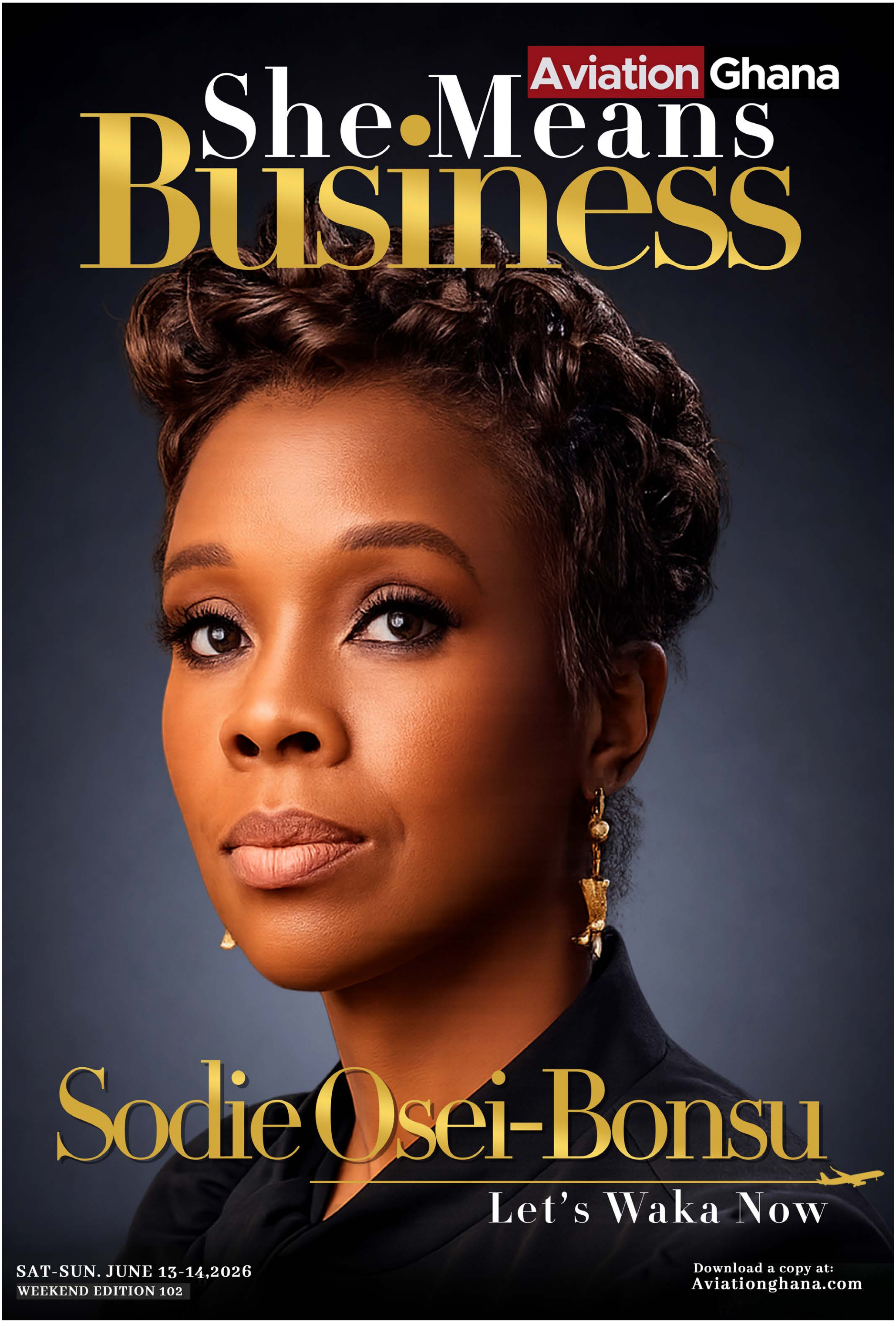
Aviation Ghana

She Means Business



Sodie Osei-Bonsu

Let's Waka Now

SAT-SUN. JUNE 13-14,2026

WEEKEND EDITION 102

Download a copy at:
Aviationghana.com

Sodie Osei-Bonsu

She Means Business

By Dominick Andoh

In the travel business, there are the people whose names appear on billboards, and then there are the people who quietly build the bridges that connect airlines, travel agencies, hotels, governments, and millions of passengers. Patience Sodieri Osei-Bonsu belongs firmly to the second group.

Across Ghana's aviation, travel, and tourism circles, however, few people call her by her full name. To almost everyone, she is simply "Sodie."

The name carries a sense of familiarity and respect. Mention it in a boardroom in Accra, at a travel conference in Lagos, or at an airline meeting in Abidjan, and chances are someone will have a story about how Sodie helped open a market, resolved a difficult commercial challenge, or mentored a young professional taking their first steps in the industry.

For nearly three decades, she has been one of the quiet architects of growth in travel and tourism across Africa.

A Citizen of Africa

Sodie's career has never been confined by borders. Today, as Chief Executive Officer for Rest of Africa at Wakanow.com, she provides strategic oversight for operations spanning West and Central Africa, including Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo, and Cameroon.

But her story started long before regional boardrooms and executive strategy meetings. Armed with two degrees from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst—a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance and a Bachelor of Science in Hotel, Restaurant and Travel Administration—she returned with a global perspective and a belief that African businesses could compete with the very best.

Her commitment to continuous learning and business innovation later led her to earn an Executive MBA for University of Ghana, Legon. The program further sharpened her expertise in strategic leadership, business growth, and organizational transformation – skills that have proven invaluable in building and scaling businesses across multiple African markets.

Those who know her say she never sought to replicate foreign models blindly. Instead, she learned from international systems and adapted them to African realities.

That approach would become one of her greatest strengths. The Woman Who Loves Building Businesses. Some executives inherit successful operations. Sodie seems to enjoy building them.

Throughout her career, she has repeatedly been entrusted with assignments requiring market expansion, commercial restructuring, and business development.

