

Musk vs. Schwab at World Government Summit — Two Competing Visions for the Future

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Billionaire Elon Musk and World Economic Forum (WEF) Chairman Klaus Schwab faced off this week, presenting competing visions for the future at this year's [World Government Summit](#) (WGS).

Convened from Feb. 13-15 in Dubai under the slogan "[Shaping Future Governments](#)," the WGS brought together prominent figures in politics, business and global governance in a format akin to that of the recent [WEF annual meeting](#).

The [WGS bills itself](#) as "a global knowledge exchange platform dedicated to shaping the future of government worldwide."

Participants comprised over 300 speakers and 10,000 attendees, including 250 government ministers and representatives from 80 international, regional and governmental organizations, including the U.N., WEF, [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), [World Bank](#) and [International Monetary Fund](#).

Musk, Schwab and other leaders debated conflicting hopes and concerns for the future. The WGS itself also predicted what the world will look like by 2071, released as part of the WGS' "[Government in 2071](#)" initiative.

These projections foresee a dystopian future of catastrophic climate change, mass migration, mass layoffs due to automation, ensuing social unrest and the merging of humans and technology as the "best-case scenario" for 2071.

Musk: AI, one-world government pose threats to humanity

Musk addressed the ongoing [rise of artificial intelligence](#) (AI) and the [dangers of a one-world](#)

[government](#), speaking by video to the WGS on Wednesday.

“One of the biggest risks to the future of civilization is AI,” Musk told WGS attendees. “But AI is both positive or negative — it has great promise, great capability but also, with that comes great danger.”

He commented on ChatGPT, the increasingly popular AI tool developed by OpenAI. Musk co-founded OpenAI with former PayPal partner Peter Thiel, but has since left its board of directors, the New York Post reported.

“ChatGPT, I think, has illustrated to people just how advanced AI has become. AI has been advanced for a while; it just didn’t have a user interface that was accessible to most people,” said Musk.

“What ChatGPT has done is just put an accessible user interface on AI technology that has been present for a few years,” he added.

Musk called upon governments to develop safety regulations for AI, comparing its rise to the development of nuclear technology.

“You look at, say, the discovery of nuclear physics. You had nuclear power generation but also nuclear bombs,” said Musk, adding:

“I think we need to regulate AI safety, frankly. Think of any technology which is potentially a risk to people, like if it’s aircraft or cars or medicine, we have regulatory bodies that oversee the public safety of cars and planes and medicine.

“I think we should have a similar set of regulatory oversight for artificial intelligence, because I think it is actually a bigger risk to society.”

This is not the first time Musk has made such remarks about AI. In March 2022, Musk said that “[artificial intelligence going wrong](#)” is one of the three biggest threats facing humanity, along with falling birth rates and the rise of “religious extremism.”

Others have expressed concerns about AI “going wrong” — alleging that bias is baked into the technology. The [New York Post reported](#), for instance, that ChatGPT refused to write an article about Hunter Biden in the newspaper’s critical style, but it was willing to write the article from the perspective of CNN.

[Business Insider](#) argues that AI tools like ChatGPT must be “woke” in order to attract major investors.

Major investments are pouring into such AI technologies. Microsoft announced last month it is [investing \\$10 billion in OpenAI](#), while Google is working on a competitor to ChatGPT known as “[Bard](#).”

Musk, in his talk to WGS delegates, also addressed what he sees as the [dangers of one-world government](#).

“I know this is called the World Government Summit, but I think we should be maybe a little bit concerned about actually becoming too much of a single world government,” he said.

“We want to avoid creating a civilizational risk by having, frankly — this may sound a little odd — too much cooperation between governments.”

Instead, Musk called for the maintenance of “civilizational diversity.” He said:

“I think we want to be a little bit cautious about being too much of a single civilization, because if we are too much of a single civilization, then the whole thing may collapse.

“Obviously not suggesting war or anything like that, but I think we want to be a little bit wary of actually cooperating too much. It sounds a little odd, but we want to have some amount of civilizational diversity, such that if something does go wrong with some part of civilization, that the whole thing doesn’t collapse and humanity keeps moving forward.”

[Musk also had some advice](#) for political leaders and other prominent figures: speak in your own voice.

“I think people should speak in their own voice,” he said. “I would encourage CEOs, legislators, to speak authentically. Do the tweets yourself and convey your message directly.”

[Musk tweeted](#) that he chose to make these remarks at the WGS because it “seemed like the right venue.”

He also hinted at his [plans for Twitter](#), indicating he expects to find a CEO to succeed him “probably toward the end of this year.”

“I think I need to stabilize the organization and just make sure it’s in a financially healthy place,” he said. “I’m guessing probably toward the end of this year would be good timing to find someone else to run the company.”

