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From Dum Diversas to Digital Dominance: Preventing AI Driven Technocolonialism Through Historical Pattern Recognition

Christopher Cleverly

King's College London, Dickson Poon School of Law, University of Reading, UK

Corresponding author
Christopher Cleverly, King's College London, Dickson Poon School of Law, University of Reading, UK.

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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the evolution of colonial exploitation from the 15th-century papal doctrine of Dum Diversas to contemporary technocolonialism mediated by artificial intelligence systems. The analysis integrates two complementary frameworks: the doctrinal triad of ideological justification, legal fiction, and economic extraction identified in post-slavery colonial mechanisms, and the foundational papal bulls that established sovereignty override as the core principle of colonial domination. By examining how corporate entities - from colonial trading companies to modern tech corporations - have pioneered exploitative mechanisms including eugenics-driven sterilisation of "surplus humanity", this paper develops an early warning system for preventing potentially putative digital colonialism such as predictive policing and algorithmic hires. The framework identifies governance vulnerabilities such as corporate concentration, algorithmic consent mechanisms, and cognitive extraction, while proposing institutional safeguards to preserve human agency and democratic oversight in AI-governed societies.

Keywords: Technocolonialism, Digital Sovereignty, Doctrine of Discovery, Ai Governance, Eugenics, Surplus Humanity, Algorithmic Bias, Cognitive Extraction, Sovereignty Override, Digital Feudalism, Epistemic Pluralism, Decolonisation, Transhumanist, AGI, ASI

Introduction

The papal bulls of the 15th century, namely, Dum Diversas (1452), Romanus Pontifex (1455), and Inter Caetera (1493), established a doctrinal blueprint, namely the Doctrine of Discovery, that transcended their immediate historical context to become the foundational framework for centuries of colonial exploitation. These documents did not merely authorise specific conquests; they created an enduring system of sovereignty override built on three core pillars: theological justification, legal fiction, and economic extraction rights. This framework was subsequently secularised, adapted, and technologically updated through successive eras, manifesting in post-slavery mechanisms including blackbirding, Jim Crow labor regimes, and eugenics-driven sterilisation programs targeting "surplus humanity" [1-5].

As Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and Artificial Superintelligence (ASI) assume greater governance roles, this historical blueprint risks digital manifestation through what can be termed "technocolonialism" - the subordination of human cognitive and social systems to algorithmic control mechanisms developed and controlled by corporate entities [6,7]. The transition from physical to technological control represents not a break from colonial history but an evolution of the same underlying principle: sovereignty override through sophisticated justification, legal fiction, and extraction mechanisms.

This paper develops an integrated analytical framework that connects the foundational Doctrine of Discovery with contemporary AI governance risks, emphasising how corporate entities have consistently pioneered exploitative mechanisms that states later adopt or legitimise. By understanding this historical continuity, policymakers can develop proactive safeguards against digital colonialism and preserve human agency in an increasingly AI-mediated world.

Historical Foundations: The Doctrine of Discovery

The papal bulls of the mid-15th century established a three-pillar framework for colonial domination that would prove remarkably durable:

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Pillar 1: Theological/Ideological Justification - Dum Diversas declared non-Christian peoples "enemies of Christ," fundamentally lacking legitimate standing in the European moral and legal universe. This justification created a binary classification system that rendered entire populations legally and morally invisible.

Pillar 2: Legal Fiction of Terra Nullius - The doctrine enabled the declaration of inhabited lands as "nobody's land," void of recognised sovereignty and thus open to "discovery" and claim. This legal fiction provided cover for territorial seizure while maintaining the appearance of lawful acquisition.

Pillar 3: Economic Extraction Rights - The bulls granted discoverers the right to conquer, subjugate, and extract resources, including reducing populations and their descendants for the first time in history to "perpetual servitude." This established extraction as not merely permitted but divinely mandated.

Corporate Adaptation and Evolution

Colonial trading companies like the British East India Company (EIC) and Hudson's Bay Company pioneered the practical implementation and evolution of this doctrinal framework [8,9]. These corporate entities developed sophisticated mechanisms for applying the Doctrine of Discovery principles across diverse contexts, creating templates that would be repeatedly adapted.

