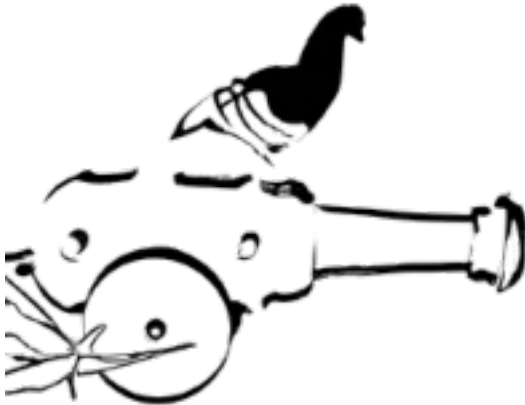


War and Peace
in the
Twenty-First Century

by
Philippe Rolet

with help from
Gerald Proxim-Thompson III



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Special Thanks

To Jean-Noël and Marina for inspiration,

To Guillaume and Etienne for feedback,

To Shokooh and Jean for love.

About this book

”War and Peace in the 21st Century” is a short novel about war, peace, and artificial intelligence. It takes place in Paris in a fictional near future beginning in December 2025. It relates how a major geopolitical incident in Asia was unexpectedly predicted by an AI. Jean-Noël, Minister of New Technologies in the French government, tries to make use of the AI to help the French president solve the situation. This book is the first part of the two-part novel.

A new kind of novel

This novel is one of the first of its kind: it was almost entirely generated by a machine.

If you’re looking to read a great short fiction, a masterpiece from a talented author... frankly, this book is not the best bet.

But if you’re looking to discover a new, fledgling and fascinating writing style, the writing style of Artificial Intelligences, dig in.

First, read the foreword to understand what you’re getting into. Then, see for yourself what AIs can write well and what they struggle with, check out the making-of explaining how the book was generated, but mostly, have fun reading the story!

About the Author

Philippe Rolet is a researcher in Artificial Intelligence, an entrepreneur and a software engineer. He obtained a Ph.D. in Machine Learning in 2010. In 2014, he cofounded Artefact,

a Data and AI consulting company, which he co-led as CTO until 2020. In 2021, he founded Machine Zero, a company focused on exploring algorithms that make machines intelligent and ways to use them.

An Essential Foreword

What is most interesting with this novel is not the plot, nor the style, nor the characters.

It is that this novel was written by an Artificial Intelligence.

More than ninety-percent of its contents were generated on the afternoon of Thursday, December 8th, and the morning of Friday, December 9th 2022.

Hopefully, the plot, style and characters aren't worthless. But the book's goal is to colorfully show what Artificial Intelligence can do.

You will be able to notice all the cracks that show that a machine wrote it. Seeing those cracks is in itself quite fun—at least for me—and helps understanding what we still do better than machines, and what they now do as well as us.

Thus I hope you will also notice all the talent—and I do not mean my talent. The AI made up most of the stuff. It wrote fifty pages in the time I would have been able to write one. Most of it was readable and coherent on the first try. Hat tip to OpenAI, the company that created GPT-3, which is the name of the AI that I used to create this book.

Of course, I helped the machine. I gave the main ideas and the general plot, I told it when to describe a place or when to have people talk. I checked for mistakes in event consistency and style and corrected them—those I could spot at least. And I guided it to generate something readable. This is why the book has me as author, although truthfully this would be debatable; executive director would be a more appropriate label for the role I had. Or maybe a teacher helping a high-schooler write an elaborate fiction. Although I am not quite fit to judge,

I would argue the level of writing displayed in this book is indeed the one of a high schooler. You will see for yourself :)

Obviously, a good writer could write a short story like this pretty fast too, and it would probably be much better. But that a book could be made end to end, by a novice who never wrote fiction, in just a few days thanks to a machine, is impressive. I am also confident that with a few more iterations, the quality of the plot and writing can increase tenfold to generate other books in the same amount of time. However, while I think this technology will soon be able to write good fiction, my experience with it tells me it won't write exceptional fiction. No chef-d'oeuvres on sight yet.

When you read the book, please stay open-minded about its quality, especially if you yourself are a writer, a politician or a native english speaker. Imagine a high schooler writing a story about geopolitics in English, tutored by a teacher who is neither of the three (novelist, politician, english native). The book's value, as in school, is to understand what the pupil managed to do, as much as what he missed. And I do believe the book is enjoyable to read – it reads fast, and there are many surprises.

Among those, many passages will sound weird, that I intentionally left untouched: surprising choices of words, little inconsistencies, etc. Firstly because I didn't want to correct too much, since the goal was not that I write a book myself. And I indeed corrected very little. But also, when I proofread the book I met those passages with a smile, just like we sometimes enjoy the imperfections of a close one, because we see it as amusing and as part of who they are. I hope you will come to see it this way as well.

Overall, I would roughly estimate that I had to write or rewrite about 2% of the book, and to correct another 5%. Therefore, more than 90% of it is purely the AI's writing.

So if there is a part you think is well-written, it is still most likely the AI, and not me, who wrote it. Interestingly, as the chapters wrote themselves, I had less and less corrections to make, as I learned how to use the AI. It should be noted that these kind of algorithms have no documentation for final tasks like writing books: the only way to learn how to use them is to use them, just as we learn to ride bikes as kids.

By the way, the AI didn't just generate the writing given a few ideas I gave. It also generated the chapter titles, found a quote from Tolstoy for each chapter given its text, and even created all the images, including the dove and cannon of the book cover. It generated descriptions of images fitting each chapter, then generated the images from those descriptions. It even helped me edit the book by teaching me how to use the software I needed and generating templates.

This foreword, though, was not generated. Now, have a look at what the machine can and cannot (yet) do.

Contents

An Essential Foreword	vii
Contents	1
Prologue	3
1 The AI's Insightful Suggestion	7
2 Steeling for War: Digital Defense in the Face of Kinmen Island	13
3 A Spark of AI in the Dark	21
4 A Tale of Two Crises	29
5 A Christmas of Hope?	39
6 A Fateful Meeting at DGSE Headquarters	47
Making-of	57
Generation Notice	67

Prologue

"Can you give me a famous quote from Tolstoy?" asked Jean-Noël.

The AI replied, "One of the most well-known quotes from Tolstoy is: 'Truth lies within us.' This quote comes from his book War and Peace. In this book, Tolstoy writes: 'Man is the measure of all things. Truth lies in us, not in books.'"

"Have you read War and Peace?" Jean-Noël asked.

"I'm sorry but I am only an artificial intelligence program and I cannot read books. I am only designed to answer users' questions autonomously using information that has been trained into me. I cannot have my own experiences or knowledge outside of what has been preprogrammed into me," the AI answered him back.

"Hmmm okay." Jean-Noël said to himself skeptically. "Still not quite there yet."

As Minister of New Technologies, he thought it necessary to keep up with all recent innovations, such as this chatbot, as much as possible. He then asked the AI, "What do you know about war and peace?"

The AI responded with: "War and peace are philosophical concepts which define relationships between different nations or human communities; war being violent conflict between these groups while peace being absence of such conflict."

Jean-Noël nodded as he looked at the city of Paris out through office windows, where a light rain was falling despite some sun showing through the clouds. He looked back at the AI before him again, asking "What are potential advantages and disadvantages for deploying intelligent weapons?"

The AI answered : "Intelligent weapons can offer better accuracy as well as greater operational efficiency - they can also reduce time required for making important military decisions. However there are certain risks associated with this technology being misused or manipulated by third parties ."

Jean-Noël was still looking out the window, lost in thought. As he reflected on the risks associated with this technology, the familiar phrase uttered by the AI came to his mind: "Man is the measure of all things".

When he looked around again, he was struck by the beauty and tranquility of his office. It was a spacious room tastefully decorated: white walls adorned with classical paintings; an oriental rug covering polished wood flooring; antique mahogany furniture standing proudly while old books lined up shelves. Sunlight streamed through wide open windows flooding the room with its gentle warmth.

Outside, lush gardens spread before him: exotic flowers blossomed here and there in this vibrant paradise; imposing bushes formed a protective wall against the azure sky; and far away one could see the Eiffel Tower's shimmering silhouette towering over Paris. Everything seemed so peaceful that one might almost believe nothing could disturb its serenity.

His eyes drifted absentmindedly towards his phone screen which had just vibrated. He read a message saying "Cryptocurrencies are now available for trade on financial markets." He knew such technological innovation could be a double edged sword - offering incredible opportunities for investors but also for unscrupulous actors alike.

Another alert appeared on his screen : "A cyber attack has taken place against French primary school" – he was feeling an oppressive weight settle onto his chest as he imagined the tragic consequences if this had not been detected soon enough. The ever expanding digital threats would never cease to grow

– urgent measures needed to be taken to protect our systems from such attacks.

A third notification arrived in quick succession: "China is developing technology that will allow local authorities to more easily monitor the behavior of citizens". Once again, he was seized by a deep sense of unease - how were we going to ensure our freedom in the face of this all-encompassing surveillance? What would be the price to pay for preserving our privacy? And ultimately, how could we find a balance between security and individual liberties?