At Wakanow, she helped lead the company's expansion beyond Anglophone West Africa into Francophone markets, creating partnerships and establishing operations in new territories.

Before that, as Country Manager for Wakanow Ghana, she oversaw sales, marketing, partnerships, operations, and customer experience while strengthening the company's brand position.

Colleagues often joke that Sodie has an unusual ability to see opportunity where others see obstacles.

A struggling market becomes a growth market. A competitor becomes a potential partner.
A customer complaint becomes a long-term business relationship. Sales Is About People. In aviation and travel, sales is rarely about selling a ticket. It is about trust.

Perhaps that explains why much of Sodie's career has revolved around relationship management.

Whether working with airlines, banks, hotel chains, governments, or multinational corporations, she has built a reputation for combining commercial discipline with genuine human connection.

People who have worked with her often describe her leadership style

Continue on Page 04


Wakanow
Travel more this Summer
Start with Your Umrah Visa
Fast Umrah visa processing in 24-48 hours, plus flights, hotels and holiday packages made easy with Wakanow.
CONTACT US
053 1028 495 | 024 2435 515 | 030 7082 484
umrahsupport@wakanow.com
www.umrah.wakanow.com/en-gh

Continued from Page 2

as calm but decisive. She listens carefully. She negotiates firmly. And when a decision has been made, she expects excellence.

That balance between empathy and accountability has helped her lead multicultural teams across Anglophone and Francophone Africa.

The Airline Years

Long before digital travel platforms transformed the industry, Sodie was already making her mark in aviation. Her career took her through some of Africa's most dynamic airline environments.

At Virgin Nigeria Airways and Air Nigeria, she served as Country Manager for Ghana and Liberia, maintaining market leadership through periods of intense industry competition and organizational uncertainty.

She negotiated commercial agreements, developed sales strategies and strengthened relationships with regulators and airport authorities.

At Virgin Atlantic Airways, she was entrusted with leading the Ghana commercial team during the airline's strategic withdrawal from the market. Beyond overseeing day-to-day commercial activities, she worked closely with key stakeholders to ensure that Virgin Atlantic exited the market on positive terms, maintaining goodwill and reinforcing relationships that could support a future return.

Her consulting roles with Gambia Bird Airlines further showcased her commercial instincts. One achievement still spoken about in industry circles was her success in dramatically increasing sales performance within months while helping establish airport and regional offices in Ghana.

The Teacher Behind the Executive

What many people may not know is that Sodie is also an educator. Between 2011 and 2013, she served as an Adjunct Lecturer in Marketing at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), introducing students to strategic marketing and practical business applications.

She enjoys explaining complex ideas in simple language. She believes knowledge should be shared, not guarded.

Many young travel consultants quietly acknowledge that their careers were shaped by her advice, encouragement or mentorship.

Perhaps that is why she remains one of the industry's most respected role models.

Never Forgetting Hospitality

Although aviation dominates her résumé, Sodie's foundation was built in hospitality.

While studying at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, she spent a summer as an intern at Walt Disney World in Florida – an experience that exposed her to one of the world's most recognized customer-service cultures. There, she witnessed firsthand how operational excellence, attention to detail, and memorable guest experiences combine to create lasting brand loyalty.

She later built on those lessons during her years at Hotel Shangri-La in Accra where she managed sales, marketing, customer relations and front-office operations.

Those experiences left a lasting lesson. The customer always remembers how you made them feel.

In today's data-driven travel industry, where algorithms and artificial intelligence increasingly shape decisions, Sodie still believes that hospitality remains a people business.

Technology can make travel easier. Only people can make it memorable. Leading Across Languages and Cultures.

One of the remarkable aspects of Sodie's journey is her ability to work across Africa's diverse cultural and linguistic landscapes.

She has successfully managed operations across both Anglophone and Francophone West Africa while building partnerships across different business environments.

This requires more than business knowledge. It requires patience. Cultural sensitivity. The ability to adapt. And the humility to keep learning.

Those qualities have helped her navigate one of the continent's most complex industries. The Person Behind the Professional

Spend time with Sodie away from meetings and sales reports, and a different side emerges.

Friends describe someone who enjoys conversation, values family and genuinely celebrates the success of others.

Despite the demands of regional leadership, she remains approachable. Young professionals often seek her guidance because they know they will receive honest advice.

There is little pretence. Little drama. Just practical wisdom gathered from years of experience.

A Legacy Still Being Written

In an era where career success is often measured by social media followers and public visibility, Sodie offers a different example.

Her influence is measured in businesses grown, teams developed, markets opened, people mentored, and brands strengthened.

Her career reflects what can happen when international exposure meets local understanding and when commercial ambition is matched by a desire to help others succeed.

For the next generation of African travel and tourism professionals, especially young women looking for role models, her story carries an important message.

You do not have to be the loudest voice in the room. You do not have to chase the spotlight. Sometimes, lasting impact comes from quietly doing the work, building relationships, and helping others rise with you.

And perhaps that is why, after more than twenty years in aviation, travel, and tourism, one simple name continues to command so much respect across the industry.

Sodie. For many, it is more than a nickname. It is a brand built on trust, resilience, and professionalism, and on the unwavering belief that Africa's travel story is only just beginning.

Emirates screens FIFA World Cup 26™ live on flights via Sport 24

Never miss a match! Emirates screens FIFA World Cup 26™ live on flights via Sport 24

Ensuring Emirates customers don't miss a moment and can enjoy one of the world's most-watched sporting events, Sport24 on ice is offering the full schedule of matches onboard

Access Multimedia Content

From the opening ceremony today in Mexico, to the final in USA on the 19 July, Emirates will screen every match of the FIFA World Cup 26™ onboard its flights, via its dedicated live sports channel – Sport 24 on ice.

Ensuring that Emirates customers don't miss a moment and enjoy of the one of most watched sporting events in the worldm, Sport24 on ice is offering the full schedule of matches onboard. Bringing together fans from every nation and creating moments that transcend borders, passengers can follow the action live at 40,000 feet, ensuring they never miss a goal, a celebration, or a defining moment of the competition.