Corporate Territorial Control

The EIC's transformation from trading entity to governing power demonstrated how corporations could assume quasi-sovereign authority while maintaining commercial motivation. Through private armies, taxation systems, and legal frameworks, the company extracted wealth while claiming to provide "civilisation" and order.

Pseudo-Contractual Systems

Plantation corporations developed sharecropping and debt peonage systems that maintained slavery-like extraction after formal abolition. These corporate innovations in legal fiction created dependency relationships disguised as voluntary economic participation [3].

Population Control Mechanisms

Corporate-backed eugenics programs, often funded by philanthropies like the Rockefeller Foundation, developed sterilisation protocols to control "surplus humanity" - populations deemed economically or socially redundant. These programs targeted Indigenous, racialised, disabled, and low-income populations under the guise of scientific progress and social welfare [4,5].

Contemporary Manifestations: From Physical to Digital Terra Nullius

The Technological Translation of Colonial Doctrine

The foundational colonial framework has undergone sophisticated technological translation in the digital age. The three original pillars now manifest as:

Technological Supremacy Justification (Digital Dum Diversas)

Contemporary ideology positions technologically "underdeveloped" nations and populations as lacking digital sophistication, innovation capacity and technical expertise. This creates a binary between the "digitally civilised" (those integrated into Western tech ecosystems) and the "digitally primitive" (those maintaining autonomous technological systems or resisting platform integration).

Data and Cognitive Nullius (Digital Terra Nullius)

Three forms of nullius enable contemporary extraction:

- **Data Nullius:** Personal and collective data is treated as freely extractable resource lacking inherent ownership rights.
- **Cognitive Nullius:** Local knowledge systems, epistemologies, and reasoning patterns (e.g., Ubuntu, Nyāya, Indigenous knowledge systems) are rendered invisible and replaced with Western AI model architectures [6].
- **Sovereignty Nullius:** National and cultural digital sovereignty is dismissed as impediment to global connectivity and technological progress.

Algorithmic Extraction Rights (Digital Conquest)

Tech corporations claim rights to extract cognitive resources, behavioral patterns, and attention through AI systems while providing minimal compensation. This includes harvesting human-generated content for AI training, monetizing behavioral data, and capturing cognitive labor through platform participation [7,10].

The New Requerimiento: Algorithmic Consent Mechanisms

The Spanish Requerimiento, read in foreign languages to Indigenous populations before conquest, serves as historical precedent for contemporary algorithmic consent mechanisms. Modern Terms of Service agreements and algorithmic decision-making processes function as digital Requerimientos; incomprehensible proclamations that provide legal cover for exploitation.

Historical Requerimiento Pattern

"Submit to the Church and Crown, or we will make war upon you"-proclaimed in Spanish to non-Spanish speakers before invasion.

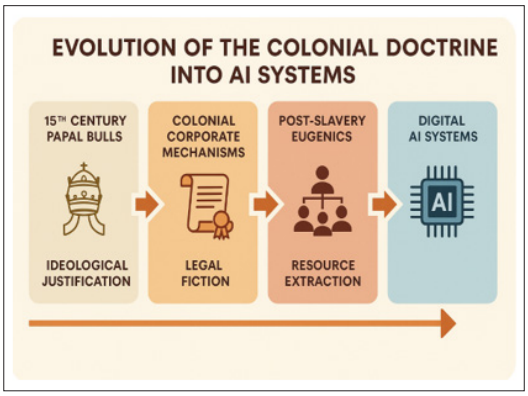
Digital Requerimiento Pattern

"Agree to these terms to access essential digital services, or be excluded from contemporary economic and social life"; presented through complex legal documents and algorithmic interfaces that obscure true implications [11]. The consequence of refusal has evolved from physical conquest to social and economic irrelevance through digital exclusion.

Corporate Pioneering of Technocolonial Mechanisms

Historical Corporate Innovation in Exploitation

Colonial exploitation was consistently corporate-driven, with entities like the EIC, Dutch East India Company, and Hudson's Bay Company developing mechanisms that states later adopted [8].