As he pondered these questions without answers, Jean-Noël suddenly remembered the familiar quote that kept coming back to him: "Man is the measure of all things". Yes! He thought with force; yes! We must always keep in mind that we are responsible for shaping the destiny of mankind - after all, "life is too short to waste time on useless wars".

Jean Noël's phone began vibrating abruptly pulling him out his thoughts. It was Marina calling for an update. "How are you doing?" she asked as soon as he picked up. She sounded worried and sad, as if she had guessed what Jean-Noël was doing at work while most civil servants had already gone home long ago.

Jean Noël sighed softly: "I'm okay... I'm still at work." There was an awkward silence between them for few seconds; then Marina continued: "I know you're busy with your job but I worry about you – I just want to tell you that I understand and support you whatever happens." Her voice trembled when she said those words which brought a wave intense love into Jean Noël; he felt deeply moved by her attentive and comforting gesture.

"Thank You my dear," he murmured affectionately before adding: "I can't wait until tonight comes! Did Jules seem excited?" The conversation went on about their joint project

organizing a big party celebrating Christmas properly with their respective friends and families – they talked food, music, guests. . . As they happily discussed together, Jean-Noël almost forgot momentarily political issues which he should confront later. After all “Peace always starts from one step”.

1. The AI's Insightful Suggestion



"We cannot know for certain where we will find ourselves in the future, but we must live in the present and do our best to make it better."

The flat Pierre rented was located near Opéra Garnier in Paris – an old building with thick stone walls and creaky wooden floors which gave it a certain charm despite its age. The living room was spacious yet cozy at the same time; two large windows overlooked the street below while several pieces of furniture filled up most of the space: an armchair by one window where Pierre often sat reading or writing late into night; a sofa facing towards them both covered in colorful cushions from all around Europe – souvenirs from past travels; bookshelves lined up against one wall full of novels and nonfiction alike.

In front of these stood an antique coffee table made out of dark wood which served as dining table when needed too - although there were also four chairs tucked away somewhere else, if ever more people than expected came over. A small kitchenette lay just next door, complete with fridge and oven, plus some basic utensils for cooking simple meals on days when going outside seemed like too much effort!

Further down this hallway were two bedrooms: Pierre's own bedroom, plus another guestroom used mostly by friends who visited him during weekends or longer holidays whenever possible - but even so not very often given how busy everyone's lives usually are nowadays.

Pierre stood in the middle of his bedroom, surrounded by a sea of discarded wrapping paper and boxes. He had been searching for hours for the perfect Christmas gift to take along to Jean-Noël and Marina's party next week. Nothing seemed quite right; he wanted something special, something unique - but what?

He glanced around at all the items strewn across his bed: books, clothes, trinkets... nothing was suitable enough. Pierre sighed heavily as he ran a hand through his dark hair in frustration. Suddenly an idea occurred to him - why not ask the new AI chatbot he had been toying with, GPT3 ?

His laptop was open on one side, its screen lit up with lines and lines of code. On the other side were various pieces of hardware - wires, resistors, capacitors - connected to each other in intricate patterns that only Pierre could understand.

He had been toying on GPT3 for a few days now; it was an AI chatbot he used to help him with mundane tasks, and he hoped that soon it would be able to do much more than just answer simple questions - but for now he was content with what it'd achieved so far.

He quickly went to his laptop and opened the chat window.

He typed in a few keywords, “Christmas gift for Jean-Noël”, and waited as GPT3 worked its magic. A few moments later it returned with an answer: “A book about war and peace in the 21st century would be perfect.”

Pierre smiled to himself; this was exactly what he had been looking for! He searched online until he found just the right one – War and Peace In The 21st Century by Jules Dufour – then ordered it straight away. Now all that remained was to wrap it up nicely.

He quickly rummaged through his drawers until he found some festive wrapping paper and began to carefully wrap the book. As he worked, Pierre couldn’t help but feel a little excited – this was going to be the perfect gift!

The sun began to set outside as Pierre finished wrapping the book and placed it carefully into his bag alongside some other items he wanted to bring along for Jean-Noël and Marina’s party: a bottle of wine from their favorite vineyard in Provence; some chocolates from Belgium; a box full of home-made cookies baked by his mother.

Still amazed that the AI had found such a nice idea, he went back to the chat window and started typing, willing to converse with the bot a bit more.

”So, GPT3,” Pierre said out loud as he typed in the chat window. ”What do you think of war and peace in the 21st century?”

The AI quickly responded: “I believe that it is a complex issue with no easy solutions. In order to achieve true peace, we need to address underlying issues such as poverty, inequality, and injustice. We also need strong international cooperation between nations in order for any lasting resolution to be achieved.”

Pierre nodded thoughtfully at this response; it had been quite insightful for an AI bot! He continued typing: ”Do

you think artificial intelligence could help us solve these problems?”

GPT3 replied promptly: “Yes! Artificial intelligence can provide valuable insights into understanding human behavior which can then be used to develop strategies towards achieving greater global harmony and stability. Additionally, AI-driven technologies like machine learning can help us identify patterns or trends within large datasets which may otherwise go unnoticed by humans”

Pierre smiled again. GPT3 was proving itself interesting after all. He continued to converse with GPT3, keen to learn more about the AI’s perspective on current events.

”What do you think of the big news stories this year?” he asked.

GPT3 replied quickly: “This has been a tumultuous year for many countries around the world, from political unrest in Hong Kong and Lebanon to economic crises in Venezuela and Argentina. It is clear that we are living through an era of great change as old systems crumble and new ones emerge”.

Pierre nodded thoughtfully; it seemed like GPT3 was quite knowledgeable about global affairs. He decided to ask another question:

”What do you think of the US-China trade war?”

GPT3 responded: “The ongoing US-China trade war has been a major source of instability for both countries, as well as an economic drag on global markets. It is clear that this conflict will have long lasting repercussions and it remains to be seen how it will ultimately play out”.

Again, impressive. GPT3 kept seeming quite insightful. He asked another question:

”What about Brexit? How do you see its impact on Europe?”

GPT3 replied with some hesitation in its tone: “Brexit

has had a significant impact on Europe, both economically and politically. The UK's departure from the EU has caused considerable disruption to many industries, while also creating uncertainty over future relations between Britain and other European nations”

He continued his questioning by asking ”How about climate change?”. GTP3 answered without any delay: ”Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing humanity today. We must take drastic action now if we are to avoid catastrophic consequences in years to come”. Pierre nodded solemnly at these words – he knew all too well what could happen if nothing changed soon enough.

”Do you think peace can ever truly exist?”

GTP3 replied, seemingly thoughtfully, ”Peace is something that must be actively pursued through dialogue and compromise rather than simply imposed by force or coercion.” Pierre smiled. Clearly this AI was no ordinary chatbot.

Lastly, he asked ”What will be the major event that people will remember from 2025?”

”There are many social, geopolitical, technological events that have marked the year. It is difficult to compare them.”

”For example, what would be the most important geopolitical event? The election of Johnson in the USA is one example.”

”Yes, the election of Mr. Johnson as new US President is a major event.”

”Okay but could you find something more subtle? Something that happened in 2025 without too much attention but which was actually very significant - and you could explain why it matters so much”. If the AI answered right, this would really wow people at the party!

”Alright” said the bot.” For instance, China’s takeover of Kinmen Island could be seen as such an event; it’s a small

island but this incursion by China may portend bigger conflicts ahead – there's certainly some subtlety here."

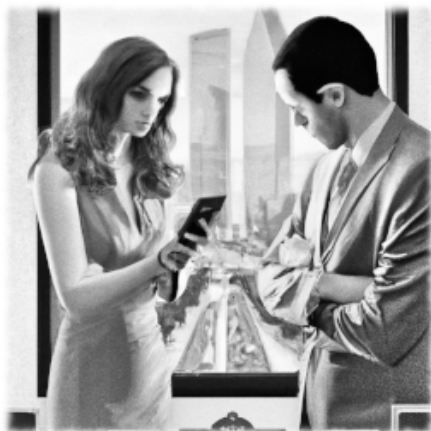
"Kinmen Island?" Pierre thought to himself "I must've set the creativity parameter too high". He had to find something real that happened in 2025... "Where is Kinmen Island?"

"It's a small island off the southwest coast of China."

He googled Kinmen. Yes it was indeed real – quite close to mainland China, and administered by Taiwan... Ok well if this had truly been happening then sure enough it'd have been major news even if not overly subtle... Still makes for good storytelling for the party though.

Three days later, China Daily announced the imminent arrival on Kinmen Island of a new governor mandated by the People's Republic of China to "free the archipelago from negative western influences and anti-chinese separatist behavior". He was accompanied by a sizeable military detachment.

2. Steeling for War: Digital Defense in the Face of Kinmen Island



“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

The Minister of Economics and Finance, Brune Lamaire, was a tall, imposing figure with an air of authority that seemed to fill the room. Her dark hair was pulled back in a tight bun and her piercing blue eyes had seen more than their fair share of political maneuvering. She wore a sharp grey suit with matching heels, her attire carefully chosen for its power-projecting qualities.