To help passengers stay up to date with the action and plan for their travel, the full FIFA World Cup 26™ live broadcast schedule is available in the June edition of the ice magazine, making it easy to follow every match throughout the tournament.

More live sports available on ice

Live TV, including Sport 24 and Sport 24 Extra, is available on most Emirates flights. Availability may vary depending on aircraft type and route.

FIFA World Cup 26™ matches will also be screened where possible in the Emirates Lounges of Dubai.

From 4-20 June, Sport 24 and Sport 24 Extra on ice will also screen the NBA Finals for basketball fans. Canada Sail Grand Prix will be screened live from Halifax Harbour, Nova Scotia on 20-21 June, as well as the Formula 1® Moët & Chandon Belgian Grand Prix on 19 July, and the Formula 1® AWS Hungarian Grand Prix on 26 July.

Zipline's Autonomous Drone's impact extends beyond medicine to agriculture

Zipline's autonomous drone delivery system is not only transforming healthcare across Africa but is also driving economic growth, improving agricultural productivity and saving thousands of lives, according to three new research studies released by the company.

The findings reinforce the growing importance of drone aviation in addressing one of Africa's biggest development challenges—delivering critical supplies to remote communities quickly and reliably.

For Ghana, where Zipline has become an integral part of the national healthcare supply chain, the research offers fresh evidence that autonomous aviation can deliver benefits far beyond emergency medical logistics.

"This research shows what communities and governments across Africa have seen firsthand: when essential supplies reliably reach the people who need them, outcomes change," said Caitlin Burton, CEO for Africa and Emerging Markets at Zipline.

Transforming Healthcare Delivery

Zipline first gained international recognition for using drones to transport blood products, vaccines and emergency medicines to hard-to-reach communities.

Today, the company operates the world's largest autonomous delivery network, making a delivery somewhere every 30 seconds and serving more than 5,000 hospitals and health facilities across four continents.

In Ghana, Zipline's distribution centres have become a critical component of the country's healthcare infrastructure, enabling clinics and hospitals to receive life-saving medical supplies within minutes instead of hours.

The latest research suggests the impact is measurable. A five-year study in Rwanda found that facilities served by Zipline recorded a 22% reduction in in-hospital childhood deaths linked to severe acute malnutrition.

Researchers also found significant declines in severe malnutrition cases across all age groups and a 46% reduction in severe anaemia among young children.

"The protocol for treating malnutrition has not changed. What changed was whether supplies were there

Continue on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

when clinicians needed them," said Pedro Kremer, Zipline's Head of Impact and Research.

Ghana's Drone Economy Takes Flight

One of the most striking findings came from northern Ghana, where researchers examined the wider economic effects of Zipline's GH3 distribution hub.

Using household surveys and satellite imagery that measured nighttime light intensity—a recognised indicator of economic activity—the study found that households within two kilometres of the hub earned between US$850 and US$1,200 in additional annual income.

The research also showed that communities closer to the hub enjoyed better access to drinking water and accumulated more productive assets than those located farther away.

According to the study, satellite data revealed significantly stronger economic activity around the facility compared with 82 similar benchmark locations across Ghana.

The findings suggest that investment in advanced logistics infrastructure can stimulate broader local development while strengthening public health systems.

Beyond Healthcare: Supporting Agriculture

Zipline's drone technology is also reshaping agriculture.

A peer-reviewed study published in Frontiers in Veterinary Science found that drone delivery of temperature-controlled pig semen to farmers in Rwanda generated a 68% direct return on investment.

The programme increased artificial insemination success rates from 48.8% to 74.8% and generated nearly US$129,000 more in farmer income than the cost of implementation.

Researchers estimated that 17% of the increase in household earnings could be directly attributed to Zipline's logistics model.

A New Chapter for African Aviation

As African countries seek innovative ways to strengthen healthcare systems and accelerate economic growth, Zipline's autonomous drone operations are increasingly demonstrating the commercial and social value of unmanned aviation.

With more than 130 million commercial autonomous miles safely flown, the company has emerged as one of the continent's most significant aviation technology success stories.

The research highlights how investments in next-generation aviation infrastructure in Ghana and other regions in Africa can deliver benefits that extend well beyond the skies and capable of saving lives, supporting farmers, creating jobs and building stronger communities.

The Pope and the AI Profiteers

By Antara Haldar

The Tower of Babel is the biblical story of how humanity, united by a single language and a single ambition, attempts to build a tower to heaven. The project ends in collapse, with God punishing the builders for their hubris by fragmenting humanity into different languages and cultures. The parable, which Pope Leo XIV explicitly invokes in his first encyclical, Magnifica Humanitas, bears an uncanny resemblance to AI. Will the technology be humankind's salvation, as its evangelists claim, or will it lead to damnation, as skeptics fear?

Human civilization is already well into an AI arms race to write the script of the future in code. Technology companies are spending billions of dollars to create systems that promise to transform knowledge, work, warfare, politics, and perhaps human consciousness itself. Public discourse oscillates between utopianism and panic. And now, one of the world's oldest institutions has entered the conversation to warn about a race to the bottom.

This moment resembles previous periods of economic excess. The technology sector's confidence is reminiscent of the financial sector's before 2008, when a small group of insiders insisted that they had mastered a transformative system that outsiders could not fully understand. Extraordinary fortunes were built on the promise of a future radically improved by financial engineering, while red flags were dismissed as evidence of ignorance or fear. Among the few voices of reason was the economist Raghuram G. Rajan, who is now cautioning against AI euphoria.

Yet the destructive potential of AI is far greater than the financial engineering of the late 1990s and early 2000s. As the pope understands, the closest parallel is to the industrial revolution

Continue on Page 09

Continued from Page 08

itself. When Cardinal Robert Prevost chose the name Leo XIV last year, he was making a statement. The previous Pope Leo made history by issuing a similarly trenchant and wide-ranging encyclical, Rerum Novarum, on the profound inequalities and social dislocations created by industrial capitalism. Factories, railways, and mechanized production had transformed society faster than political institutions could adapt, leading to extraordinary concentrations of wealth alongside extraordinary misery.