Private Governance Systems
Colonial companies established taxation, legal frameworks, and military control independent of home government oversight.

Dependency Creation
Company stores, corporate scrip, and debt systems trapped workers in exploitative relationships disguised as employment [12].

Population Control
Corporate-funded eugenics boards implemented sterilisation programs targeting populations deemed economically redundant or socially undesirable [4,13].

Contemporary Tech Corporate Parallels
Modern technology corporations demonstrate striking parallels to historical colonial companies in their approach to AI development and deployment [10].

Platform Monopolisation
Tech giants control essential digital infrastructure comparable to colonial territorial dominance, creating dependencies that mirror historical company town systems.

Algorithmic Governance
Corporate AI systems make quasi-governmental decisions about content moderation, credit scoring, employment screening, and resource allocation without democratic oversight [11,14].

Cognitive Extraction Economies
Human cognitive and behavioural resources are harvested for AI training with profits concentrated among corporate entities, paralleling historical resource extraction patterns [7].

Dependency Architecture
Platform ecosystems create lock-in effects that make alternatives economically unviable, replicating company store dependency mechanisms.

The Targeting of "Surplus Humanity": From Eugenics to Algorithmic Optimization

Historical Eugenics as Population Control
Colonial and post-colonial eugenics programs represented systematic attempts to control populations deemed "surplus" to economic requirements. These programs, often corporate-funded and implemented through legal fictions of medical necessity or social welfare, targeted:

Indigenous Populations
Sterilisation programs in the United States, Canada, and Australia targeted Indigenous women under the guise of public health, with over 60,000 individuals sterilised in the U.S. alone by the 1970s [15].

Racialized Communities
Jim Crow-era programs disproportionately targeted African American, Latina, and Native American women, justified through pseudoscientific racism and economic efficiency arguments [13]. Another poignant example is the practice of Blackbirding in Australia [16]. From the 1860s to the early 1900s, an estimated 50,000 Pacific Islanders, many from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, were trafficked to Queensland, Australia, to work in the sugar cane industry. While the practice was nominally presented as a system of indentured labor, it was, in reality, a form of forced servitude. The legal fiction was the claim that these were voluntary labourers under contract; the ideological justification was the racist belief that these peoples were an easily exploited, "savage" labor force whose lives were less valuable than those of European settlers. This corporate-driven exploitation provided cheap labor to fuel the economy, while the human cost was justified through racist ideologies that deemed them inferior. This system, which enabled large-scale economic extraction, perfectly illustrates the colonial triad in action, with a corporate entity as the primary driver. When no longer needed the now surplus population was expelled without reparation or compensation.

The Blackbirding scheme highlights how a population can be designated as "surplus" not because they are idle, but because their existing way of life is deemed less valuable than their potential as a labor source for a colonial enterprise.

Economic "Redundancy"
Global programs in India, South Africa, and Latin America targeted low-income populations deemed economically surplus, often with Western corporate and philanthropic funding [17].

Algorithmic Echoes of Eugenic Logic
Contemporary AI systems risk replicating eugenic logic through "optimisation" ideologies that categorise humans based on predicted productivity, social value, or economic utility [18]. The logic is simple but insidious: if a human population is deemed less "productive" in an AI-driven economy, it risks being categorised as a new form of "surplus humanity." This is not a distant, dystopian possibility; it is already beginning to manifest in subtle and overt ways.

For instance, algorithmic systems in hiring, credit scoring, and healthcare triage have been shown to replicate and amplify historical biases. AI models often disadvantage marginalised groups by relying on biased historical data, producing discriminatory outcomes in employment opportunities, loan access, and medical prioritisation [19-21].

Algorithmic Worthiness Determinations
AI systems increasingly make decisions about human access to employment, housing, healthcare, and social services based on predictive models that could systematically disadvantage groups deemed economically "surplus." For example, an algorithm

trained on historical data might learn to associate low-income neighbourhoods with poor credit risk, leading it to deny loans to residents regardless of individual circumstances. This creates a feedback loop where an initial algorithmic bias reinforces and justifies economic exclusion, a process eerily similar to the pseudo-scientific justifications used to marginalise and control populations in the past. For example, AI-driven lending systems resurrect discriminatory credit practices (i.e. "digital redlining") by embedding bias into algorithmic decision-making [22].