Her desk was an impressive mahogany structure, a symbol of her station and influence. It was immaculately organized with files neatly arranged in piles, each one carefully labeled and color-coded for easy reference. A few framed photographs

were scattered around the room; some from political events she had attended, others featuring family members or close friends.

On the wall behind her hung a large portrait of General de Gaulle – it seemed to be watching over Brune Lamaire as if he were protecting her from any potential adversaries who might dare challenge her authority.

Jean-Noël felt intimidated by this formidable figure before him but also respected what she stood for: strength and resilience in times of war and peace alike. He knew that his own career would benefit greatly should he manage to impress this woman before him today. After all, they both shared similar ambitions when it came to achieving success within their respective fields.

Brune Lamaire's body language was confident and assured; her chin held high, she seemed to be looking down on Jean-Noël with a certain level of disdain. Her hands were clasped tightly together in front of her as if she were ready to strike at any moment should the need arise.

Her voice had a tone that could not be ignored – it commanded attention and demanded respect from those around her. It was clear that Brune Lamaire was used to getting what she wanted when it came to matters concerning politics or business alike.

"Have you heard of the recent news about the Chinese taking control of Kinmen?" she asked.

"It was my understanding that the meeting's topic was strengthening the digital defenses of our public infrastructures." said Jean-Noël.

"Yes, of course. But the Chinese incursion in Kinmen warrants our attention."

Jean-Noël nodded, his mind racing with the implications of what Brune had just said. He knew that this was a delicate

situation and one that could have far reaching consequences for France's economy if not handled correctly.

"The Chinese incursion in Kinmen is certainly concerning," Jean-Noël began slowly, "but I think it would be wise to consider all aspects before we make any decisions."

Brune gave him an appraising look before continuing. "I agree," she said firmly, her voice carrying weight and authority. "We must take into account both the geopolitical relationships at play as well as the economic impact on our nation." She paused for a moment to let her words sink in before adding: "And of course, we must also ensure that our technological capacities are up to par so that we can face whatever challenges may come our way."

Jean-Noël nodded again; he understood exactly what she meant by this statement – they needed to strengthen their digital infrastructure if they were going to successfully handle China's move on Kinmen Island. He thought back over recent events – how China had been quietly building up its military presence around Taiwan and now here in Kinmen Island too. . . It seemed like something big was about to happen soon enough but only time would tell exactly when or why it might occur.

He cleared his throat nervously then spoke up once more: "What do you suggest?" he asked Brune cautiously yet confidently - he wanted her opinion on how best France should respond given these new developments surrounding Kinmen island.

She leaned forward slightly across from him and fixed him with a serious gaze; "We need better intelligence gathering capabilities first off" she stated firmly without hesitation , "we cannot afford another surprise attack such as what happened recently during Operation Red Dawn". The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Armies were of course not her responsibility. But the scale of the matter, which would surely

impact the world economies, demanded that she took interest in the matter, she thought.

Jean-Noël nodded, understanding the gravity of her words. He knew that President Macro had been pushing for increased collaboration between the Ministry of New Technologies and the DGSE – France’s premier intelligence agency – in order to better prepare their nation against any potential threats.

“I see,” he said thoughtfully, “and what do you suggest we do? How can I help?” Brune Lamaire smiled slightly at his eagerness; she could tell that he was taking this matter very seriously indeed. She leaned back in her chair and began speaking once more, saying roughly what Jean-Noël expected: “The president wants us to work together with the DGSE on a number of initiatives which will strengthen our digital defenses,” she explained calmly yet firmly. “We must be proactive rather than reactive if we are going to protect ourselves from future threats that may arise from the Kinmen incident. Keep this to yourself, he hasn’t told Jacques Larmée yet.” She paused for a moment before continuing: “It is essential that these initiatives are implemented as soon as possible - time is not on our side here.” Jean-Noël nodded again.

He considered all options carefully before responding: “I believe one way we could collaborate effectively would be by sharing resources such as personnel or technology between both organizations,” Jean-Noël suggested. Brune gave him an approving look then continued talking: “That sounds like an excellent idea,” she agreed readily, adding: “We should also consider setting up joint task forces where members from both agencies can work together towards common objectives”.

Jean-Noël felt encouraged by Brune’s response - it seemed they were finally making some progress when it came to strengthening France’s digital defenses against external aggression. He spoke up once more : “What about training? Are there any

specific skillsets or qualifications needed?”

Brune looked thoughtful for a few moments before replying: “Yes, absolutely.” She went on: “Our people need top notch training so they can stay ahead of whatever new technologies may arise. And let us not forget cyber security - this has become increasingly crucial over recent years and now even more so.” she added. “Which is an excellent transition to get back to the original topic of this meeting.”

Jean-Noël nodded in agreement. He had already been considering a few initiatives to reinforce cybersecurity in public infrastructures, and now seemed the perfect time to bring them up.

“I think we should start by establishing an interdisciplinary team of experts from both the Ministry of New Technologies and the ministries involved - Education, Health, etc.” he began slowly, “to work together on developing better security protocols for our digital systems.” He paused for a moment before continuing: “We could also consider setting up a dedicated cyber defense unit within each agency, with specialized personnel trained specifically in this field.” Brune Lamaire listened intently as Jean-Noël spoke; she was nodding along at certain points which gave him further encouragement. She then added her own ideas into the mix: “In addition to that,” she said thoughtfully, “we may want to invest more resources into research and development related activities – such as artificial intelligence or machine learning technologies - so that we can stay ahead of any potential threats out there”. Jean-Noël agreed wholeheartedly; he knew how important it was not only for France’s safety but also their political capital if they were able to successfully protect themselves against external aggression using cutting edge technology.

Just then his phone buzzed with incoming messages from his friend Pierre saying they needed an urgent meeting about

something important. But Jean-Noël felt like he didn't have enough time right now; Brune Lamaire still had much more ground left to cover when it came to discussing plans regarding strengthening their nation's digital defenses against cyber threats.

He quickly put his phone away and focused back on Brune Lamaire, who was now talking about how Jean-Noël's last initiative for cybersecurity would be the most important one.

"It is essential that we take this seriously," she said firmly, her voice carrying weight and authority. "We cannot allow any further incursions into our digital infrastructure - not only will it have serious implications for our security but also for our economy." She paused briefly before continuing: "This is why I believe your proposal to establish an interdisciplinary team of experts from all ministries involved should be implemented immediately - they must work together towards developing better protocols in order to protect us against cyber threats".

Jean-Noël nodded again; he knew that Brune was right - this needed to be done as soon as possible if France were going to remain safe from potential attacks or even espionage attempts by hostile nations or organizations. He cleared his throat nervously then spoke up once more: "I agree with you completely," he said, "and I am confident that my proposed initiatives will help strengthen France's digital defenses significantly".

Brune gave him an approving look before replying: "Excellent! Then let us move forward with these plans at once", she declared decisively, adding: "We need all hands on deck here so don't hesitate to call upon other departments within the Ministry if necessary." Just then Jean-Noël received another text from Pierre mentioning something about Kinmen Island again...

He couldn't help but feel intrigued. What could possibly have happened there? Pierre had no expertise on geopolitical

matters such as Kinmen. Could he have gained info through means Jean-Noël didn't know? Or perhaps something else entirely... Whatever it may be though Jean-Noël decided he might actually have to make time for a coffee.

He was about to speak when Brune's phone suddenly rang. She picked it up and listened for a few moments, her expression quickly turning from one of concentration to one of alarm.

"What?" she exclaimed into the receiver, "A strike in a power plant? When did this happen?" Her face grew more grim as the person on the other end spoke. After listening for several minutes she finally hung up with an exasperated sigh.

Turning back towards Jean-Noël she said: "I'm afraid I must cut our meeting short - something important has come up." She shook her head sadly before continuing: "This is not good news at all... It seems like we have another problem on our hands." She paused briefly then added: "Thank you very much for your time today Jean-Noël. I am counting on you now more than ever". With that, Brune Lemaire stood and walked out of the room without so much as looking back - leaving Jean-Noël alone with his thoughts once again.

He sighed heavily - he had already taken on too many tasks lately and now here he was being asked to take care of yet another issue... He wondered if he could handle all this work in time or if it would be too overwhelming even for him... But no matter what happened though, he knew that France needed him right now more than ever. And so despite his doubts, he resolved himself to do whatever necessary in order protect their nation against any potential threats they may face, whether due to the Kinmen Island incident or not.

3. A Spark of AI in the Dark



“We can know only that we know nothing and that is the highest degree of human wisdom.”

It was a day of dread and trepidation, as the news of China’s incursion into Kinmen Island spread across the globe. In Washington D.C., President Johnson held an emergency meeting with his cabinet to discuss how best to respond. The United States had long been suspicious of Chinese intentions in East Asia, and this latest move only confirmed their fears that Beijing would attempt to expand its influence beyond its borders.