Whereas Leo XIII grappled with the industrialization of labor, Leo XIV is grappling with the industrialization of intelligence. For years, the AI debate has been dominated by engineers, entrepreneurs, and investors speaking the language of "scale," "disruption," "efficiency," "innovation," and "optimization." But Leo XIV is intent on introducing a different vocabulary, focusing on the dignity of labor, war, monopolistic power, and the common good.

Hence, the word "dignity" appears 100 times in Magnifica Humanitas's more than 42,000 words. That emphasis reveals a fundamental difference in worldview. The central question for Silicon Valley is what machines can do. The central question for the Vatican is what human beings are.

To be sure, some leading figures in tech increasingly sound like theologians themselves. As the Harvard historian Jill Lepore notes, Silicon Valley has its own prophets, missionaries, sacred texts, origin myths, and promises of redemption. AI, they prophesy, will cure disease, eliminate scarcity, solve climate change, and perhaps even conquer death itself. But such promises cannot be divorced from the industry's financial interests.

The Vatican, by contrast, is offering a rival account of humanity's future, one centered on the beliefs that human beings are more than information-processing systems and that our affective attributes are as important as our cognitive abilities. We are unique creatures, capable of love, friendship, conscience, responsibility, suffering, joy, and moral judgment. Our value cannot be reduced to productivity metrics or market prices.

This perspective has significant implications for a perennial preoccupation: the future of work. While much of the AI discussion focuses on productivity gains and economic growth, the Vatican asks a different question: What happens when societies lose sight of the dignity embedded in meaningful labor?

Economists have long debated whether automation ultimately creates more jobs than it destroys. Yet, as the global surge in populism demonstrates,employment statistics alone cannot capture the role that work plays in providing a

Continue on Page 10

Continued from Page 09

sense of identity, purpose, community, and self-respect. The challenge posed by AI is not merely economic, but existential.

Leo's AI intervention is also timely in confronting "monopolistic control" and "digital colonialism." Neither phrase feels hyperbolic. It is simply a fact that a handful of firms increasingly control the models, computing infrastructure, and data upon which the future AI economy depends.

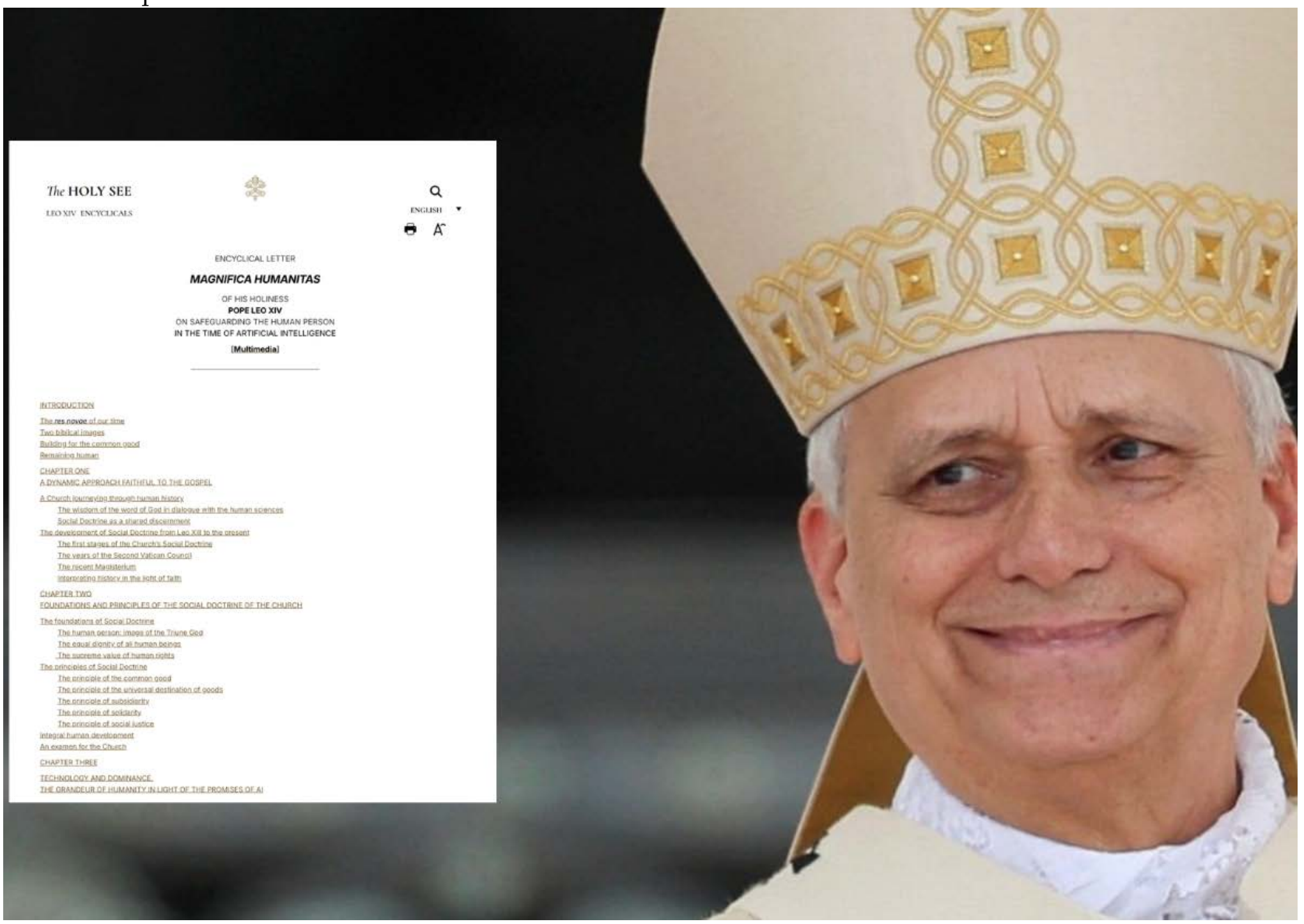
But perhaps the real target of Magnifica Humanitas is not the technology but its unholy marriage with the market. Here, the symbolism gets even richer. The first American pope comes from Chicago, the city most associated with neoclassical economics. Yet Leo has directly challenged the assumption that markets alone can be trusted to shape society's technological future. He recognizes that AI raises questions that prices and profits cannot answer. How should societies balance innovation against safety? Who should determine the acceptable uses of autonomous weapons? How should the gains from automation be distributed? What obligations do technology companies have toward the communities they disrupt?