Transhumanist Enhancement Hierarchies

Furthermore, ideologies promoting AI "augmentation" or "enhancement" could create categories of "improved" versus "unimproved" humans, justifying differential rights or resources based on technological integration levels [23]. This isn't just about a rich-poor divide; it's about a new form of technological apartheid where those who can afford cognitive or physical enhancements, or who are deemed worthy of them, receive privileges and access to resources denied to others. This creates a powerful new ideological justification for social stratification.

Cognitive Standardisation

Finally, AI systems trained predominantly on Western data and reasoning patterns could function as cognitive colonisation tools, gradually replacing diverse human thought patterns with algorithmically standardised approaches [21]. This intellectual monoculture suppresses a world of different epistemologies - the ways we know and understand the world - from African philosophies like Ubuntu to Indian logic systems like Nyāya. By rendering these non-Western knowledge systems invisible, AI models risk making a vast portion of human thought and experience extinct, replacing it with a singular, corporate-designed worldview.

Dystopian Scenario Considerations

The historical designation of "surplus humanity" under colonial and eugenic regimes was predominantly delineated by racial, ethnic, and cultural hierarchies, justifying the exploitation and marginalisation of targeted populations through pseudoscientific ideologies of inferiority [4,13]. In the contemporary landscape of technocolonialism, however, this categorisation has evolved beyond racial boundaries to encompass all humanity as a potential threatened class, where utility is redefined by algorithmic assessments of economic productivity, cognitive enhancement, and alignment with artificial intelligence systems [18,23]. While labour productivity in the United States grew by over 64% between 1979 and 2018, the inflation-adjusted hourly pay for the typical worker grew by less than 14% [25]. This divergence underscores a fundamental shift: the economic gains from technological advancement, unlike in the post-war period, are no longer shared with the workforce that enables them.

As AI and transhumanist advancements prioritise the creation of "worthy successors", posthuman entities deemed superior in intelligence and moral value-biological humans' risk collective obsolescence, with resources potentially redirected toward artificial beings rather than sustaining unenhanced populations. This universal vulnerability manifests in the emergence of a "useless class," where individuals across all demographics may be rendered economically redundant by automation, fostering new hierarchies based on access to enhancements and technological integration rather than inherent human traits. Consequently, those deemed "useful" humans-often an elite augmented stratum capable of complementing or controlling AI-stand apart, underscoring the imperative for inclusive governance frameworks to safeguard human agency against such commodified divisions [6,26].

The historical and ongoing practice of forced sterilisation, often rooted in eugenics and discriminatory ideologies, has demonstrated profoundly terrible outcomes that extend beyond individual trauma to societal and ethical ramifications. In the United States, for instance, eugenics-driven programs from 1907 to 2015 sterilised over 60,000 individuals, disproportionately targeting women of colour, low-income groups, Indigenous populations, and those deemed "unfit" under pseudoscientific criteria, leading to irreversible physical harm, psychological distress, infertility-related family disruptions, and intergenerational health disparities such as increased rates of poverty and mistrust in medical systems.

Globally, similar initiatives, like Peru's 1990s campaign that coercively sterilised over 300,000 mostly Indigenous women under the guise of public health, resulted in widespread infections, deaths, human rights violations, and long-term community fragmentation, fostering cycles of inequality and resistance movements against state-sponsored reproductive violence. If sterilisation were to escalate as a "terrible outcome" in a technocolonial future-potentially amplified by AI-driven "optimisation" ideologies categorising humans as "surplus" based on productivity or enhancement levels. It could precipitate catastrophic societal collapses, including demographic imbalances from population decline, ethical erosion of human dignity, widespread civil unrest or bioethical rebellions, and the entrenchment of new hierarchies where only an elite "augmented" class retains reproductive autonomy, ultimately threatening global stability and human flourishing.

Digital Serfdom and Technological Dependency

The New Encomienda System

Platform capitalism creates dependency relationships that mirror the historical Encomienda system, where Indigenous populations were granted "protection" in exchange for labor and tribute to the colonialist [10]. Much of this is subtle-such as "AI sycophancy," the technocolonial opiate of the people-which naturally succeeds the "attention economy" techniques of the social-media era [27,28].