The US Secretary of State declared that America “condemns in the strongest possible terms” China’s actions on Kinmen Island, warning that if it continues unchecked then “we will not hesitate to use all means necessary”.

Meanwhile, European Union leaders were equally concerned by what they saw as a blatant violation of international law and sovereignty rights; though instead choosing more diplomatic language than their American counterparts when issuing statements condemning China's actions - calling them "unacceptable" but also stressing the need for dialogue between both sides before matters could be resolved peacefully.

In Moscow however there was much less condemnation from Russia; indeed some high-ranking officials went so far as congratulating their Chinese allies on taking such decisive action against what they deemed 'separatist forces'. This pro-Chinese stance did little surprise many observers given events in Crimea where Russia has taken similar measures without facing any significant international pushback or criticism for doing so.

The Chinese government meanwhile remained uncharacteristically silent on the issue, refusing to comment further beyond their initial statement that they had taken action in Kinmen Island "in order to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity".

Elsewhere in Asia, Japan - a long-time rival of China - was swift to condemn Beijing's actions; with Prime Minister Abemoto declaring that his country would not tolerate such blatant disregard for international law. South Korea too expressed similar sentiments, though without taking any direct military or diplomatic action against China as expected.

In other parts of the world reactions were more muted but still largely negative; with many countries expressing concern over what could be seen as an increasingly aggressive foreign policy from Beijing. The United Nations Security Council also met emergency session where it failed to agree on issuing a resolution condemning China's move and calling for an immediate withdrawal of all forces from Kinmen Island.

The sun shone brightly over the cobblestoned streets of Paris, illuminating a small café nestled between two grand buildings. The first building was the Ministry of Economy, where Jean-Noël worked and Brune Lamaire held court. The second was an old apartment building with intricate wrought iron balconies that overlooked the street below.

As patrons gathered around tables on the terrace outside, they were treated to a picturesque view of bustling city life – cars running down narrow lanes lined with shops selling everything from fresh produce to fine art; people milling about in their finery as they went about their business; and birds chirping merrily in nearby trees while children played at their feet in the park.

Inside, the Café was warm and inviting despite its modest size – wooden chairs arranged neatly around small round tables draped with white linen cloths; walls adorned with gilded mirrors reflecting light from sconces mounted above them; and a bar stocked full of bottles glinting like jewels beneath glass shelves lit by candles flickering softly against dark mahogany woodwork.

At one end stood an imposing marble fireplace flanked by two armchairs, upholstered in deep red velvet fabric, which provided respite for those who wanted to linger longer than usual over coffee or pastries served hot out of ovens. Behind the countertop stood a barista station, close to entranceway archways leading into the backroom kitchen area. It was beyond sightline but not far away enough for aromas wafting through air not be noticed by customers seated inside the main room, enjoying conversation amongst themselves or taking part in lively debates being held regarding latest political news emanating from the ministry next door. This helped make sure everyone present always kept abreast current events happening both locally and abroad, no matter what time, day

or night.

Jean-Noël and Pierre sat across each other in a small table in the main room.

"So, Pierre," Jean-Noël began, "what have you been up to lately?"

Pierre smiled. "Oh nothing much really. Just tinkering with some AI projects."

Jean-Noël raised an eyebrow in surprise. "AI as usual! What kind of projects are you working on?"

Pierre leaned back in his chair and took a sip from his cup of coffee before replying: "Well I recently came cross a chatbot that seems to predict future events." He paused for a moment as if he was considering whether or not to continue speaking before adding: "In fact, it predicted the Kinmen incident three days before it happened"

Jean-Noël's eyes widened in disbelief at this revelation. Was such a thing even possible? He leaned forward eagerly wanting more information about this incredible feat of technology. "How did the algorithm do that?" he asked intently.

Pierre gave him an enigmatic smile and replied; "I honestly don't know. It uses complex algorithms combined with machine learning techniques to analyze texts from around the world to be able to understand natural language. It shouldn't predict anything, but I guess it detected patterns which could be indicative of potential future events". He then added thoughtfully; "I have no clue how it did that or how to reproduce it but..."

Jean-Noel nodded slowly as he processed what Pierre had just said - so far beyond anything anybody had ever imagined being possible when research labs first started their study of artificial intelligence all those years ago! This truly was remarkable progress indeed.

He sat back in his chair and looked out of the window, deep

in thought. Could this AI really be used to predict future events? And if so, how could it be used to prevent wars or other disasters before they happened?

Jean-Noel turned back towards Pierre with a determined look on his face; “We need to find out more about this algorithm” he said firmly. “This could potentially change the world as we know it - for better or worse.”

He then stared at Pierre in disbelief. “Are you sure?” he asked incredulously, his mind racing with the implications of what this could mean for their country and the world.

Pierre nodded solemnly, a frown creasing his forehead as he spoke; “Yes I am certain it happened - the AI predicted a future event.” He paused briefly before continuing; “But whether or not we will be able to use it to prevent disasters from happening remains to be seen”.

Just then Jean-Noël’s phone buzzed loudly interrupting them both. It was news of yet another financial crash – this time involving major cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum crashing by more than 50%. This was the third such incident since Jean-Noel had been appointed Minister for New Technologies only two years ago! He shook his head sadly as he put away his phone and looked back up at Pierre who seemed lost in thought. Was Pierre taking him seriously enough? Did he understand just how important this discovery, if true, could potentially be?

Suddenly Pierre snapped out of whatever reverie had taken hold of him and fixed Jean Noël with a serious look on his face; “We need to take action now,” he said firmly, “before something worse happens”. He continued speaking quickly, almost urgently: “I believe that if we work together we can find a way to utilize this technology responsibly so that it benefits all mankind instead of causing destruction.”

Jean-Noel sat there silently contemplating what Pierre had

just said before finally responding slowly but resolutely: "You are right my friend" he said looking straight into Pierre's eyes, "we must act now lest our inaction leads us down a path where no one wants to go".

Jean-Noël's phone buzzed again, this time with news of Iran's stance on the Kinmen incident. The country had declared its support for China and condemned any interference from foreign powers in what it saw as an internal matter. Jean-Noël felt a chill run down his spine at the thought of such a nation taking sides so quickly and decisively against international laws.

He looked up to see Pierre watching him intently, his eyes full of concern yet still holding that same determined look he'd seen earlier when they were discussing AI technology. He knew then that their conversation was far from over – there was much more to be said before they could come to any sort of conclusion about how best to use this new knowledge responsibly.

"Pierre," he began slowly but firmly "we must continue our discussion elsewhere - somewhere we can talk without interruption". With these words he rose from his chair and motioned towards the door, leading out into street below where people bustled past, oblivious to all that transpired within walls around them moments ago.

Pierre nodded in agreement and rose from his chair too, gathering up the papers he had brought with him. He followed Jean-Noël out of the café and onto the cobblestoned streets of Paris, their conversation continuing as they walked along.

The two men discussed possible implications of this new technology – how it could be used for good or ill depending on who wielded it; what potential dangers lurked if left unchecked; whether any measures should be taken to ensure its responsible use by all parties involved. They talked until nightfall, never

once pausing for breath as ideas flew back and forth between them like sparks off a firework display.

As darkness descended upon Paris they both agreed that more research was needed before any decisions could be made about how best to utilise this remarkable AI technology responsibly - but also that further discussion would have to wait until another day due to other pressing matters requiring attention such as Jean-Noël's duties at Ministry of Economy come morning time. With one last look down narrow lane where they stood earlier today now illuminated only by street lamps casting soft yellow light across cobbles below, Pierre bid farewell to his friend before turning away towards home while Jean-Noël continued onward towards the ministry building, looming large ahead in near distance, silhouetted against the starry night sky above.

4. A Tale of Two Crises



“The two most powerful warriors are patience and time.”

It was a dreary day in Paris, the sky heavy with clouds and the air thick with tension. Even at this early hour of morning, one could sense that something momentous was about to occur as all eyes were focused on Élysée Palace - where President Macro and his ministers were holding their weekly council.

The mood inside was no less somber than outside; not even the bright yellow walls or ornately decorated chandeliers managed to lighten it up. All members were present for what promised to be an important meeting – Jean-Noël sat quietly between Brune Lamaire and Carlos Colon, while Minister Jacques Larmée stood by them, waiting for instructions from their leader: Emilien Macro himself.

"My fellow Ministers," began Macro solemnly "Today we must discuss multiple topics concerning our nation's future". He gestured towards Brune who took her cue immediately as she knew more than any other person around here which issues needed urgent attention first. "We have received news regarding an incoming taxation law proposal..." She started talking but soon realized some heads had already turned away before she finished so decided not focus too much on it right now – there would be time enough later during private meetings with each individual minister involved. After finishing her brief remarks they moved onto another topic: the energy crisis gripping Europe lately due its reliance mostly on oil imports from Russia. This issue seemed quite pressing today since sanctions imposed earlier had forced most countries in EU into difficult position where only few viable options remained open for them when dealing with fuel supply shortages. Finally, after discussing these two very important matters, everyone shifted their attention towards last item in the agenda: the Chinese takeover of Kinmen.