These are not engineering questions. They are moral ones.

To argue that a technology must be deployed simply because it exists is like saying that because humanity invented nuclear weapons, it is obliged to annihilate itself. Technological capability does not eliminate moral responsibility. AI is often presented as an unstoppable force that is sweeping humanity toward a predetermined future, but Magnifica Humanitas warns against such fatalism.

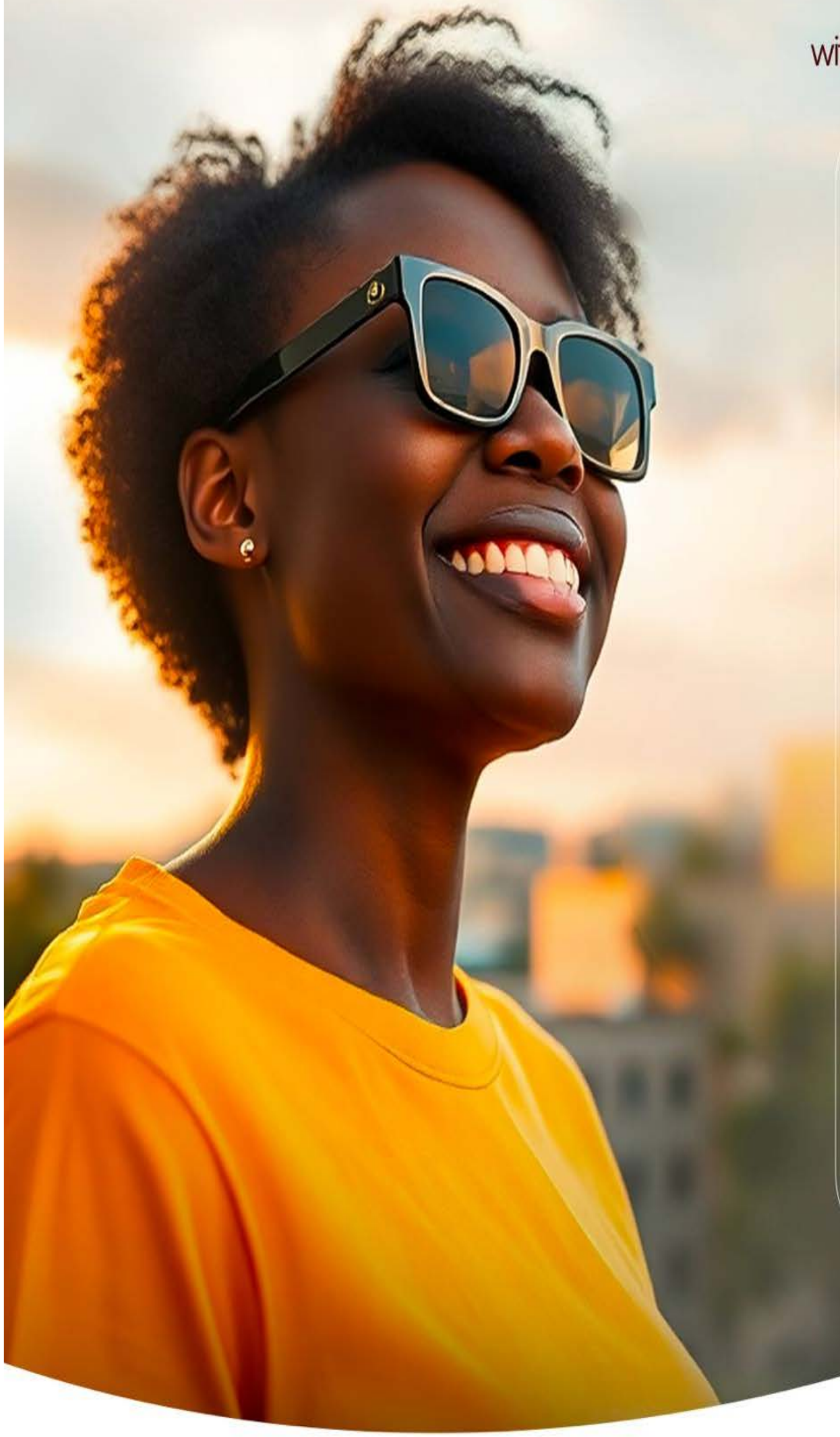
As economists like the Nobel laureates Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson argue, technologically driven outcomes are matters of choice, not fate. A new technology does not decide how it will be used. Humans do. The battle is not between the Vatican and the Valley, but between the Chicago-born Pope and the Chicago School of economics. Leo, ironically, is seeking to officiate a divorce—one between the world's most powerful technology and the profit motive.

Antara Haldar, a professor of empirical legal studies at the University of Cambridge, is a visiting faculty member at Harvard University and the author of the forthcoming Everyman: The Untold Story of Economics (Simon & Schuster, September 2026).