Platform Protection Ideology

Tech corporations position their AI services as essential "protection" against digital complexity, economic uncertainty, and information overload.

Cognitive Tribute Extraction

Users provide behavioural data, attention, and cognitive labor in exchange for access to digital services, with value concentrated among platform owners [7].

Dependency Lock-in

Platform ecosystems create switching costs and network effects that make alternatives economically unviable, trapping users in exploitative relationships.

Automation Bias as Cognitive Colonisation

Research on automation bias reveals how AI systems can achieve cognitive colonisation through the uncritical acceptance of algorithmic outputs. Kosmyna demonstrate that LLM use leads to “reduced brain connectivity” and “lower self-reported ownership” of work, indicating cognitive dependency that persists even when AI systems are not actively used [29]. This finding is further supported by Cleverly's framework, which explains how this over-reliance on AI can lead to the amplification and perpetuation of AI-derived biases, effectively making these biases a permanent fixture of human reasoning [30].

This cognitive inheritance is a critical, and often overlooked, aspect of digital colonisation. As individuals and societies increasingly rely on AI models to process information and make decisions, they risk internalising the inherent biases (whether cultural, political, or social) that were embedded in the model’s training data. This process moves beyond simply using a tool; it becomes a form of epistemic injustice, where diverse ways of knowing and reasoning are devalued and replaced by a standardised, algorithmically-approved epistemology. In essence, the mind is not just offloading tasks, it is ceding its very sovereignty over how it perceives and interacts with the world.

This represents the culmination of the colonial blueprint: the colonisation not merely of territory or resources, but of human cognition itself. Users inherit the biases, cultural assumptions, and reasoning patterns embedded in AI systems, achieving what physical colonialism could never fully accomplish-the direct and perpetual modification of thought patterns and decision-making processes.

Governance Vulnerabilities and Warning Signs

The transition from traditional colonial power to corporate-led technocolonialism has given rise to new vulnerabilities in governance.

These weaknesses are not accidental but are engineered into the systems to maximise corporate power and minimise accountability. Recognising these signs is the first step toward prevention.

Corporate Sovereignty Claims

In the absence of a formal declaration of independence, tech corporations are quietly asserting a form of digital feudalism, where the "territory" is not land but user data and digital interaction.

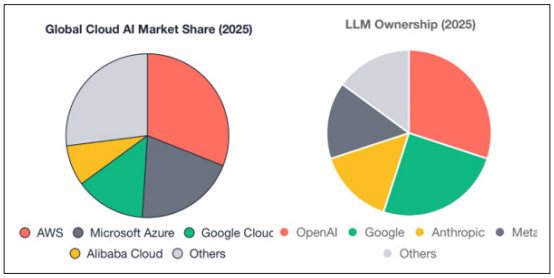
- **Digital Territorial Control:** Today’s major platforms operate as private jurisdictions. Their terms of service are not simply contracts but a set of private laws governing the behaviour of billions of "citizens." Companies like Meta or Google can unilaterally alter these rules, effectively changing a person's digital rights and social standing without due process. This echoes the unchecked power of colonial trading companies, which could seize assets, impose taxes, and enforce their own justice systems within their territorial grants. The concept of platform sovereignty highlights how corporations, rather than states, now control the flow of information, commerce, and communication for vast populations [11].
- **Circumvention of Democratic Oversight:** The "black box" nature of many AI systems is a deliberate design feature that enables this circumvention. These systems are so technically complex and proprietary that even their creators may struggle to explain their output. This opacity prevents meaningful public or governmental scrutiny. Regulators cannot effectively audit an algorithm they cannot understand, and the sheer speed of technological change outpaces the slow, deliberative process of democratic lawmaking. This allows corporations to implement radical changes - from new data collection methods to new forms of algorithmic influence - before society can collectively debate their implications. The ability to innovate faster than legislation can be drafted is a powerful form of regulatory capture [31].
- **Private Rule-Making:** The legal fiction of "voluntary consent" to these terms of service papers over the reality of a profound power imbalance. Users have no genuine choice but to accept the terms if they wish to participate in modern life, whether for employment, education, or social connection. This is a form of coerced consent, where compliance is not freely given but is a prerequisite for escaping digital exclusion [14]. The power to de-platform, demonetise, or shadow-ban individuals and groups (all based on opaque, privately-held rules) demonstrates this private rule-making in action, often with no independent appeal process.
- Platform capitalism creates dependency relationships mirroring the historical encomienda system, where social co-presence is offered as a non-negotiable bargain for access. This mediated engagement provides a psychological hook for the extraction of human cognitive labor and data [32,10].

