

When Rules Cannot Arrive in Time, What Can We Do Now?

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Translation scope

This page translates the complete publicly available Chinese HTML text, including its source version and evidence boundaries. It does not claim that a separate English PDF has been produced. Source transcription and original-document formatting limitations remain as stated below.

The problem this work addresses

Begin with whether mistakes can still be corrected: why correction after the fact may come too late in an era of high consequences, and which four questions ordinary people can ask today.

Version and evidence boundaries

Current version: V1.1.1. This English page translates the public online transcription of the uploaded Chinese source document. The source PDF has not yet been attached through this site's binary publication process, so no invented download link is provided. Refer to the source document for tables and complex formatting.

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Civilization Leap Research Group · An Action Guide for Ordinary People

When Rules Cannot Catch Up, What Can We Do Now?

—An Action Guide for Ordinary People

V1.1.1 | Edition calibrated for direct expression of the core ideas

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Begin with a question

If a single mistake could also take away the chance to put things right later, can we continue to place our final safeguard in “we will deal with it after it happens”?

Much of human history has followed this pattern: act first, make mistakes, correct them, then legislate. This path worked for thousands of years because it had an invisible insurance policy: even after a terrible mistake, there was an afterward.

After a war, people remained who could negotiate peace and rebuild. After a crisis, causes could still be investigated and rules revised. When one generation made mistakes, the next still had a chance to choose again.

Now that insurance policy faces an unprecedented problem.

Why what worked before may no longer work

In the past, a mistake needed time to produce large-scale consequences. Distance, organizational costs, limited information, and the speed of execution acted as natural brakes. That delay gave us room to discover problems, object, negotiate, and change the rules.

Now intelligence is becoming more capable, action faster, actors more numerous, and transmission across domains quicker. A purpose can be broken into tasks, replicated, coordinated, and executed more quickly.

When the time needed to produce an irreversible result becomes shorter than the time needed to discover, understand, negotiate, and correct it, our most reliable methods of repair may arrive too late.

Law has not lost its rationale, and negotiation has not lost its value. They may simply arrive too late.

The real danger is losing every chance to correct a mistake

Ordinary mistakes can accumulate. We do something right today, something wrong tomorrow, and can still correct it the day after. As long as life continues, successes and failures can still enter the same ledger.

Irreversible failure is different. It does not merely add an enormous loss to the ledger; it abolishes the ledger itself.

If an action destroys the people who would continue to exist, the ability to refuse and exit, or the channels for correction and recovery, the question is no longer how often we were right before. It is whether there will be any opportunity to correct things afterward.

The decisive break is not how large the mistake is, but whether correction remains possible after it.

What must we re-examine?

Not self-interest itself, competition itself, markets, law, states, or defense.

What needs re-examination is an order of action: first decide “what I want,” then make others and the consequences accommodate that goal.

This approach could operate for a long time because there was still an afterward. When some actions may eliminate the conditions for later correction as well, setting goals first and relying on rules to catch up is no longer safe.

What is the new order?

Before deciding “what I want,” first examine whom the action would affect and whether any consequences would leave no way back. My interests still count; they simply no longer get to settle everything in advance of everyone else.

Self-interest remains. Competition remains. Defense remains. Laws and rules remain. What is removed is the presumed priority of “I lock in my own goal first, then make others and the consequences accommodate it.”

Waiting is not doing nothing

For ordinary problems, waiting for more evidence often means being careful.

But in matters with major consequences, if waiting itself allows capabilities to keep growing, old goals to remain locked in, competition to accelerate, and correction windows to shrink, choosing not to act yet is not a neutral state.

When the old path is itself consuming the window for choice, waiting for final proof is also a choice.

And it may be an irreversible one.

But not waiting does not mean rushing into irreversible decisions. What should come first are actions that can be stopped and reversed, without closing off future opportunities to change course.

What exactly does “the only path” mean?

It does not claim that no second path could possibly exist anywhere in the universe.

It means that, when the old path has been judged unable to continue carrying super-capabilities, no second feasible path has yet emerged that can solve the same problems, and the window for changing direction cannot wait indefinitely, this is currently the only direction that cannot be postponed further.

The search for a second path proceeds alongside advancement of the current direction. The former is not a reason to wait; the latter is not a reason to exclude counterevidence.

Four things you can do today

You do not have to accept the whole theory first, or even agree with the name “Civilization Leap.” The next time you face a decision with major consequences, ask four additional questions:

First: Why must we win in this way?

Before asking how to win or get the task done, ask whether the goal itself has already become unquestionable.

Second: Who bears the consequences of this purpose?

Who will be affected? Who was not seen before the goal was locked in?

Third: Which consequences would make choosing again impossible?

Which losses cannot be offset by gains? Which mistakes, once made, leave no chance to put things right later?

Fourth: If these consequences entered before the purpose was locked in, would the purpose itself change?

If affected people and irreversible consequences were considered before setting the goal, would the original goal still be the only choice?

These four questions are something you can act on today.

When exactly does a purpose become locked in?

You can observe this in your own life and work:

- When does a decision become unquestionable?
- Before it was locked in, who was not seen?
- Would things have been different if someone had asked, “Whom will this affect?”

This does not ask you to abandon your own interests. It asks only that, before fixing a goal, you leave a place in the judgment for consequences that would leave no way back.

If you want to go further

This is only an entry.

The full intellectual assessment and causal chain are in the main text, How Can Civilization Continue in the Age of AI, AGI, and ASI?

How these judgments could be overturned, and what alternative paths exist, are examined in the research and falsification supplement.

What you can do today is remember those four questions the next time you make a decision.

Bring forward what can be brought forward; where that is impossible, leave the future room to change.

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