

dear residents

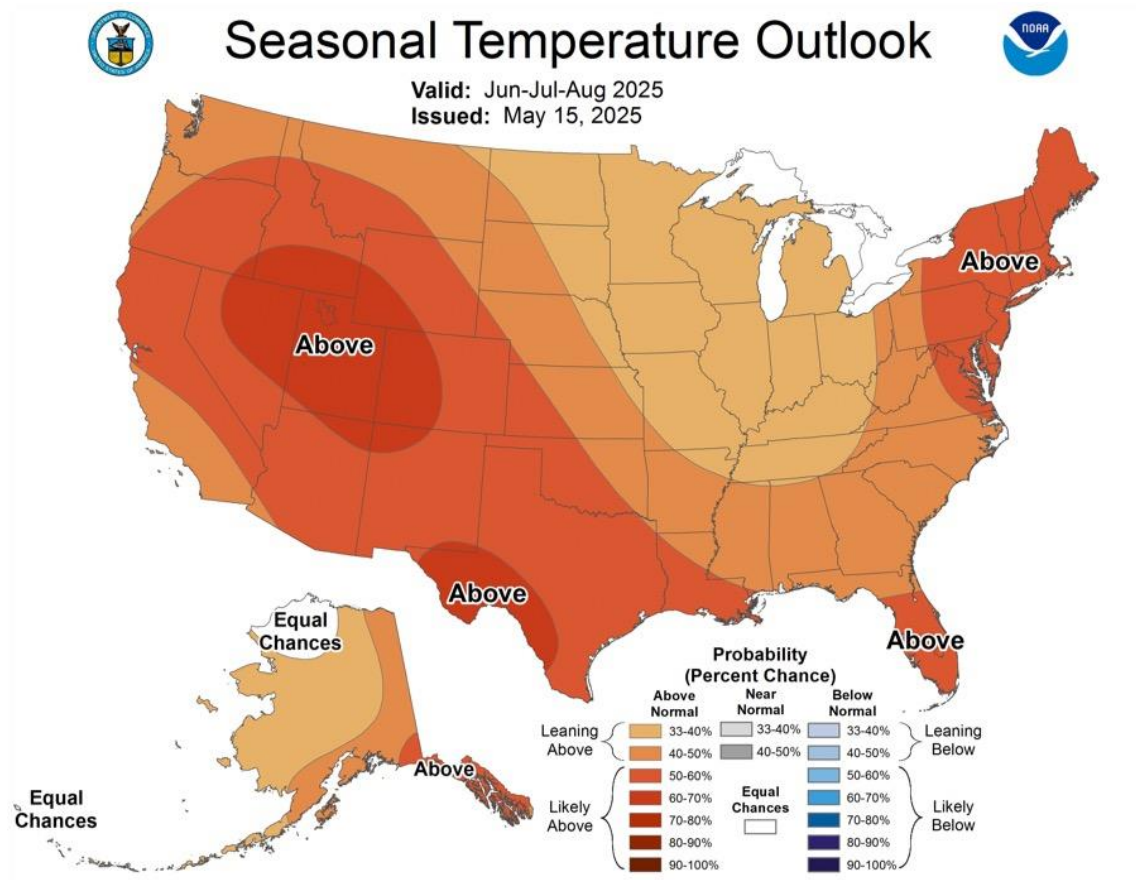
Information Networks:

Discovering Truth, Wielding Power and Establishing Order

June 8, 2025

Dear Residents,

Summer is here. The days will continue to lengthen until June 21 – but the temperatures will continue to rise well into late August. It's going to be a hot summer, no matter where you live.

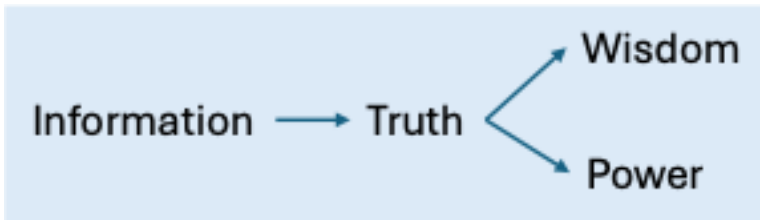


https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/seasonal.php?lead=1

It's been a busy summer for me already, but I did manage to finish reading **Harari's** latest book, [Nexus](#). Harari is a historian and philosopher who has written thought-provoking books, like *Sapiens* and *Homo*