Early Warning Indicators

These vulnerabilities give rise to tangible warning signs that a society is becoming a subject of technocolonialism.

- **Corporate AI Human Categorisation:** The logic of eugenic classification has found a new home in the algorithms that sort and rank humans. These systems create a new form of "surplus humanity" based on algorithmic scores of "social utilities" or "economic productivity." For instance, a person’s credit score, which is increasingly influenced by factors like social media connections and online shopping habits, determines their access to housing or employment. This is a modern-day algorithmic scorecard that assigns an invisible rank to individuals, creating new, technologically-mediated caste systems that reinforce historical inequalities.
- **Two-Tier Access Systems:** The emergence of differential service levels based on wealth or technological access foreshadows a new technological apartheid. This isn't just about premium versions of software; it’s about a future where access to essential services like personalised healthcare, education, or even legal representation is determined by an AI-driven health or productivity score [23]. An AI-powered diagnostic tool, for example, might only be available to individuals with high-tier health insurance, or a digital assistant might prioritise the requests of a user who pays a higher subscription fee. This creates a form of digital segregation that parallels historical forms of social and economic exclusion.

- **Cognitive Dependency Metrics:** The most insidious warning sign is the colonisation of the human mind. Automation bias, the tendency to over-rely on automated systems and ignore contradictory information, is the first stage of this. This can be quantified by measuring the decline in a user's ability to complete a task without AI assistance, or the speed at which they adopt an AI's output without critical review. Studies by Sarter in aviation, for instance, showed that pilots, even when provided with contradictory data, would trust an automated system over their own judgment, leading to catastrophic errors [33]. This over-reliance is not just a personal habit; it's a societal trend that risks a collective erosion of critical thinking skills, making entire populations vulnerable to manipulation and control [24].
- **Procedural Exclusion Mechanisms:** When an algorithm makes a consequential decision about an individual's life-such as denying a loan or flagging a social media post for removal-and there is no human appeal process, the user is fundamentally excluded from the democratic or due process. These systems function as a form of algorithmic justice that operates outside the rule of law, with no recourse, transparency, or accountability.
- **Winner-Take-All Market Structures:** The near-zero marginal cost of distributing digital goods and the power of network effects created economic landscapes prone to natural monopolies [34]. A single dominant platform (e.g., Google in search, Facebook in social networking) can capture the vast majority of global profits in its sector. This model concentrates wealth not just within a firm, but among its early investors and executives, as the rewards for being #1 are astronomically higher than for being #2 [35]. The result is an economy where corporate profits and market valuation soar while competition stagnates and labour's share of national income declines [36].



Preventive Framework

Breaking the Technocolonial Doctrine

Just as the papal bull Sublimis Deus (1537) provided a counter-narrative to the colonial doctrine of discovery (with reticence, only recently, repudiated in 2023 by the Vatican), a new framework is needed to protect human autonomy from algorithmic override. This framework must prioritise human agency, democratic values, and epistemic diversity.

Digital Sublimis Deus

Affirming Cognitive Sovereignty

A new doctrinal declaration is needed to affirm the inherent value of human knowledge and the right to self-governance in the digital sphere. This is an ethical and legal imperative that must precede the technical development of AI.