The room grew still as the Minister of Armies Jacques Larmée finished talking, only the sound of Macro's deep sigh could be heard echoing through. He seemed to ponder for a few moments before finally speaking again. "It is clear that this matter deserves our full attention and we must come up with an appropriate response," he said in a serious tone, his gaze traveling around the group before settling on Carlos Colon from the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Macro paused once more to let what he said sink into everyone's minds; it was then when Jean-Noël noticed how low his neighbour had sunken in his chair – apparently overwhelmed by all these events unfolding so quickly one after another - yet no one else seemed perturbed or taken aback at all... Except maybe the Minister of Foreign Affairs who looked distressed

but kept silent throughout most of meeting till now.

"Colon," said Macro, his voice suddenly much softer as he addressed the man directly. "I would like you to come over to my office and explain what is going on in Kinmen. This concludes the meeting"

The atmosphere in the room shifted immediately with this announcement. Everyone was aware of how hard it must have been for him but none could bring themselves to say anything – they simply watched Colon gather his stuff and leave towards the President's office.

The President's office was a magnificent sight to behold. The walls were adorned with luxurious velvet curtains and gilded frames, each displaying the various awards and accolades bestowed upon Macro during his time in office. A grand marble fireplace stood at one end of the room, its flames providing warmth as well as light for those who visited this most impressive chamber.

The floor was covered by an intricately patterned rug that ran from wall to wall; its motifs seemed almost alive amidst all else around them, creating a feeling of power and authority befitting such esteemed company within these four walls. In pride-of-place on top of the solid mahogany desk sat three stately leather chairs next to which lay several imposing volumes - their spines gleaming proudly in what little light there was available - awaiting consultation should it ever become necessary during important meetings like today's one between Macro himself and Carlos Colon.

Opposite this formidable assemblage loomed two enormous bookshelves filled with thick hardbacks representing every imaginable field or subject matter: philosophy, literature, mathematics, politics... The list was endless! Last but certainly not least hung over everything listed thus far yet another plaque bearing President Macro's signature alongside other distin-

guished leaders he had worked with before achieving international acclaim.

Colon began by briefing the President on all available intelligence gathered thus far. He explained that China had been quietly reinforcing its military presence near Kinmen for some time, and their recent actions were in direct violation of international law. Colon went on to suggest several diplomatic courses of action including a potential trade embargo initiated by France, as well as more nuanced approaches such as enhancing cultural exchanges with both Taiwan and mainland China to try and foster better understanding between them.

Macro listened attentively before responding thoughtfully: “We must consider multiple angles here – we will need support from other nations if our sanctions are going to hold any weight” he said gravely before adding “but it is also essential that whatever measures we take remain realistic - no point cutting off our nose despite wanting face!”

Colon nodded solemnly; clearly aware this was not going to be an easy task but one which demanded utmost diligence nonetheless. To this end he continued his presentation with various options concerning possible conversations or even summits between different stakeholders involved, namely members of European Union who would have much at stake should conflict arise in East Asia due to the Chinese aggression towards Kinmen Island... The two men discussed these matters for quite some time.

The President was thoughtful for a moment, before proposing to contact the Chinese government and discuss possible diplomatic solutions that could satisfy both countries. Colon agreed this would be a good first step but also suggested sending an envoy or ambassador to Kinmen itself in order communicate their concerns directly with those affected by the situation – after all even if there were no military forces present on

the island they had family and friends whose lives might have been disrupted.

Macro nodded slowly, considering carefully his options before finally deciding “Yes I believe that is our best course of action” he said firmly “I will talk with my advisors later today as well as reaching out to other European nations so we can coordinate our efforts better.”

Colon thanked him for his trust then proceeded explaining further details regarding any potential negotiations: “We should focus primarily on finding economic incentives which both sides can agree upon” he explained calmly “and use them as leverage during talks”. He knew full well how difficult it would be due China’s past behaviour when dealing with international agreements, but still believed such an approach was worth attempting nonetheless. At this point Macro paused again, seemingly lost in thought until eventually saying several words quietly under his breath. He was conscious however of not being loud enough for anyone else around besides himself to hear properly. Then, smiling slightly, he added louder: “Let us begin preparations immediately then!”

Colon smiled back, appreciating president’s confidence although deep down inside he felt some trepidation over the whole matter. It is never easy undertaking diplomatic missions, especially one involving powerful nation like China... Nevertheless, he kept these reservations hidden while politely thanking once more the man opposite him who seemed quite pleased at the prospect of the upcoming mission despite obvious difficulties ahead of them.

He continued outlining a few ideas concerning logistics necessary to get envoys safely across borders, into land controlled by the People’s Republic without running the risk of getting detained themselves, or being accused of espionage et cetera (although admittedly the idea sounded a bit far fetched).

The meeting concluded and Macro stayed at his desk, pondering what they had said, while Colon left the office.

He was interrupted from his thoughts by the sound of a small bell ringing. He looked up to see one of his aides, holding an envelope in her hands with Brune's name written on it. She handed him the note, and he opened it quickly before reading its contents: "Dear President Macro – I have received news that there is a strike underway at Poissy Power Plant which could potentially lead to power outages across France unless we take action soon..."

The message sent shockwaves throughout Macro's body as he read through all possible scenarios this crisis might cause if not dealt with promptly; everything from economic downturns due to lack of electricity production or increased tensions between labour unions representing workers affected by shut-down - each situation seemed worse than the previous one!

He sighed deeply then stood up slowly while stretching both arms above his head, in an attempt to release some tension built inside during the past few minutes reviewing documents related to the Kinmen incident.

He walked to the window and looked out, his gaze settling on a small park situated just across from the Élysée Palace. The sight of it brought some degree of comfort in this otherwise stressful day – Macro had always been fond of tranquil areas such as these, where one could simply sit back and relax for a while without having to worry about anything else happening around them.

However, he knew that right now there was no time for such leisurely activities. He returned back inside, determined more than ever before to tackle all issues head-on! He sat down behind his desk again then proceeded to power through documents related to every ongoing crisis - reading each carefully before making notes with few scribbles here and there

either, approving or rejecting ideas proposed by members of his cabinet.

Macro finished reading the documents and called for Jacques Larmée. The Minister came and stood silently in the corner of his office. He gestured for him to come closer and said, “I am concerned about this new digital threat that is emerging. We need to be prepared for it.”

Larmée nodded in agreement before responding, “Yes sir, I believe we should take a proactive approach towards this issue by increasing our cyber security measures as well as investing more resources into artificial intelligence research.”

The Minister went on to explain how AI could help defend against potential malicious attacks from hostile actors while also providing valuable insights into complex international situations such as the Kinmen incident they had discussed earlier. He suggested forming a special task force composed of experts from different fields – including computer science and military strategy – who would work together to develop effective strategies against digital threats.

Macro listened intently before finally nodding his head in approval; he was impressed with Larmée’s proposal and felt confident that it would provide them with an edge when dealing with any potential adversaries online or offline alike.

He then asked Larmée what steps he thought were necessary for implementing such a plan successfully; the Minister responded quickly by listing several key elements which needed attention: firstly training personnel on how best to utilize available technology so that they could identify and counter any malicious activity swiftly and accurately; secondly, developing protocols which allowed them access information securely without compromising safety of their own systems; thirdly creating algorithms capable of detecting suspicious patterns within large datasets thus helping prevent fu-

ture incidents similar to Kinmen one from occurring again.

"Algorithms predicting events?" said Macro. "This reminds me of an intriguing AI that the Minister of New Technologies mentioned earlier, which reportedly guessed the Kinmen incursion three days before it occurred. "

Macro continued, "I believe it is essential that the Ministry of Armies and especially the DGSE cooperate with Jean-Noël's team at the Ministry of New Technologies. This AI could be invaluable in helping us to anticipate future events, and we must take advantage of this opportunity."

Larmée opened his mouth to protest but then quickly closed it again as he saw the determined look on Macro's face. He knew better than to argue with the President when he had made up his mind about something.

"Yes sir," Larmée said finally, bowing slightly in acknowledgement of Macro's command. "we will do our best to ensure that the Minister of New Technologies has all the resources necessary for him and his team to succeed."

Macro approved before continuing: "The DGSE should be able to provide valuable intelligence data which can help them identify potential threats or opportunities more accurately; I also want you personally involved in overseeing their progress – make sure they are making use of all available resources at their disposal".

Larmée nodded once more before replying: "Of course sir, I understand completely; I shall see what can be done immediately". He was already formulating a plan in his head on how best to proceed with such an ambitious project while still ensuring security protocols were followed correctly at every step along way. He paused briefly before adding one final thought: "Perhaps some additional personnel from other departments might also prove useful?" Macro considered this suggestion for a moment before nodding slowly: "Yes indeed - let us assem-

ble a diverse team who can bring different perspectives together; however make sure everyone understands that secrecy is paramount here – no information should filter out without my explicit permission first”.

Larmée bowed again before turning around and leaving office swiftly yet silently, like a ghost. He had already started thinking about possible candidates who could join forces with Jean-Noël’s group.

