) the Trilateral Commission set out in 1973 to create a “New International Economic Order” and b) its members essentially adopted and invested in China to become a Technocracy (an economic system), it is not coincidental that the U.S. is finally being taken off the world stage as the primary economic power, and China is taking over. I have said for decades that this is an economic coup and not a political coup. Just about everyone has missed this 800 pound gorilla in the living room.  

While vaudevillian comedy-like shouting matches broke out in the West Wing of the White House between President Donald Trump and his senior advisers and between the White House press secretary and various presidential aides, world leaders gathered in Beijing to discuss the creation of modern-day land and maritime «silk roads» to improve the economic conditions of nations around the world. Nothing more could have illustrated the massive divide between the concerns of many of the nations of the world and those of the United States, which is rapidly descending into second-rate power status, along with its NATO allies Britain, France, and Germany.

While Mr. Trump was threatening to fire his senior White House staff, reprising his one-time role in his reality television show «The Apprentice», China’s President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and presidents and prime ministers from around the world sat down to discuss the creation of new international and intercontinental highways, railways, and maritime routes under China’s proposed Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

Even countries that are cool on the Chinese initiative, including India and Japan, sent representatives to the summit that carried a bit more clout than the pathetic representation of the United States, Matt Pottinger, a little-known special assistant to Trump and the senior
director for East Asia of National Security Council. In fact, the only reason Trump sent anyone to represent the United States at the Beijing gathering was because of a special request made by President Xi during his recent meeting with Trump at the president’s private Mar-a-Lago Club resort in Palm Beach, Florida.

South Korea, which saw relations with China sour over America’s placement of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system in South Korea, sent a delegation to Beijing after a phone call between South Korea’s new liberal president, Moon Jae-in, and President Xi. Moon responded to the phone call by sending a delegation led by his Democratic Party’s veteran legislator to Beijing.

Even North Korea, which rankled South Korea, Japan, and the United States by firing a ballistic missile into waters near Russia, sent a delegation to the Beijing meeting headed by Kim Yong Jae, the North’s Minister of External Economic Relations. The Trump administration, which sent a virtual unknown to Beijing, complained loudly about North Korea’s representation at the Silk Road summit. But Washington’s complaint was conveyed by someone as unknown as Mr. Pottinger, Anna Richey-Allen, a low-level spokesperson for the U.S. State Department’s East Asia Bureau. The reason why the United States is being spoken for by middle-grade bureaucrats is that the nation that still believes it is the world’s only remaining «superpower» is now governed by an administration rife with top-level vacancies, inter-agency squabbling, and amateur league players.

Even though major European Union member states were not represented in Beijing by their heads of government, Germany sent its Economy Minister, Brigitte Zypries. She warned, however, that the EU would not sign a Silk Road agreement with China unless certain EU demands on free trade and labor conditions were guaranteed. Germany’s reticence did not seem to faze other EU nations, which were represented in Beijing by their heads of government and appeared to be more avid in their support of the Chinese initiative. These EU member state leaders included Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Czech President Milos Zeman, and Hungarian
Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Moreover, had British Prime Minister Theresa May not been in the middle of a general election campaign, she would have been in Beijing. Nevertheless, she sent British Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond in her place.

If the Trump administration hoped to convince world leaders to stay away from Beijing, it was sorely disappointed. The United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, was there, along with the President of the World Bank Jim Yong Kim and International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde. Also present in Beijing were the presidents of Turkey, Philippines, Argentina, Chile, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Switzerland, Kenya, Uzbekistan, and Laos, as well as the prime ministers of Vietnam, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Serbia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Fiji, Ethiopia, Cambodia, and Myanmar.

Ministerial delegations from Afghanistan, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, Finland, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Maldives, Romania, Nepal, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Uganda, and the United Arab Emirates were at the Beijing summit. Japan was represented by the senior adviser to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Secretary General of the Liberal Democratic Party, Toshihiro Nikai. France, which was experiencing a change of presidents, sent former Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin.

The Silk Road initiative has projects planned in all the nations whose governments were represented in Beijing, except for the United States and Israel. In addition to the nations represented by their government heads of state and ministers, Silk Road agreements were signed between China and Palestine, Georgia, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Tajikistan, Brunei, Croatia, and East Timor.