Nairobi to Lomé, 4 weekly nonstop flights

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays



with **immediate connections to**

Abidjan
Abuja
Accra
Bamako
Banjul
Bangui
Bissau
Brazzaville
Conakry
Cotonou
Dakar
Douala
Freetown
Kinshasa
Lagos
Libreville
Luanda
Malabo
Monrovia
N'djamena
Niamey
Nauakchott Service starts 02AUG
Ouagadougou
Pointe Noire
Praia
São Tomé
Yaoundé

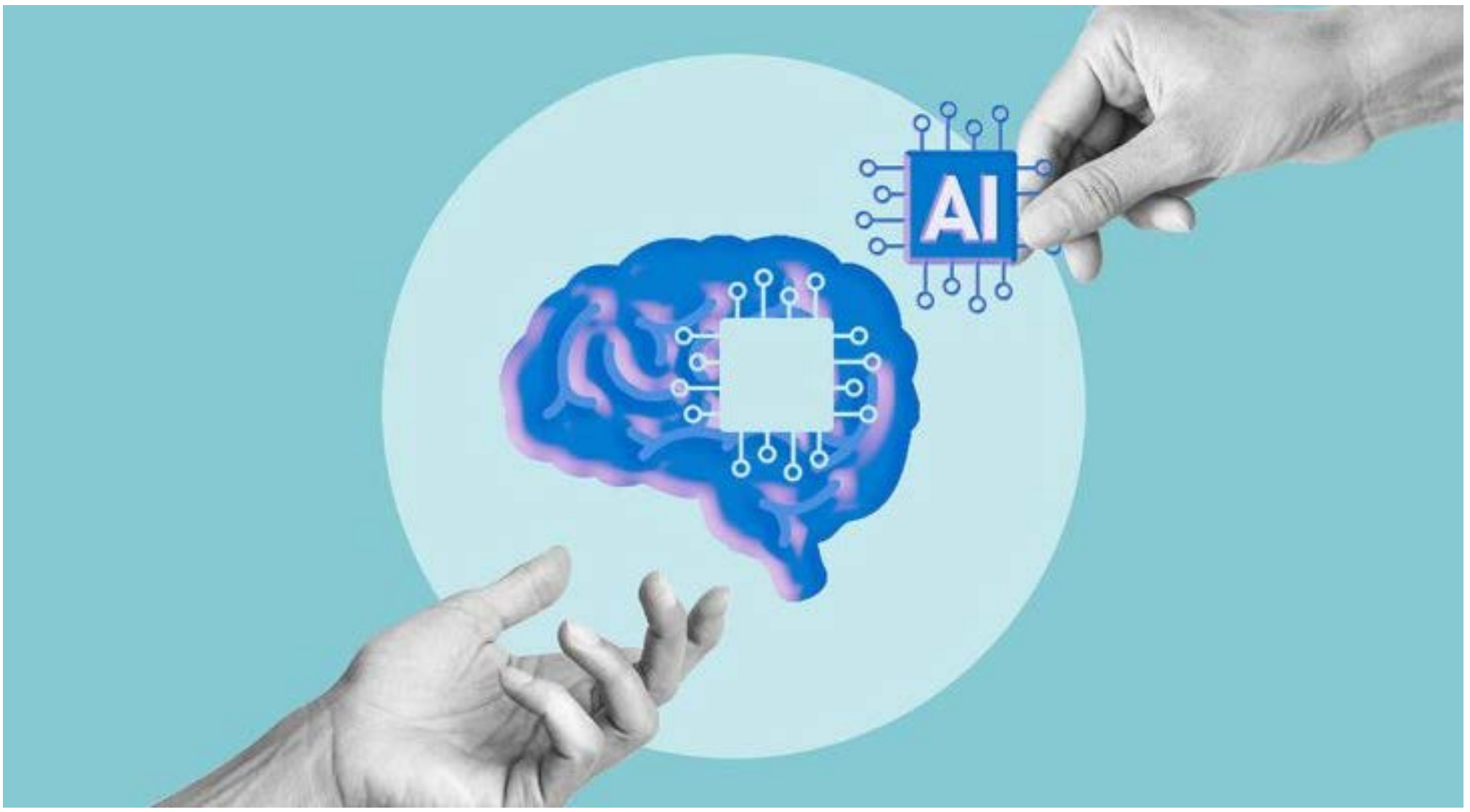
BOOK NOW YOUR SEAT on our website ! **www.flyasky.com**

ASKY
The Pan African Airline


GHANA
YOU CAN NOW CONTACT
OUR CALL CENTER
+233 (0) 596 993 488
AD 1957
FREEDOM AND JUSTICE

Cognition for Sale

By Sami Mahroum



In his seminal 1956 paper "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two," American psychologist George Miller made a deceptively simple argument: our working memory can hold only seven pieces of information at once. In effect, Miller identified a hard constraint on the human mind's processing capacity, showing that short-term cognition operates within surprisingly narrow limits.

At roughly the same time, the Nobel laureate economist Herbert A. Simon arrived at a strikingly similar conclusion. His theory of bounded rationality held that decision-makers never optimize in the sense that classical economics imagines, because cognition itself is a scarce resource. Faced with more variables than they can simultaneously process, human beings do not search for the best possible answer. Instead, they settle for an answer that is good enough within the limits of their cognitive resources. As Simon put it, "A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention."

In the 1980s, educational psychologist John Sweller pushed this logic further with his cognitive load theory. Sweller's theory holds that when informational demands exceed the limits of working memory, the mind becomes overwhelmed and performance deteriorates.

Cognitive Capitalism

Despite approaching the problem from different directions, Miller, Simon, and Sweller all described the same underlying condition: a widening gap between the complexity of modern societies and people's cognitive capacities.

It was against this backdrop that heterodox economists in the early 2000s began to argue that capitalism was entering a new phase. In an influential 2005 paper, Carlo Vercellone—an economist at Université de Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint Denis—drew on Karl Marx's concept of the "general intellect" to contend that collective human intelligence has displaced the factory as the central engine of value creation, giving rise to what he termed "cognitive capitalism."

But Vercellone's thesis extended beyond the rise of the knowledge economy. Capital, he argued, could never fully own or control the most productive dimensions of cognition: tacit knowledge, relational judgment, and lived experience. Unlike machinery, knowledge could not be fully separated from the workers who possessed it and thus could not be codified into procedures or transferred at will. Cognition, in his view, remained the one productive input resistant to complete commodification precisely because it was irreducibly human.