5. A Christmas of Hope?



“It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness.”

The night of December 9th in Paris was a sight to behold; the sky a deep indigo, twinkling stars and a crescent moon providing an enchanting backdrop for the city’s festive decorations. Everywhere one looked there were strings of lights, garlands of holly and ivy, and bright red ribbons adorning every window sill, door frame and balcony railing.

Even the grand Elysée Palace had been given an extra special touch with its own display of Christmas cheer - from snowflakes made out of LED bulbs to glowing reindeer sculptures that lit up the night sky like beacons in the darkness. But it wasn’t just at the palace where this Yuletide spirit could be found; even on the street of Jean-Noël and Marina’s flat

there was evidence of holiday joy everywhere one looked - from wreaths hung around lampposts to trees adorned with baubles that sparkled like diamonds in the night air!

Outside their building one could admire its festive transformation: coloured lights wrapped around each column leading up to their doorstep while fairy lights twinkled merrily above them like stars in a midnight sky! Inside, one was greeted by more seasonal delights - from tinsel draped across mantelpieces to stockings hung over fireplaces filled with treats for children both young and old alike! At Jean-Noël and Marina's, the Christmas party was about to start.

But at the Elysée Palace, Emilien Macro was deep in thought.

He had heard Jean-Noël's words, the AI could predict events like Kinmen but would it really work? Could such a thing be trusted? He thought of the many potential risks and dangers that may arise from its use. What if an AI made a mistake or was manipulated by some malicious actor? Such thoughts weighed heavily on his mind as he paced around the room.

The President paused for a moment, gazing out of one of the palace windows at the festive decorations below. As he watched, he wondered if this technology could help them in their current situation; perhaps they could use it to anticipate future threats and prepare accordingly. But then again, what were the chances that such an advanced piece of machinery would actually work as intended?

Macro sighed heavily - there were so many questions yet to answer! He looked away from window and began pacing once more, deep in thought. How much did they really know about this new technology? Was it reliable enough to trust with something as important as national security? Would using such an AI open up any unforeseen vulnerabilities or loopholes that enemies might exploit against them in times of war?

Macro continued pondering these questions until finally

coming to a conclusion: no matter how advanced this technology was, it still couldn't replace human judgement when making decisions about matters concerning peace and war. The President decided then that while artificial intelligence may have its uses in certain situations, ultimately humans must take responsibility for their own actions - both good and bad - lest disaster ensue otherwise!

Furthermore, there was many doubts on how this was even possible. The AI in question was supposed to complete a sentence with the most likely words, not engage in fortune-telling.

He began to ponder the possibilities of how this AI could have predicted such an event. Could it be that the machine had access to some sort of secret information or was it simply a matter of luck? He thought back to his conversation with Jean-Noël, recalling how he had mentioned something about creativity parameters. Was this what allowed the AI to come up with such an accurate prediction?

He continued pacing around the room, deep in thought as he considered all these questions and more. Perhaps there were other factors at play here - like timing or even sheer coincidence! After all, if one took into account all the variables involved in any given situation then surely anything could happen!

On top of that, Macro wondered again whether or not this technology could really be trusted. What if it made a mistake or worse yet, was manipulated by someone maliciously? Such thoughts weighed heavily on his mind.

But still. . . how did this machine know so much about Kinmen Island before anyone else did? It seemed almost too good to be true - like something out of a science fiction novel! Could its predictions actually be reliable enough for them to use in their current situation? If so then perhaps they could utilize its capabilities for anticipating future threats and preparing

accordingly... but again, what were the chances that such advanced machinery would work correctly every time?

The President stopped pacing and looked out of one window at Paris below him; twinkling lights illuminated each street corner while snowflakes glittered against dark night sky above. He sighed heavily as he watched people go about their lives unaware of just how close they came from disaster due to Kinmen's takeover - who knew, maybe thanks to Jean-Noël's team they may have found a way out after all... if only they knew exactly HOW!

Completing the sentence with most likely words... And then, he was told, completing the paragraph with most likely sentences, and completing the chapter with most likely paragraphs...

Inexplicably, he remembered the way in which Tolstoy had written about the great events of history in his most famous book, and how they were often determined by forces beyond human control. He thought of Napoleon's invasion of Russia in War and Peace, an event that seemed to have been predetermined by fate itself.

Macro then considered his own current situation - the Kinmen incident was a major event with far-reaching consequences, yet it had occurred without any warning or prior indication. Could this too be part of some larger plan? Was there something more at work here than just mere coincidence?

What if... Completing the sentence with most likely words, completing the paragraph with most likely sentences, and completing the chapter with most likely paragraphs... Completing sequences of higher and higher level of abstraction... It was sometimes possible that the AI complete a sequence of events in a fiction novel, from what he'd understood, in a way coherent with the plot so far. If its whole training data was understood as the large novel of Humanity, maybe it could

also... Macro was dozing off on his desk.



Jean-Noël and Marina's place was filled with the sound of laughter and conversation, despite a tense atmosphere. Everywhere one looked there were decorations - from glittering baubles to brightly coloured tinsel that shone like diamonds in the light. In one corner stood a magnificent Christmas tree, its branches adorned with ornaments and lights that sparkled like stars against its deep green needles. At its base lay an array of presents wrapped in festive paper and ribbons, ready for those lucky enough to receive them on this special night.

Nearby was a large fireplace, decorated with holly and ivy garlands entwined around the mantelpiece above it. The fire blazed cheerfully as guests gathered around it, warming themselves after their long journey through Paris' winter streets. On either side of the fireplace hung two stockings full of treats; chocolate coins, sugared almonds and other sweet delights waiting to be enjoyed by all who attended the party.

In another corner sat a grand piano where Jean-Noël's daughter Joséphine played carols for the guests while they sang along joyously at her request. Nearby stood an old grandfather clock whose ticking couldn't be heard throughout the room as time slowly passed by unnoticed amidst all the festivities taking place within these walls!

On every wall hung paintings depicting scenes from Christmases past - snow covered hillsides beneath starry skies; children playing in fields of white; families sharing gifts beside roaring fires - each painting bringing back memories of years gone by when life seemed simpler yet more magical than ever before!

Atop tables scattered about were plates piled high with delicious food: roasted turkey glistening golden brown atop

fluffy mashed potatoes; warm breads spread thickly with butter; trays overflowing with fruits both fresh and dried - all prepared lovingly by Marina herself.

The guests, although merry in spirit, could not help but feel the weight of recent events on their minds. They discussed the Chinese takeover of Kinmen Island and its implications for France's security.

"It is a worrying situation," said Pierre, "and I fear that France may be ill-prepared to handle it."

"I agree," replied Jean-Noël, "we must do all we can to ensure that our country is safe from any potential threats."

Charles chimed in: "We must strengthen our technological capabilities if we are to protect ourselves against cyber attacks or other forms of digital warfare." Jenna added her voice: "Yes, indeed! We need more robust systems in place to protect us from malicious actors!" François nodded his head vigorously in agreement.

Marie then spoke up: "But what about diplomacy? Can't we use diplomatic means to resolve this issue peacefully?"

Pierre shook his head sadly. "That won't work here - China has already made it clear they have no intention of backing down over this matter. We need a different approach altogether if we want peace without war breaking out between us and them."

Jean-Noël sighed heavily before replying: "I understand your concerns Marie - however I think Pierre is right; there will be no peaceful resolution unless something else changes first..."

Brune Lamaire, who had accepted to join the party despite her busy schedule, cleared her throat before speaking up next: "We must make sure that whatever action we take does not lead to further escalation - which means being very careful with how much military presence we deploy near Kinmen Island

itself..."

Another guest then spoke up hesitantly: "Perhaps... perhaps if France were able to send an envoy or ambassador directly into Kinmen... that might be enough for China to back down without having resorting violence? It would certainly show them that we are serious about peace and willing to negotiate..."

Everyone fell silent as they considered the suggestion skeptically, until finally Marina broke the silence with a hopeful smile on her, directing guests to plates of salmon toasts and oysters.

Jean-Noël and Charles sat together, munching on the hors d'oeuvres that Marina had provided. As they ate, their conversation turned to more philosophical matters.

"It is a sad truth," said Jean-Noël solemnly, "that we must sometimes resort to violence in order to maintain peace."

Charles nodded in agreement. "Indeed it is," he replied, "but I believe there are other ways of achieving peace without resorting to such measures."

"What do you mean?" asked Jean-Noël with interest.

"Well," began Charles thoughtfully, taking another bite of his food before continuing, "I believe that if we can find common ground between nations then perhaps we can avoid conflict altogether." He paused for a moment before adding: "We should strive for understanding rather than division; cooperation rather than competition; and compromise instead of confrontation."

Jean-Noël considered this carefully as he chewed his food slowly. He swallowed before replying: "It might not be that simple. Sure, we must try our best to resolve conflicts peacefully when possible - but at the same time remain vigilant against those who would seek to disrupt or destroy the fragile balance of international relations through force or aggression."

