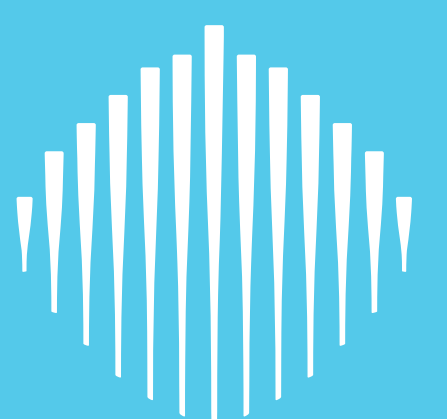The Tech Renaissance:
Shaping a Transformed Future

Manuel Muñiz,
Provost of IE University and Dean of IE School of Politics,
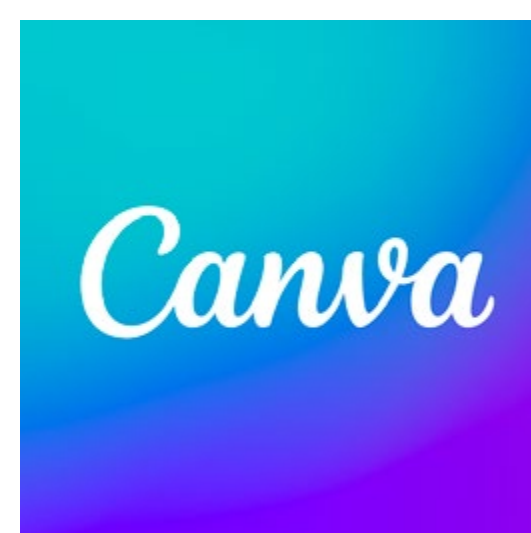Economics and Global Affairs

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The world is changing exponentially.

Just in March of this year we saw the deployment of generative AI across the board. In the second half of that month, we witnessed the launch of GPT4, v5, Copilot, Canva and many others. These tools will bring immense change to our economies and to the way we work and live. They will have very positive implications for our societies, and bring great governance challenges.

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Generative AI is but an example of a much broader trend of change. And tech is at its core. So much so that it is fair to say that technological innovation is changing the global order. It does so along very important lines. First, it changes the distribution of power by creating new offensive and defensive capabilities. It also changes power dynamics because it has the capacity to create new domains of convergence and collision of states.

Cyberspace is the ultimate example of this. An entirely new space for power competition or cooperation. Outer space would be another of these examples now that it is being opened to a new era of exploration and economic exploitation. **Additionally, technology has altered the importance of certain materials, making some like lithium or cobalt, particularly valuable. Not surprisingly, states around the world are working hard to guarantee their supply.**

Technology also changes how our economies work. This has, again, global implications. It alters competition dynamics, unleashing in some instances truly oligopolistic or monopolistic forces. How domestic markets behave informs the way trade policy is crafted by reducing or increasing incentives to cooperate across borders. Technology also affects the distribution of innovation and talent, leading to great concentration in certain geographies, and to a general competition for the training, attraction and retention of talented workers and entrepreneurs. Ultimately, technology shifts the location of economic activity, impacting fiscal traction and the capacity of states to fund themselves.

Finally, technology has a big impact on how freedoms and rights are exercised (or not). Indeed, it has implications for our fundamental rights, and depending on the regulatory framework that is built it, technology can either enhance or hinder these. This is why we should develop further capabilities to understand and govern technological change.

All the issues indicated above belong to the realm of high politics. They are about strategically important matters for states and their citizens. And they spill over from the national to the international realm. Hence, they should be part of our diplomatic activity.

We urgently need to deploy an effective Tech Diplomacy. It is not easy, however, to draw the intellectual parameter of the field. What falls within the remit of technology diplomacy? What issues or topics? The framework used above could be a helpful starting point. It could be called the 3Ps framework as technology impacts Power, Prosperity and Politics.

This framing would be helpful when it comes to planning and to setting priorities for action. governments need to develop a permanent structure to lead on this dossier. This structure would need to interact and develop a set of tight connections to the tech world, where the innovation takes place. Ultimately, this will all require tech-diplomats capable of understanding technology, of using it and of comprehending its broader social implications.

If done well, tech diplomacy could influence how certain technologies are used in combat, or the shape and form of future trade agreements, or set constraints on the use of certain tools on citizens. In essence, technology diplomacy should help to build an effective governance architecture around emerging technologies. Something that will become more and more important as these become more disruptive. Only in the balance between governance and its positive impact will innovation attain full potential to serve humanity.

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