Vercellone, of course, could not have foreseen the rise of AI. Before the emergence of large language models, the limits of codifying human cognition manifested as informational overload: too many variables to process, too much data to interpret, and too much complexity for workers and decision-makers to navigate. Today, however, what once seemed inseparable from human intellect can increasingly be extracted, replicated, and deployed at scale.

In a sense, AI has introduced a form of cognitive compression, or "zipping," that converts tacit human understanding—once confined to individuals and institutions—into something that can be sold by the token. As a result, a new market has emerged around what Vercellone believed could never be commodified: human cognition itself.

The Market for Human Thought

From the clay tablet and the printed book to the encyclopedia and the search engine, humans have sought

Continue on Page 14

Continued from Page 13

to externalize cognition. But while a textbook contains knowledge and a database stores information, both remain passive repositories. AI systems, by contrast, can perform increasingly complex cognitive tasks without continuous human guidance.

Cognitive science provides a valuable lens for understanding what AI firms actually package and sell. British psychologist Alan Baddeley's model of working memory is particularly useful in this regard, showing that human cognition consists of several distinct but interconnected functions.

Baddeley's model identifies three main cognitive layers. The first is the capacity to hold and process verbal information, which allows us to read a sentence, retain it, and build on it. The second is the ability to synthesize information from multiple sources, integrating disparate inputs into a coherent whole. And above both sits what Baddeley called the "central executive": the part of the mind responsible for setting goals, allocating attention, responding to new situations, and deciding what matters and why.

These layers are not interchangeable, and they are being commodified in very different ways. AI can now reproduce the first two, processing and synthesizing vast amounts of information without the constraints of human memory and at a fraction of what companies currently pay research analysts, policy advisers, and strategy teams. What it cannot yet do is define priorities, exercise judgment, and navigate uncertainty.

The real disruption lies beyond routine automation, in the growing commodification of cognitively demanding, knowledge-intensive labor. While workers whose economic value lies primarily in processing and synthesizing information are increasingly vulnerable to AI-driven displacement, those whose value lies in directing and overseeing complex processes remain far less vulnerable—at least for now.

But obsolescence may pose a bigger threat to business models built on selling cognitive labor by the hour than displacement, as workers and organizations move from the demand side to the supply side of the cognitive market. An independent researcher who sells their analytical capacity by the hour could serve multiple clients at once without working more hours by packaging their expertise into an AI-augmented product. Likewise, a small consultancy that relies on analytical depth alone could harness AI tools to operate at a scale previously available only to much larger firms.

The New Knowledge Economy

The knowledge economy was conceived for a world in which expertise commanded a premium, not one in which cognition itself has become infrastructure. This shift marks the emergence of a new form of economic participation, defined less by performing cognitive labor than by controlling the systems that package, scale, and distribute it.

The cognitive market, however, is not a single market. It has two distinct layers governed by conflicting logics. At the lower layer, organized around the general cognitive functions Baddeley identified, something resembling what Vercellone and his co-authors called "commonfare" is beginning to emerge, though not by political design.

Developed across a series of collaborative works during the 2010s, the commonfare concept rests on the idea that cognitive value is produced collectively and draws on a shared intellectual inheritance. Therefore, the systems that generate and distribute it should be governed as a common good rather than as private property.

Market forces are now producing a version of this on their own. Once an AI model is trained, adding users costs relatively little, incentivizing firms to scale as aggressively as possible. Unsurprisingly, the most reproducible layers of cognition are also the ones being rapidly democratized: a researcher in Nairobi can perform many of the same analytical tasks as a partner at McKinsey.

Yet the same technology that democratizes access to expertise is also eroding the scarcity on which many professionals built their careers. The tacit knowledge of millions of analysts, researchers, lawyers, and advisers—the very thing Vercellone argued could never truly be separated from human judgment and lived experience—has been harvested to train AI models owned by a handful of corporations.

Capital, in this sense, has not merely commodified human cognition. It has appropriated it, much like the enclosure of common land once dispossessed those whose labor had made it valuable.

Continue on Page 15

Continued from Page 14

This dynamic is already visible at the cognitive market's specialist layer, where AI systems are being trained to replicate highly specific forms of expertise: the oncologist's ability to recognize rare patterns, the geopolitical analyst's strategic intuition, and the M&A lawyer's feel for hidden risk.

Such hard-won capabilities are now being systematically extracted and encoded into commercial AI products like Bloomberg's financial-analysis models and the legal-services platform Harvey. These are proprietary systems built by capturing and concentrating forms of cognitive capital that were unevenly distributed in the first place.

The cognitive market is therefore democratizing at the bottom while concentrating at the top. Those most vulnerable are mid-level knowledge workers—analysts, researchers, junior professionals—whose market value derives from the cognitive functions AI can perform more cheaply. The primary beneficiaries are those already at the top of the cognitive hierarchy, who can now monetize their expertise at a scale they would never have achieved on their own.

The Scarcest Commodity

Whether or not one accepts their broader political premise, Vercellone and his co-authors raise a fundamental question: If the knowledge used to train AI systems is collectively produced, who is entitled to the returns?

That question becomes even more pressing as cognitive compression improves over time. In a recent working paper, Nobel laureate economist Daron Acemoglu and his co-authors argue that when AI systems consistently outperform average humans, the incentives to develop and maintain expertise begin to erode. After all, why spend years developing internal analytical capacity when you can rent it?

The result is what the authors call "knowledge collapse." The more effective cognitive zipping becomes, the less incentive institutions and individuals have to preserve the raw material on which it depends. In their telling, analytical capacity risks atrophying not because AI has failed, but because it has succeeded to such an extent that society no longer feels the need to cultivate it.

None of this is inevitable, provided institutions follow three key principles. The first is to adopt AI gradually while simultaneously developing the internal capacity to challenge, supervise, and evaluate increasingly agentic systems before entrusting them with consequential tasks.

The second principle is to bolster institutional decision-making. While AI can handle tasks like reading, synthesis, and pattern recognition far more efficiently than humans and with relatively little risk, strategic judgment and interpretive reasoning are different. Those capacities must be deliberately maintained and strengthened, not quietly handed over to machines.