The one clear message the Beijing meeting sent out to the world is that America’s «unipolar» vision of the world was dead and buried. Even among Washington’s longtime friends and allies, one will not hear Donald Trump referred to as the «leader of the Free World.» That phrase has been discarded into the waste bin of history along with America’s insistence that it is the world’s only «superpower.» The United States is
a power, a second-rate one that happens to possess a first-rate nuclear arsenal. But nuclear weapons were not being discussed in Beijing. Major projects were on the agenda, projects that when completed will leave the United States at sea in the propeller wash.

President Xi, in his keynote address to the conference, said that the «One Belt and One Road» initiative is «a project of the century» and that will benefit everybody across the world. And to put his money where his mouth is, Xi said China will contribute 80 billion yuan (US$113 billion) as added financial impetus to create a global network of highway, railway, and maritime links in a recreation of the ancient Silk Road that linked China to the West. Meanwhile, in Washington, Trump spoke of having recorded «taped» conversations with his fired director of the FBI James Comey, setting off a political firestorm. A new global infrastructure being spoken about in Beijing and political hijinks the major topic of conversation in Washington. The United States has fallen into second-rate global status and is seriously ill as a cohesive nation-state but does not even realize it.

China and Russia used the Beijing summit to showcase several Eurasian initiatives, including the Russia-inspired Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Both the Chinese and Russian heads of state let it be known that the BRICS alliance of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa was still a potent world entity, even though South Africa was not represented in Beijing by its president and India chose not to send any representative to Beijing.

President Putin’s words to the conference about the new geopolitical status in the world were noteworthy: «the greater Eurasia is not an abstract geopolitical arrangement but, without exaggeration, a truly civilization-wide project looking toward the future.» In other words, the European Union, which is losing the United Kingdom as a member and will never see membership for Turkey, is a dying international organism. Other international initiatives, like the EEU, BRICS, AIIB, and the One Belt, One Road (OBOR), are leaving the EU and the United States in the dust. That was evident by the fact that the United States was represented in Beijing by an overrated desk clerk and the EU by a
Brussels «Eurocrat,» the European Commission vice president Jyrki Katainen.

Read full story here...

Mark Sagar On Avatars: How Humans Will Interact With Machines In Ten Years

The velocity of AI development is ever increasing; today’s capabilities will double in 12 months and re-double thereafter in 12-18 month cycles. When AI avatars can routinely fool a human into believing that they are also human, the door to global delusion is wide open. Technocrats build because they can, not because it is smart to do so. [] TN Editor

In ten years artificially intelligent robots will be living and working with us, according to Dr. Mark Sagar, CEO of Soul Machines, an Auckland, New Zealand-based company that develops intelligent, emotionally responsive avatars.
Sagar, an AI engineer, is the inventor of a virtual nervous system that powers autonomous animated avatars like Baby X — a virtual infant that learns through experience and can “feel” emotions.

“We are creating realistic adult avatars serving as virtual assistants. You can use them to plug into existing systems like IBM Watson or Cortana — putting a face on a chatbot,” said Sagar.

Within a decade humans will be interacting with lifelike emotionally-responsive AI robots, very similar to the premise of the the HBO hit series Westworld, said Sagar.

But before that scenario becomes a reality robotics will have to catch up to AI technology. “Robotics technology is not really at the level of control that’s required,” he said.

The biological models Sagar has developed are building blocks for experimentation. “We have been working on the deepest aspect of the technology — biologically-inspired cognitive architectures. Simplified models of the brain,” he said. At the core of the technology, are virtual neurotransmitters that can simulate human hormones like dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin.

With computer graphics, Sagar says he can easily develop virtual humans that can simulate natural movements like a smirk or blinking of the eyes, which is not as easy to replicate with robots. “Robotics materials will have to get to the point where we can start creating realistic simulations. The cost of doing that is really high,” said Sagar. “Creating a robotic owl for example would take half a year or something. The economics are quite different from computer graphics,” said Sagar.

In about five years, Sagar says the system he has created could be used to power virtual reality games. “We want to create VR experiences where users can freely move through a world and the characters start to have a life of their own,” he said. “Once you put your AR or VR glasses on, you will have this alternate populated world of fantastic things that people haven’t even imagined yet,” said Sagar. Soul Machines is currently building the next version of Baby X.
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