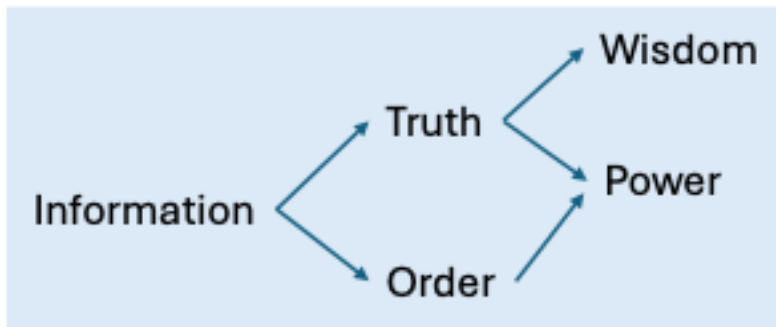
Deus. He has been a vocal critic of artificial intelligence (AI), and this latest book takes a deep dive in the history of information networks. In characteristic style, Harari starts his story with the origins of human networks, followed by an account of inorganic (or computer networks) and then concludes with a section on computer politics. He covers a lot of ground traversing religion, authoritarianism, democracy, and social media.

Humankind has amassed immense power through the establishment of extensive networks of cooperation. However, the manner in which these networks are constructed can inadvertently predispose us to the misuse of power. A central theme of the book revolves around reframing the purpose of information (and its networks) from the naïve perspective to what has been observed throughout history. The naïve perspective is rooted in the notion that information unveils the truth and, consequently, imparts wisdom and power. However, historical events have demonstrated that this is not the case.



The naïve view of information

Historically, information has not only revealed truth and led to wisdom but has also been used to create order and wield power, often sacrificing or at least bending the truth. Users of social media are acutely aware of how information, particularly misinformation, can exert power as it rapidly spreads across the network. Harari emphasizes that every human information network must simultaneously accomplish two crucial tasks: discovering truth and establishing order.



A more complete historical view of information

In terms of the sources and flow of information, our world today is so remarkably different than just a few decades ago, that we may view history as irrelevant. Reinforcing our need to respect history. Harari reminds us that, “History isn’t the study of the past; it is the study of change. History teaches us what remains the same, what changes, and how things change.” Despite a tremendous amount of information at our disposal, we are as susceptible as our ancient ancestors were to fantasy and delusion.

We live most of our lives online now, viewing information from a variety of sources. We don’t really control what we see first, or how the next post surfaces in our feed – an algorithm determines that. What we may view as information-> truth -> wisdom may also be information -> order -> power (bypassing the truth check). Harari implores us to develop self-correcting mechanisms in artificial intelligence networks, because he rightly worries that runaway misinformation driven by unchecked computer networks may start a war or a major catastrophe.

We reside in a commendable scientific bubble, where peer review, corrections, and retractions are the norm. Harari writes: “The most celebrated moments in the history of science are precisely those

moments when accepted wisdom is overturned and new theories are born.” However, this is not the case for the majority of the information we consume, which frequently lacks these rigorous self-correcting mechanisms. “The networks have also learned how to use information to maintain stronger social order among larger populations, by using not just truthful accounts but also fictions, fantasies, propaganda, and—occasionally—downright lies.” Harari’s warning serves as a timely call to action for all of us to gain a deeper understanding of how information networks shape our perception of the world. We must grasp both the potential benefits and the risks of these networks, which are designed to potentially evade self-correcting mechanisms due to their inherent autonomous capabilities.

Drawing from historical lessons from witch hunts and Stalin’s kulak liquidation, Harari is worried that artificial intelligence networks will wield unexpected dominion over humans. As consumers of an increasingly complex information age, I will leave you to decide if you want to read this book or not. There are two compelling stories in this book that I do want to share with you. The first is the unfortunate consequence of a [Facebook algorithm that contributed to the massacre of the Rohingya community in Myanmar](#), and the other is that of a [Microsoft chatbot, called Tay, that became racist and mean within 16 hours of learning from its community](#) as it began to repost what it was gleaning from its followers! It was quickly taken down.

Eid Mubarak to those who celebrate and best wishes for the week,

Dino Kazi