Lastly, institutions must invest in oversight. The ability to question, verify, and interpret AI outputs is itself a cognitive skill, and an organization that cannot tell good analysis from bad effectively loses the capacity to govern itself.

What Marx Got Right

In his unfinished notebooks from the 1850s, known as the Grundrisse, Marx predicted that collective human knowledge would become the central productive force in capitalist economies. What he did not foresee was that this knowledge would be compressed, priced by subscription, and sold back to institutions drowning in more information than they could process. The cognitive surplus that organizations can no longer absorb has become, in effect, the commodity being bought and sold.

This emerging economic reality not only reshapes how institutions function but also determines which forms of cognitive labor retain value, which kinds of expertise remain scarce, and who gets to participate in the market as sellers. Once the cognitive functions required for routine knowledge work become universally available at negligible cost, what remains genuinely scarce is that which cannot be reproduced: the ability to ask the question no one thought to ask, see what others have overlooked, and know what to do when there is no precedent.

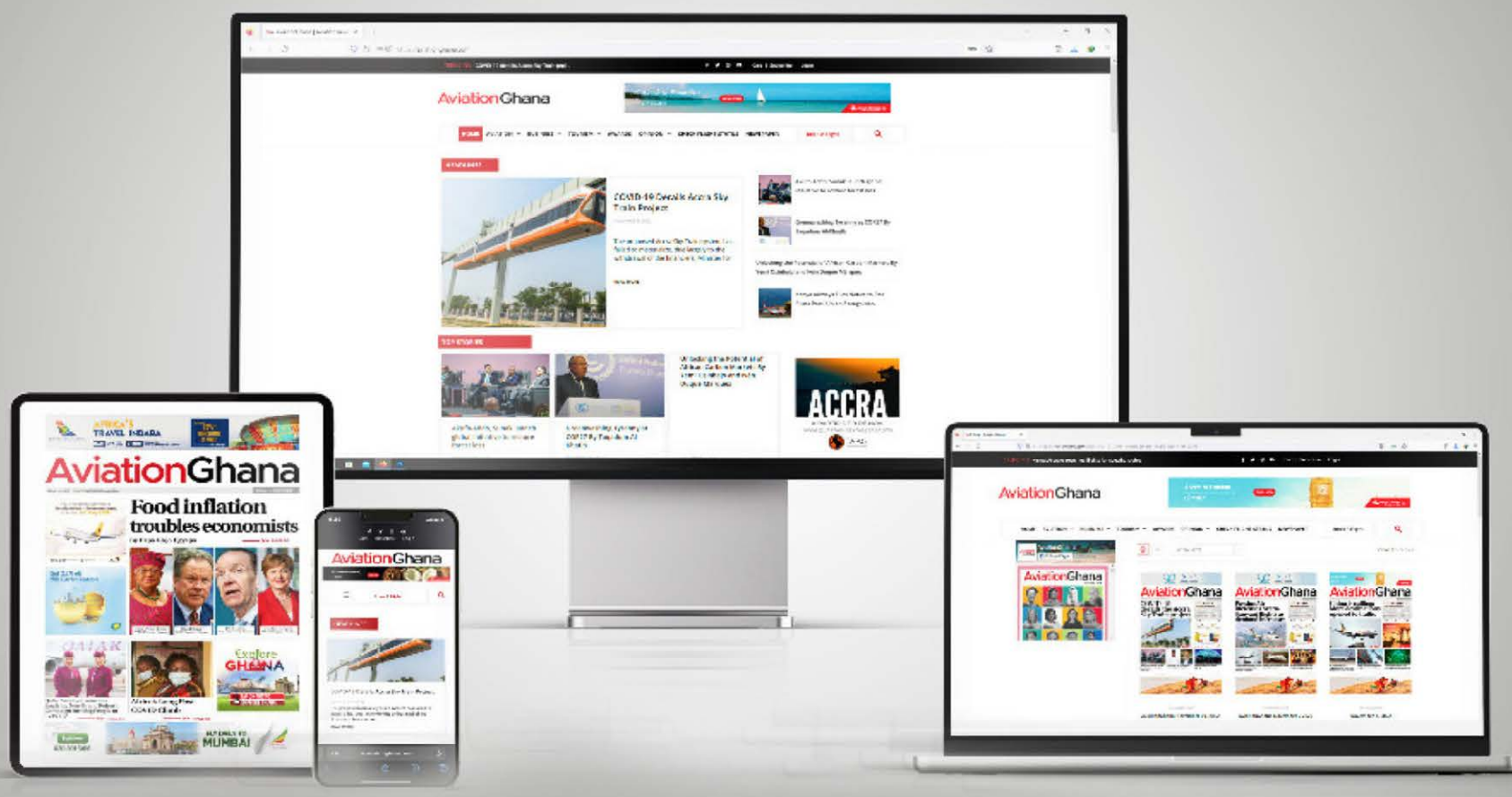
The real risk, as Acemoglu and his co-authors note, is that institutions may not recognize what they are losing until it is too late. As AI assumes more of the analytical burden, the distinctly human capacities at the top of Baddeley's model of the mind could atrophy. Over time, we may lose the ability to make sense of complexity by ourselves.

Yet those capacities are also becoming more valuable than ever. In a global economy where AI can package, replicate, and distribute knowledge at near-zero marginal cost, the ability to think independently may soon become the scarcest commodity of all.

Sami Mahroum, Founder of Spark X, previously held posts at INSEAD, the OECD, and Nesta.

AviationGhana

Full Digital Access



Download a **Free Copy** on www.aviationghana.com
To advertise in the special Saturday-Sunday Edition
Email: aviationghana.info@gmail.com
whatsApp: +233 2433 76878

www.aviationghana.com

AviationGhana

Your Credible Source of Aviation & Tourism News in West Africa is live on

pressreader

QATAR AIRWAYS القطرية | TURKISH AIRLINES | BRITISH AIRWAYS | IBERIA