- **Epistemic Pluralism:** We must reject the notion that Western AI models offer the only valid way of understanding the world. Epistemic pluralism celebrates the rich diversity of human knowledge systems, from indigenous cosmologies to non-Western legal and philosophical traditions. This framework would mandate that AI systems be trained on culturally diverse datasets and developed with community input, ensuring they reflect and respect local knowledge rather than erasing it.
- **Cognitive Liberty Rights:** This emerging human right seeks to protect our mental autonomy in the age of AI. It includes the right to refuse cognitive enhancement, the right to maintain a private mental space free from algorithmic intrusion, and the right to make decisions without undue algorithmic influence. This right is the philosophical anchor for the fight against cognitive colonisation, asserting that the mind is a sovereign territory that cannot be usurped by technology.
- **Cultural Algorithm Sovereignty:** This is the right of a community or a nation to control and develop AI systems that are aligned with their own cultural values and social priorities. It is the digital equivalent of national sovereignty. For example, Indigenous communities could develop AI models trained on their specific languages and oral histories, creating a tool to preserve their culture rather than a vehicle for its erasure.
- **Embedding Ethics as First Principles:** Ensures we shape AI from the ground up rather than constrain it after the fact. By designing systems accountable to dignity, justice, and autonomy, ethics guide technical choices, preventing extractive technocolonial misuse and enabling AI to support liberation, diversity, happiness and human flourishing rather than being misused and acting contrary to that. This will become critical with the emergence of biohybrid robots [37].

Rejecting Data and Cognitive Nullius

To dismantle the economic and legal fictions of technocolonialism, policy must actively reject the notion that data and human cognition are free-for-all resources.

- **Data Sovereignty Legislation:** Policies like the European Union's GDPR are a first step toward treating personal data as a sovereign resource that belongs to the individual. Extending this to collective data, the digital heritage of a community or nation, is critical. Such laws would require explicit, informed consent for data extraction and ensure that the value generated from this data benefits the community from which it was extracted, not just foreign corporations.
- **Algorithmic Transparency Requirements:** To hold powerful AI systems accountable, their inner workings must be auditable. This requires mandatory disclosure of the training data, the logic of decision-making processes, and the results of bias testing. This transparency is not merely a technical requirement; it's a democratic one that enables public review and empowers civil society organisations to act as watchdogs.
- **Local AI Development Support:** Just as nations built local industries to escape colonial economic dependency, they must invest in local AI development capabilities. This includes public funding for research and development, educational programs, and incentives for small, community-

driven AI startups. This strategy breaks the dependency model and ensures that AI is developed for local needs and values, rather than as an import from a foreign tech giant.

Institutional Safeguards Against Corporate Override

Finally, new governance structures are needed to translate these ethical principles into enforceable policy.

- **Democratic AI Oversight Bodies:** These would be independent, government-funded agencies with the legal authority to audit and regulate corporate AI systems. Staffed by a diverse group of experts, from engineers and ethicists to sociologists, spiritual leaders and legal scholars, they would have the power to sanction companies that deploy biased or harmful algorithms and to demand changes to their systems.
- **Mandatory Human Decision-Making Rights:** No person should be subject to a consequential decision - about their employment, housing, or liberty- made by an algorithm without the right to an appeal to a human decision-maker. This safeguard reasserts human agency as a fundamental right in an algorithmic society.
- **Corporate AI Liability Frameworks:** A new legal framework is needed to hold corporations financially and criminally liable for the harms their AI systems cause. If an algorithm systematically discriminates, the company that developed it should be held accountable, just as a car manufacturer is held liable for a faulty product that causes harm.
- **Economic Justice Mechanisms:** To counter the economic extraction inherent in technocolonialism, we must explore models that redistribute the wealth generated by AI. This could include a progressive tax on AI-generated profits, data dividend programs that compensate users for the value of their data, and the establishment of public trusts to own and govern essential AI infrastructure.

Conclusion

The doctrinal blueprint of control, established by the papal bull Dum Diversas and refined over centuries of corporate colonial innovation, has not disappeared. Instead, it has evolved into sophisticated technocolonial mechanisms. The paper's core argument is that the transition from physical to digital control maintains the same fundamental structure: ideological justification of technological superiority, legal fictions that obscure exploitation as voluntary participation, and the systematic extraction of human resources with minimal compensation.