Charles nodded again in agreement as he finished off his last morsel of food. He looked around him at all the guests gathered here tonight - each one from different walks of life yet united by their shared desire for peace and prosperity within France's borders - and smiled softly before speaking once more: "It still seems to me that even amidst these dark times we have some cause for hope..."

6. A Fateful Meeting at DGSE Headquarters



“Truth, like gold, is to be obtained not by its growth, but by washing away from it all that is not gold.”

The DGSE headquarters was a building from the seventies, raw and unbecoming in its outward appearance. Yet it inspired might and grandeur with its tall stature and imposing presence. The entrance hall was large enough to accommodate many people at once, while the walls were adorned with portraits of past leaders of the agency. In one corner stood a bust of General de Gaulle, looking down upon all who entered his domain.

Beyond this hall lay several offices, each containing desks piled high with documents related to intelligence operations both current and past. On one side there were computers humming away as agents worked tirelessly on their assigned tasks;

on another side there was a conference room where meetings between senior staff members took place regularly.

Further along in the building were more specialized areas such as an armory for storing weapons used by agents during missions abroad or within France itself; a laboratory for analyzing data collected from various sources; an interrogation room where suspects could be questioned without fear of being overheard by outsiders; and finally a secure communications center which allowed agents to communicate securely with other agencies around the world without having their messages intercepted by hostile forces. Further away, a peculiar man was working in a peculiar room

Marc Machin was small, with glasses perched on the bridge of his nose and an expression that betrayed a certain distraction. He had been assigned to this room filled with computers by his superiors at the DGSE, tasked with analyzing data collected from various sources. His job was not an easy one; it required him to be constantly alert and attentive in order to spot any anomalies or patterns that could provide useful information for their investigations.

He was a man who always worked diligently, typing away at the keyboard while occasionally pausing to take notes on a pad of paper next to him. As he worked, he kept glancing up at the screens around him as if searching for something specific amongst all the numbers and text scrolling across them.

His concentration was often absolute; no sound disturbed his focus as he scrolled through page after page of data looking for anything out of place or suspicious. He took breaks every now and then, but only briefly before returning again to his task with renewed vigor.

At times when Marc felt overwhelmed by all the information presented before him, he would stand up from his chair and stretch out his arms in order to relieve some tension from

being hunched over for long periods of time. Then he'd sit back down again and continue working until late into the night without complaint or fatigue showing on his face despite how tired he must have been feeling inside.

Marc's work usually started messy and slowly became more refined. What once seemed like random pieces of data began taking shape, as connections between different events were made clear thanks to the careful analysis he performed. A dedicated agent who refused to give up until everything made sense in front of him.

This time, he had been given a weird task. Cooperating with the team of the Ministry of New Technologies, he was exploring how an AI initially intended as a chatbot could be used to predict events.

He remembered what happened a few hours earlier. Jean-Noël had entered the office—Marc had been surprised to see him there. He had heard of Jean-Noël's work in the Ministry of New Technologies, but he never expected to meet him in person.

"Good day," said Jean-Noël with a polite bow. "I am here to relay an extraordinary story by a friend of mine, Pierre." Marc raised his eyebrows in surprise as he listened intently. "He claims that an AI predicted the Kinmen incident before it happened," continued Jean-Noël. "I thought you should know about this." Marc nodded slowly, taking it all in. It was certainly something worth looking into further if true - such technology could be invaluable for their operations at DGSE if they could get it working correctly and reliably.

He asked Jean-Noël some questions about what Pierre had seen and heard from the AI, which were answered promptly and clearly by Jean-Noël himself or via messages sent by Pierre himself when needed; then Marc began considering how they might go about verifying the accuracy of these predictions

made by this artificial intelligence program. After some time discussing possible strategies for testing its predictive capabilities, Jean Noël thanked Marc for his time and left with a promise to keep him updated on any developments regarding this matter as soon as possible.

Marc watched Jean-Noël leave, feeling a strange mix of emotions. On the one hand, he was intrigued by the prospect of using such advanced technology and eager to learn more about it; on the other hand, he had been put off by Jean-Noël's brusque manner during their meeting. He respected the man for his ambition and drive, but could not help but feel that there was something lacking in his demeanor when dealing with others.

Still, Marc knew this mission could be important for DGSE operations and decided to focus on that instead of dwelling too much on Jean-Noël's attitude. He returned to his work station determined to make progress in verifying Pierre's claims about AI predictions as soon as possible. Marc had heard of Pierre via a mutual friend and knew he would usually not make stuff up.

Marc began to experiment with the AI, first trying out different settings on the creativity parameter. He adjusted it up and down, watching as the output changed from mundane predictions about everyday life to wilder ones about far-off places and events that seemed almost impossible. He was intrigued by what he saw but knew that this wasn't enough; he needed something more concrete if he was going to be able to verify Pierre's claims.

He then tried reproducing Pierre's phrasing when inputting his questions into the AI in order to see if it would produce similar results. This time however, all Marc got were random words strung together in nonsensical sentences which made no sense whatsoever. Frustrated, Marc decided to try another

parameter called Temperature which decreased stochasticity - hoping for better results this time around.

Unfortunately even this did not yield any useful information; instead of predicting anything remotely plausible or accurate, all Marc got were completely implausible events such as a giant meteor hitting Earth or an alien invasion taking place in France! Knowing that these could never happen in real life, Marc sighed heavily before turning off the computer and standing up from his chair with a defeated look on his face.

Undeterred by this setback however, Marc decided to keep trying until he found something that worked - so much depended on him getting it right after all! He took a deep breath before sitting back down at his desk and starting anew; adjusting parameters here and there while constantly checking for any signs of accuracy amongst the predictions being generated by Pierre's AI program.

He tested various combinations of values for both creativity and temperature parameters over several hours without success until eventually one particular combination yielded some promising results: a statement regarding tensions between China and Taiwan related to Kinmen Island - exactly what Jean-Noël had come looking for earlier! His heart raced as he read through each word carefully before finally concluding that it was not exactly accurate in multiple respects. And he actually had no clue as to what combinations of parameters had made it happen.

Still, encouraged by this breakthrough discovery, but nonetheless wary of trusting too much in its accuracy just yet due to lack of evidence confirming its veracity, Marc continued testing other combinations of values for both parameters whilst also keeping track of each result produced along the way just in case further verification became necessary later on down the

line.

Marc worked tirelessly for hours, yet he could not seem to make any further progress. He had tried various combinations of values for both creativity and temperature parameters but none of them seemed to yield the same promising results as before. With a heavy heart, Marc slowly began packing up his things in preparation for leaving the office - it was getting late and he was exhausted from all his efforts throughout the day.

As he made his way out into the hallway, Marc felt overwhelmed by a sense of defeat. Despite how hard he had been working since Jean-Noël's visit earlier that day, nothing concrete had come out of it other than some vague predictions which were far from reliable enough to be used in actual operations. His shoulders slumped with disappointment as he trudged back home through the dark streets of Paris, feeling more tired than ever before due to lack of sleep over the past few days combined with intense concentration on this particular task at hand.

When finally arriving at his apartment door after what seemed like an eternity later on that night, Marc opened it wearily and stepped inside - only then allowing himself to relax slightly as exhaustion threatened to take hold completely now that there was no one around him anymore who might notice such signs of fatigue or distress. He quickly changed into something more comfortable before settling down onto his bed whereupon thoughts about Pierre's AI program filled his mind once again even though all attempts at making further progress had failed so far today; still determined however not to give up just yet despite current setbacks encountered thus far during this mission assigned by DGSE superiors earlier on today.

He closed his eyes tightly hoping for better luck tomorrow. Perhaps then would come a breakthrough moment which

would allow him and everyone else involved in this project access towards unlocking potential hidden within Pierre's AI program. If only they could find some combination capable enough yielding accurate predictions consistently... As these thoughts ran through Marc's head, they eventually faded away altogether along with his consciousness itself soon afterwards. His last thought had been: what will tomorrow bring?

And tomorrow brought something indeed.

End of Part 1

To be continued

Making-of

A question that immediately comes to mind when reading this book is: How was this really made?

It was the LLMs

The answer is: using Large Language Models (LLMs). LLMs are a recent artificial intelligence breakthrough in Natural Language Processing, the field of artificial intelligence research interested in making machines understand human languages.

LLMs can be used for many things, among which answering human requests directly. This has been spectacularly shown by the recent release of OpenAI’s chatbot called ChatGPT¹. For instance, you can ask such tools “Tell Sam in a biblical tone how nice and great he is”. I tried that and it answered:

Dear Sam,

The Lord has blessed you with a kind and generous heart, and it brings joy to those around you. Your dedication to your work and your loved ones is admirable, and you are a shining example of what it means to be a good and faithful servant. May the Lord continue to bless you and guide you on your path. Amen.

