Journal of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies
ISSN-e: 2255-3479

Luis de la Corte Ibáñez
Autonomous University of Madrid

Email: luis.cortes@uam.es

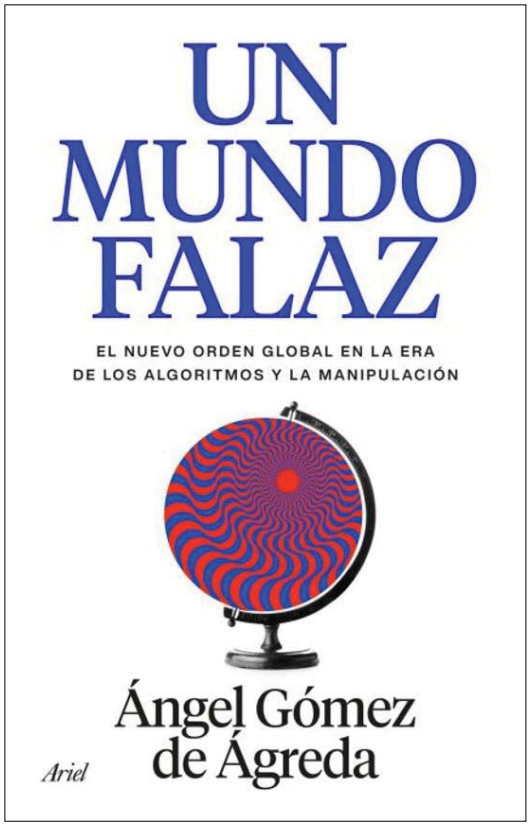
REVIEW

A Fallacious World. The New Global Order in the Age of Algorithms and Manipulation.

Ángel Gómez de Ágreda

Publisher: Ariel, 2026 (456) pages

ISBN: 978-84-434440-25-8



Artificial intelligence, disinformation, post-truth, technological rivalry between the United States and China, the power of major digital platforms, and cognitive warfare are some of the most recurring concepts in contemporary strategic debate. In recent years, they have generated a wealth of literature on the impact of the digital revolution on the economy, security, competition between powers and the very autonomy of the individual. This is hardly surprising, as with growing technological dependence, uncertainty also increases regarding who controls technical infrastructure, data, algorithms, the frameworks through which we interpret reality, and so on.

A recent contribution to these reflections can be found in *A Fallacious World. The New Global Order in the Age of Algorithms and Manipulation* (Ariel, 2026). Its author, Ángel Gómez de Ágreda, is a colonel in the Air and Space Force (in the reserves) and a recognised Spanish voice in debates on the relationship between digital technologies, security and conflict. He demonstrated this in his previous book, *Mundo Orwell. A Survival Guide for a Hyperconnected World*, published to great acclaim in 2019, where he elegantly and rigorously examined the social and cultural effects of digitalisation, from a humanist perspective that once again permeates this new book, in which the focus shifts to the current boom in artificial intelligence and its geo-economic, geopolitical and strategic implications. In fact, almost simultaneously, Gómez de Ágreda has published 2026, together with Enrique Martín Romero, another book of a more academic tone on *Inteligencia artificial y defensa* (published by Libros de la Catarata).

The author of *Un mundo falaz* makes a double nod to Aldous Huxley's celebrated novel, *Brave New World* (*Un mundo feliz*, as it was translated into spanish). The first nod is evident in the play on words that inspired the book's title, based on the paronymy between 'happy' [*feliz*] and 'fallacious' [*falaz*]. The second is reflected in the text's structure, with its contents organised into five sections titled respectively with the categories α, β, γ, δ and ε, in direct reference to the caste system Aldous Huxley described in his novel. Gómez de Ágreda thus draws on this dystopian imagery as a formal device. The aim? To show how the digital revolution is altering the mechanisms by which societies distinguish (and mix up and confuse) the true from the false, the material foundations of wealth and the balances of power between states.

The book begins with the contemporary crisis of truth, although the perspective is considerably broader and more ambitious than that found in the deluge of recent works on issues such as disinformation and fake news. The focus turns to digital ecosystems capable of tailoring messages, reinforcing pre-existing biases and exploiting individual emotions on a massive scale. According to the author's analysis, the isolated lie loses its centrality in the face of fragmented information environments where emotional narratives often take precedence over fact-checking.

The second major transformation described in the book concerns artificial intelligence. Gómez de Ágreda inevitably points out that this is not just another sector-specific innovation, but a cross-cutting technology with simultaneous effects on productivity, employment, scientific innovation, decision-making and international

competition. The battle over algorithms matters, but the author quickly moves on to consider other, more decisive factors: advanced semiconductors, computing power, cloud infrastructure and massive data accumulation. The geoeconomics of artificial intelligence—who produces, who designs, who stores and who processes—emerges as one of the main axes of the rivalry between the United States and China. The book emphasises that this competition is not fought solely in laboratories or software companies. It also cuts across global supply chains that are extraordinarily vulnerable and concentrated. The West's dependence on Asian production of advanced semiconductors, Taiwan's strategic importance, US restrictions on chip exports to China, and the race to secure critical minerals all demonstrate that artificial intelligence is reviving old concerns about industrial autonomy, technological dependence and strategic vulnerability.

