

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

CAN HUMANITY SURVIVE?

Yes — **humanity can survive**. But survival is not guaranteed, and the interesting question is perhaps not simply *whether* humanity survives.

It is:

What kind of humanity survives?

There are at least three different meanings of survival:

1. **Biological survival** — humans remain as a species.
2. **Civilizational survival** — complex societies, institutions, knowledge and culture continue.
3. **Human survival** — the qualities we associate with being human—freedom, dignity, relationship, curiosity, compassion, meaning—remain central to how we live.

The first may be easier to achieve than the third.

The great paradox

Humanity possesses unprecedented capacities to **destroy itself**, but also unprecedented capacities to **understand and cooperate**.

We can create nuclear weapons, alter the climate, engineer biological systems and develop increasingly autonomous technologies.

But those same human capacities give us science, medicine, international cooperation, communication, disaster preparation and the ability to recognize dangers before they become irreversible.

So the central problem may not be:

Can humanity survive?

It may be:

Can humanity become capable of governing the power it has created?

That connects directly with the political imperatives we were discussing.

The 20th century asked:

Who should have power?

The 21st century may have to ask:

How much power should humanity possess—and how can that power remain under human control?

And perhaps there is an even deeper question:

Can a species capable of imagining its own extinction learn to act collectively before that possibility becomes reality?

That is not a question with a certain answer.

But uncertainty itself does not mean hopelessness. **The future is not yet an established fact.** It remains partly the consequence of choices made by billions of people and the institutions they create.

So perhaps the most important imperative of the 21st century is neither *survival* nor *progress*.

It is **responsibility**.

We have acquired the power to affect the future of humanity. The question is whether we can acquire the wisdom to use that power.

SOURCE: ChatGPT