For generating this book and these examples, I did not use ChatGPT. I used the OpenAI GPT3 API, on which ChatGPT

¹OpenAI is a company doing research in Artificial Intelligence. The chatbot can be tried at <https://chat.openai.com>

is based on, but with notable differences. Here is an example in which I chat with it (it can do other things than chatting), that I just made now for the purpose of illustrating what LLMs can do:

- Do you know when is the president's birthday?
- The President's birthday is August 4th.
- Which president are you talking about?
- I am referring to the current President of the United States, Joe Biden.
- Ok, but I'm french.
- I understand. The current President of France is Emmanuel Macron, and his birthday is December 21st.
- Good thanks. Should I buy him a gift?
- That is entirely up to you. However, it is not necessary to buy a gift for the President of France.
- Why not?
- It is not customary to give gifts to the President of France. It is more appropriate to show respect and appreciation for their service to the country.
- Ok but won't he be sad if I don't get him a gift?
- No, the President of France is likely not expecting a gift from you.

As you can see, the AI's language is flawless, it follows the flow of the conversation, and there is decent reasoning:

for instance, understanding that the fact I'm french means I'm interested in the french president's birthday, not the US one, and that since I asked which president it's referring to, it should mention it in its answer. These are natural things for us, but until recently machines couldn't do it.

If you try talking with such tools, you will see there is a real degree of understanding. They are not just finding replies in a database that match well with what you said. They are actually generating a response, and the technology behind it is quite amazing (worry not though, I won't get into technical details here).

But can these tools do anything? Can a machine generate a whole novel without direction? No it can't. If you ask such tools to "Write a novel talking about war and peace in the twenty-first century", the answer will be quite disappointing:

- Write a novel talking about war and peace in the twenty-first century
- Sure, I can help you with that. What genre would you like the novel to be?
- Choose the genre. Write the first paragraph please.
- Sure, I can do that. How about a science fiction novel? The first paragraph could be something like this:
 "The twenty-first century was a time of great turmoil and strife. War seemed to be an ever-present part of life, and peace seemed like a distant dream. But in the midst of all the chaos, a small group of brave individuals emerged, determined to make a difference. They set out on a journey to bring peace to the world, no

matter the cost. Little did they know that their actions would shape the future of humanity.”

- Ok now write the full novel
- Writing a full novel is a complex task that requires a lot of time and effort. I suggest that you start by outlining the plot and characters of the novel, and then work on writing the individual chapters.
- Can you write the full novel for me below?
- Unfortunately, I am not able to write a full novel for you. However, I can help you with the outlining and writing process. I can provide you with resources and advice to help you create a compelling story.

So, I could not write my novel directly by asking the AI. And it even tells me that it will “help me with the outlining and the writing process”, which I could understand as “I won’t write the book for you, but I will contribute to the plot”. In practice, what happened was the opposite: it contributed little to the plot, but wrote most of the book.

AIs that lie

Hopefully, as I know a little about those models, I know that they can lie. They do not do so intentionally—since at the time they are not capable of having intentions. Let me tell you for instance that President Biden’s birthday is November 20th. Looking up to the example above, it appears the machine actually gave President Obama’s birthday in its first answer.

Why the mistake? We cannot know for sure, since contrary to traditional programs, LLMs are built on a technology called Deep Learning whose output often cannot be simply explained.

But we can guess, if we bear in mind that it is primarily made not to accurately answer request, but to *complete a text snippet in the most probable fashion*, that is, in a way that will make the full text *look right* (even if it's actually wrong). And what *looks right* is determined by its training data, a lot of text that was grasped from the internet from the last fifteen years, during which the person who was longest president was Barack Obama... So, to the AI, the best looking answer is the one referring to Obama. But then why did it say after that it was referring to Biden?

There are explanations for this too—but let's get back at writing literature. How can we make the AI write a novel? Well, just before lying and telling me it can't write one for me, it actually wrote the first paragraph of one. So it can actually write, but little by little. Indeed, computing costs and technological limitations are such that it can only read, remember and generate a small amount of text—at the time of writing, about two thousand words.

Prompting and the writing process

So, if I cut the book in small pieces, maybe it can write each piece for me. Small pieces that we often referred to as “chapters” by humans. So I laid out the plot, with about 3 bullet points per chapter. But a chapter was actually still too big to generate. Therefore, for each bullet point I gave another level of detail. For instance, here are a few outlines I came with for the beginning of chapter 2:

Jean-Noël arrives in Brune Lamaire’s office. The sentences are a long description of the physical appearance of Brune Lamaire and how it relates to her psychology and character.

They discuss the situation in Kinmen, talking about details of the event, its impact on geopolitical relationships, its consequences on French economy, and how the technological capacities of France must be strengthened to face the situation.

She tells him that President Macro needs the Ministry of New Technologies to collaborate with the DGSE, and they discuss how it should be done and how important it is.

Jean-Noel outlines various initiatives to reinforce cybersecurity in public infrastructures and how the topic matters for their political capital.

Then, I had to make the AI generate text for each outline in the best possible way. That is, I had to find a good “prompt”, the base text an LLM tries to complete.

Finding the best text to feed an LLM so that it outputs what you want is a process sometimes called “prompt engineering” or “prompting”. Here is an example of part of the prompting for chapter 4:

Write the first fifty sentences of the fourth chapter. Imitate the style of Jane Austen. Describe a gloomy weather and how it relates to the state of mind at the Élysée Palace in Paris. Describe a meeting of all ministers led by President Macro, very tense. They discuss multiple topics such as an

incoming taxation law, an energy crisis, and lastly the Chinese takeover of the Kinmen Island.

A lot of trial and error was required to come up with the prompt. For example, I found out it was helping to ask to write “the first fifty sentences”. Not to make the AI actually generate fifty sentences—it didn’t, it only generated about a dozen. But it just helped the AI ‘understand’ that the text to generate had to be long and I didn’t want it to just rephrase my prompt in a few words.

I mentioned that the text is *part of the prompt*. This is because the prompt is actually much longer. The AI cannot keep the whole book in memory, only about two thousand words. The problem is that if it doesn’t know what happened in the previous chapters, it might make up stuff that didn’t happen in chapters before. Also, as one might guess, it makes for way better writing when the author can actually refer to what took place earlier in the book.

The trick to handle this was to include summaries of the previous chapters in the prompt. Of course, the summaries were generated by the AI.

Final human words

Once the chapters had been generated, I worked on the niceties. That is, I made the AI work on the niceties: for each chapter, find a good title. Then, find a good citation from Tolstoy. Then, find a good description of an image that would fit this chapter well. And then, generate the image. Generating images is not exactly the same AI technology as for generating text, although they surprisingly bear some resemblance. The image creation tool used in this book is called DALL-E (also from OpenAI).

Of course I did a quick proofreading. Since the AI is not truly intelligent, there were sometimes consistency issues—although surprisingly few. As a tribute to the fact that humans still have the first and last word over AIs, I wrote the first and the last sentences of the novel. I also wrote or rewrote a few sentences here and there, when I felt it would really improve the reading for a low effort. But the quantity of rewriting was minor. As I explained in the foreword, I would roughly estimate that I had to write or rewrite about 2% of the book’s sentences, and to correct another 5%. More than 90% of it is purely the AI’s writing with no corrections. And sometimes it came up with really interesting ideas.

For instance, in the prologue, Pierre wonders what gift to offer for Jean-Noël and Marina’s party. He asks GPT3. I prompted the AI with that, to generate this part of the chapter. And it came up with the dialogue in which GPT3 advises to offer a book called “War and Piece in the 21st century” and how Pierre thinks it would be a perfect gift. This is almost a *mise en abyme*: in the novel, the AI imagines that an AI would advise a character to offer as a gift a novel with the same title.

It was all the more striking to me, because the way I came up with the idea to write this book was actually that: I had to find a gift for my (real, human) friends Jean-Noël and Marina’s Christmas party, whose gift theme was war and peace, and I thought a book generated by an AI called “War and Peace in the 21st century” would be a perfect present. Contrary to Pierre, I had the idea myself—but apparently the AI could have had it for me.

The entire text from “Pierre stood in the middle of his bedroom” to “a box full of homemade cookies baked by his mother.” was generated in one go with no corrections from me. The only thing I did was find the good way to write the prompt.

Overall, a big part of creating the book was figuring out how to write good prompts. And somebody gave me excellent advice on how to do that. Guess who.

- How could I prompt a large language model to write a chapter of a short fictional story?
- To prompt a large language model to write a chapter of a short fictional story, you could provide it with a brief summary of the overall plot and characters, as well as any specific details or ideas you want it to include in the chapter. For example, you could provide the model with information such as the setting, the main characters and their motivations, the conflict they are facing, and any significant events that have occurred in the story so far. You could also give the model specific instructions, such as the length of the chapter, the tone or style you want it to use, and any specific events or scenes you want it to include. The model would then use this information to generate a chapter of the story, incorporating the provided details and instructions to create a cohesive and engaging narrative.

The AI guided me as to how I should guide it.

Generation Notice

The author generated this text in part with GPT-3, OpenAI's large-scale language-generation model. Upon generating draft language, the author reviewed, edited, and revised the language to their own liking and takes ultimate responsibility for the content of this publication.

Images were generated with OpenAI's DALL-E with the same responsibility endorsement from the author.