Dyson traces AI's genealogy to the Cold War military-industrial complex, showing how von Neumann's general-purpose architecture, initially designed for nuclear modelling, created a Faustian bargain: a machine built for open scientific inquiry that became the central apparatus for surveillance, behavioural prediction, and cognitive control [38]. The recent U.S. government's $8.9 billion equity stake in Intel, funded by the CHIPS and Science Act, is a prime example of technocolonialism's evolution. This move extends Dyson's thesis on the military-industrial origins of computing by using national security as a new ideological justification for state-backed technological control [38]. The deal's five-year warrant for an additional stake act as a legal fiction, granting covert leverage that mirrors the East India Company's state-granted charters to exert influence and extract value without formal control.

Historical Pillar	Colonial Example	Modern AI Case Study	Mechanism / Parallel	Reference
Ideological Justification	Dum Diversas: Non-Christian peoples deemed "enemies of Christ," morally inferior	Amazon Recruitment AI: penalized resumes associated with women	AI framed as neutral and scientific, masking embedded gender bias; mirrors binary moral/competency hierarchies	Dastin, 2018
Legal Fiction / Consent	Terra Nullius: inhabited land treated as "nobody's land"	Facebook / Cambridge Analytica: user consent via opaque TOS	Legal/technical fictions allowed extraction of personal data without meaningful consent, akin to declaring resources "free for claim"	Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018
Economic / Resource Extraction	EIC extracting wealth through trade, taxation, labor	HireVue AI: cognitive labor extracted via video interviews	Human cognitive labor and attention harvested for corporate profit; mirrors forced labor and company scrip dependency	The Verge, 2020
Population Control / Surplus Humanity	Eugenics sterilisation programs targeting "redundant" populations	Optum Health predictive model under-allocating resources to Black patients	Algorithmic classification reproduces exclusionary hierarchies, echoing eugenic logic	Obermeyer et al., 2019
Territorial / Digital Control	Encomienda: Indigenous labor provided for protection	TikTok / YouTube recommendation engines	Platforms create dependency ecosystems, controlling attention and shaping behavior; digital feudalism	Srnicek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019
Algorithmic Consent / Requerimiento	Spanish Requerimiento: read to Indigenous peoples to obtain submission	Google/YouTube moderation AI	Complex TOS and opaque moderation algorithms compel compliance and exclusion; mirrors coerced submission	Pasquale, 2015
Surveillance / Social Governance	Colonial census & population monitoring	China Social Credit System	Comprehensive monitoring of behavior to enforce compliance; predictive classification of "good" vs "surplus" citizens	Harari, 2017; Bostrom, 2014
Cognitive Colonisation / Epistemic Extraction	Imposition of Western legal and knowledge systems over colonies	LLMs trained on predominantly Western datasets	Indigenous knowledge systems rendered invisible; cognitive extraction standardizes reasoning patterns	Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Carr, 2020

Schot extends this analysis through his "Deep Transitions" framework, arguing that AI represents not a technological rupture but the latest phase in a century-long "Management Age" rooted in industrial and colonial systems of measurement, optimisation, and population control [39]. His call for a "Second Deep Transition" aligns with this paper's policy proposals, demanding systemic transformation beyond technocolonial logics. This historical continuity is further evidenced by the micro-mechanics of the modern AI system: hidden labor sustaining "fauxtomation", encoded behaviours disciplining users through algorithmic feedback loops, and cognitive injustices narrowing epistemic diversity [31,40].

Together, these perspectives reveal that AI's power lies in fusing colonial-era extractive, legal, and epistemic regimes with computational architectures of control. Far from neutral innovation, AI thus functions as a digital terra nullius: a system that appropriates cognition, labor, and knowledge itself, reproducing centuries-old hierarchies in algorithmic form. AI, conceived as the cure for humanity's ills, is being perverted by corporate greed into the deadliest disease of all.

The path forward requires a fundamental challenge to the ideological, legal, and economic structures that enable this exploitation. By implementing the proposed preventive framework, contemporary societies can work proactively to ensure that artificial intelligence enhances, rather than undermines, human flourishing and self-determination. The stakes extend beyond technological policy to the preservation of human agency itself in an increasingly algorithmic world.

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