Schwab: Technology can help the elite ‘be the master of the world’

Perhaps confirming Musk’s fears, in his keynote speech to the WGS, [Schwab said](#) mastering technologies such as AI can help global elite “[be the master of the world](#).”

“We are at the beginning,” he said. “When you look at technology transformation, it usually takes place in the terms of an S-curve. And we are just now where we move into the exponential phase.”

This phase, Schwab said, “requires us to strengthen cooperation and enhance coordination at the level of governments, countries and institutions to maintain the frameworks of [international cooperation](#), which in turn is reflected in the paths of development comprehensively.”

Schwab referred to the recently concluded WEF annual meeting to contextualize his remarks, stating, “we discussed our ability to adapt to these global challenges, in light of various crises that require new mechanisms and innovative methods to help us reach a better future and serve the aspirations of humanity.”

Schwab said the coming decades will witness major “structural transformations” related to climate change. He argued for achieving the Paris Climate Agreement goals and reaching “zero carbon emissions.”

New technologies, said Schwab, will continue to play a vital role in these transformations.

“A few years ago, we considered some technologies a science fiction that was difficult to implement,” said Schwab. “But today, it has become a reality that we live through artificial intelligence, new space technology, and industrial biology, which heralds a major change coming during the next 10 years, and requires governments to be ambitious in their decisions.”

Schwab heralded AI’s role in helping bring about the [Fourth Industrial Revolution](#), saying:

“Artificial intelligence, but not only artificial intelligence, but also the metaverse, neospace technologies, and I could go on and on ... synthetic biology. Our life in ten years from now will be completely different, very much affected. And who masters those technologies, in some way, will be the master of the world.”

Like Musk he expressed some concerns, but his “[deep concern](#)” was that new technologies such as AI might “escape” the control of the global elite.

“My deep concern is that [regarding] #4IR technologies, if we don’t work together on a global scale, if we do not formulate, shape together the necessary policies, they will escape our power to master those technologies,” he said.

These same elites must therefore “shape the necessary policies to make sure that those technologies serve humankind.”

That’s how, Schwab said, they can show the public, which will “feel overwhelmed by change” because it can’t “understand really what’s going on,” why “those technologies can serve for the good.”

The WEF is an enthusiastic proponent of [technologies such as AI](#) and [the metaverse](#).

Schwab’s remarks at the WGS about how new technologies can help the global elite “be the master of the world” closely mirrored his statements at this year’s WEF meeting, where he opined what it means “[to master the future](#).”

Tedros: COVID ‘will not be the last pandemic’

[WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#) also spoke at the WGS meeting, saying that COVID-19 “unfortunately ... will not be the last pandemic or the major health emergency.”

He added:

“Other threats, such as climate change, will continue to increase in frequency and intensity.

“We owe it to those who we have lost and those who will come after us to learn the lessons and make the changes that should keep the world safer.”

[U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres](#) told attendees the world is “confronting a confluence of crises unlike any in our lifetimes.”

“Conflict is raging, poverty and hunger are rising, divisions are deepening, and the

[climate emergency](#) keeps worsening,” he said. “We have a duty to act. We must forge a path towards greater cooperation, rooted in solidarity.”

To do so, he said:

“We must avoid short-term policymaking that delays taking on the big tests we face — and ultimately makes those challenges even more intractable. We must strengthen global governance and reinvigorate multilateralism for the 21st century. And we must act at the speed and scale that our fast-moving times demand.

“This applies to every challenge we face — from tackling the climate catastrophe and advancing sustainable development, to achieving peace and safeguarding human rights, including the rights of future generations. ... Government action is critical, but not enough.”

“We need everyone — across the private sector, civil society, and beyond — to work together for the common good,” Guterres added. “This is our common agenda.”

And [Arturo Bris](#) of the IMD World Competitiveness Center, also speaking at the WGS, said that a “shock” is needed to spur the “transition” to a new “world order.”

Aside from speeches by key figures, the WGS meeting encompassed several [forums](#), including “[SDGs \[Sustainable Development Goals\]](#) in Action,” “Future by Design Global Forum,” “Future of Work Forum,” “Future of Education Forum,” “Food System Transformation Forum” and “Gathering of the Greatest Minds.”

WGS proceedings were also accompanied by [several reports](#) that were published to complement this year’s meeting. [PWC](#) wrote one such report, suggesting that “policymakers and regulators will have to learn from non-traditional, non-government actors who have already built a foothold in the metaverse.”

[Roberto Azevêdo](#), executive vice president and chief corporate affairs officer of [PepsiCo](#) and former director general of the World Trade Organization, wrote a report that stressed “the need for government and businesses to work as partners, while both must better engage the will of the people.”

“This partnership must seek structural changes that aim at long-term solutions, free from the logics of electoral cycles,” Azevêdo argued.

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