Un mundo falaz ties in with one of the most significant strategic debates of recent years, raised by Henry Kissinger, Eric Schmidt and Daniel Huttenlocher in *The Age of AI*, published in 2021. The authors of that work posited that artificial intelligence would not only transform specific economic or military sectors and capabilities, but would also alter the very relationship between knowledge, decision-making and power. Kissinger also raised a question of particular relevance to strategic studies: what happens when decision-making systems begin to rely on tools whose inner workings are not even fully understood by the operators themselves. The possibility of delegating critical decisions to opaque technologies, the acceleration of decision-making cycles and the risk of errors amplified by automation were central to that reflection. Gómez de Ágreda takes this into account, but chooses to shift the perspective from decision-making elites towards societies exposed to new mechanisms of influence and states increasingly dependent on private technological actors.

Gómez de Ágreda is concerned by the process of power redistribution between public and private actors, explaining how Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Meta or their Chinese equivalents have acquired a strategic significance that is difficult to overstate: they control critical infrastructure, concentrate data on an unprecedented scale and are increasingly involved in spheres traditionally linked to state power. In line with this concern, the book examines the relationship of cooperation, dependence and friction between governments and large technology corporations in a context where classical sovereignty is showing clear signs of fragmentation.

The military dimension also features prominently in the book. The war in Ukraine is presented as a testing ground for accelerated technological adaptation, and the Middle East as a theatre where artificial intelligence tools have begun to be deployed in the field for surveillance, target identification and decision support. This transformation is leading to the use of autonomous drones, logistical automation and the relentless development of new electronic and cyber warfare capabilities. It is suggested that future conflicts will likely be defined less by isolated platforms than by the ability to integrate data, processing speed and real-time operational adaptation. On this point, it engages indirectly with works such as Paul Scharre's *Army of None* or *Four Battlegrounds*, though it maintains a broader and less specialised focus.

Much of the recent literature on artificial intelligence and the digital revolution tends to remain confined within watertight—or nearly so—compartments. I am exaggerating slightly, but some works focus almost exclusively on its effects on productivity and innovation; others reduce the debate to its impact on the rivalry between Washington and Beijing; others drift into normative discussions on liberal democracy, privacy or digital rights. Gómez de Ágreda moves quite freely between these registers without getting trapped in any of them. This ability is particularly valuable in Spanish, where highly specialised texts or popular essays that oversimplify complex debates continue to predominate.

Although Gómez de Ágreda's professional career is linked to the field of defence and security, the book avoids the jargon of technical literature and the frenetic tone of journalistic commentary on innovation. It seamlessly alternates between strategic issues, historical references, philosophical debates and economic transformations, without compromising readability. In contrast to certain almost messianic discourses on artificial intelligence, he reminds us of something fundamental: technology profoundly alters the strategic environment, but it continues to operate within geographical, economic, political and human constraints that no innovation can eliminate on its own.

The most interesting discussion raised by *Un mundo faliz* concerns not so much the phenomena it describes and anticipates (all plausible) as the lens through which it observes them. Gómez de Ágreda focuses his analysis on the strategic, political and anthropological costs of the digital revolution: concentration of power, erosion of individual autonomy, cognitive manipulation, technological rivalry between major powers and the fragmentation of sovereignty. This choice is understandable and ties in with a school of thought that has been highly visible in recent years, one that is acutely aware of the destabilising effects of artificial intelligence and major tech platforms. The book issues this warning with solid arguments and convincing examples, but devotes far less attention to the capabilities that these same technologies are generating in fields such as productivity, scientific research, medicine, logistics, public administration, or certain security and defence applications. The choice of perspective reinforces the power of the warning articulated in the book, but also places it within a body of contemporary literature inclined to project the bleakest scenarios of every major technological leap. The history of innovation shows that the most dystopian predictions rarely accurately anticipate all the effects of a technological transformation. Gómez de Ágreda's text, it must be clarified, does not quite reach the level of dystopia, but it comes close—or at least that is the impression many of its readers are likely to take away.

Of course, none of this detracts from the value of *Un mundo falaz*. On the contrary: its main merit lies in formulating, with clarity and ambition, one of the central strategic questions of our age. For centuries, international power was measured primarily in terms of territory, population, natural resources or military capability. These factors remain decisive, but today they coexist with new sources of technological power. Gómez de Ágreda frequently leans towards the most unsettling scenarios of this transformation, but he accurately identifies the central problem:

artificial intelligence is altering how we make decisions, how we compete and how we understand the world. And that makes this book essential reading for anyone attempting to think about the future of strategy. Essential and thought-provoking.

Review received: 27 March 2026
Review accepted: 4 May 2026