CONCIERTO | SOVEREIGN INTELLIGENCE

SOVEREIGN PERSPECTIVES · PURPOSEFUL INTELLIGENCE

Orchestrated Intelligence

More Capability per Unit of Compute

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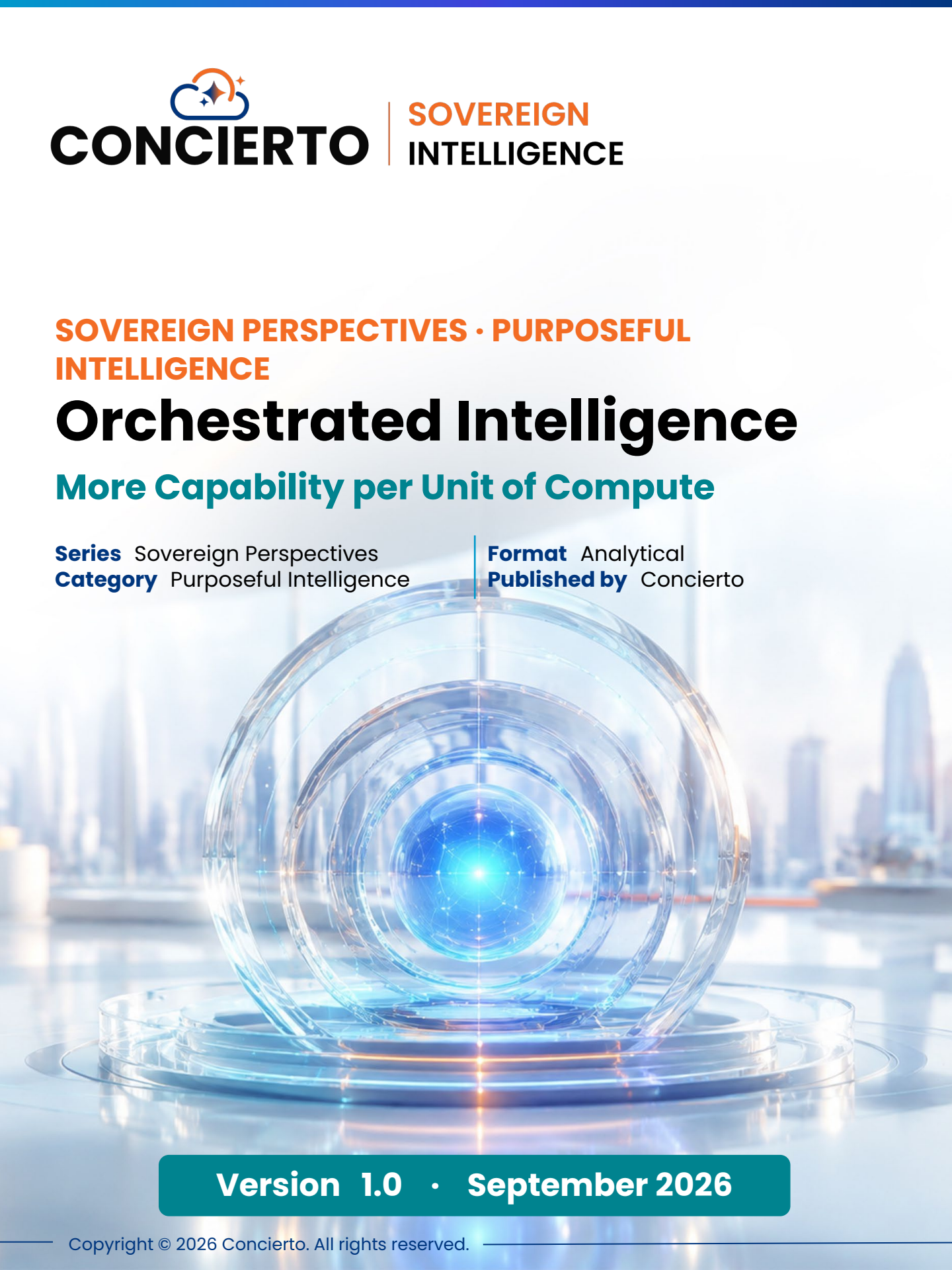

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At a Glance

9→74% what more thinking buys on a hard task

~6x the cost of buying it by brute force

+40%/yr the pace at which efficiency compounds

In Brief

- Capability can be bought two ways: brute force, one ever-larger model thinking hard on everything, or orchestration, the right capability applied to each task.
- Brute force works but is punishingly inefficient: more thinking lifts accuracy, while cost and latency rise far faster than the score.
- Efficiency is compounding on its own, so the durable advantage goes to whoever wastes the least, not whoever spends the most.
- Orchestration, matching specialized models, tools, and retrieval to each task, delivers more capability per unit of compute than any single model can.
- Orchestration is a system a buyer can own and tune, which turns efficiency from a hope into a controlled capability.

Executive Summary

There are two ways to make AI more capable. One is to make a single model bigger and let it think harder on every task. The other is to orchestrate the right capability for each task, drawing on specialized models, tools, and retrieval so that effort is spent where it earns its keep. The first is seductive and expensive: a reasoning model can lift a hard score from 9 percent to 74 percent, but at roughly six times the cost and thirty times the latency. The second is where the durable gains live, because efficiency itself is compounding: the unit cost of computation falls about 30 percent a year while energy efficiency rises about 40 percent. This paper argues that capability now comes from orchestration, not brute force, and that orchestration is a capability an enterprise or a nation should own.

Brute force buys capability by the ton. Orchestration buys it by the task, and pays a fraction of the price.

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1. Two Ways to Buy Capability

When an AI system needs to do more, there are two paths. The brute-force path makes the model larger and lets it spend more computation on every request, so that even a simple task runs through a system built for the hardest one. The orchestration path keeps a range of capabilities on hand, specialized models, tools, retrieval, and human checks, and routes each task to the least expensive capability that can do it well. Both raise what a system can do. Only one raises what it can do per unit of cost.

The question is not how powerful a single model can be, but how little it can cost to get each task done well.

2. The Price of Brute Force

Brute force is real, and it is expensive. Letting a model think longer can transform a hard task: on one difficult qualifier, a reasoning model reached 74 percent where a prior-generation model scored 9 percent. But that lift came at roughly six times the cost and thirty times the latency, and the same premium is charged on the easy tasks that never needed it. A system that meets every request with maximum thinking pays for maximum thinking on all of them, most of which could have been answered for a fraction of the price.

~6x

More thinking lifts the hardest scores, but the cost and delay rise far faster than the accuracy.

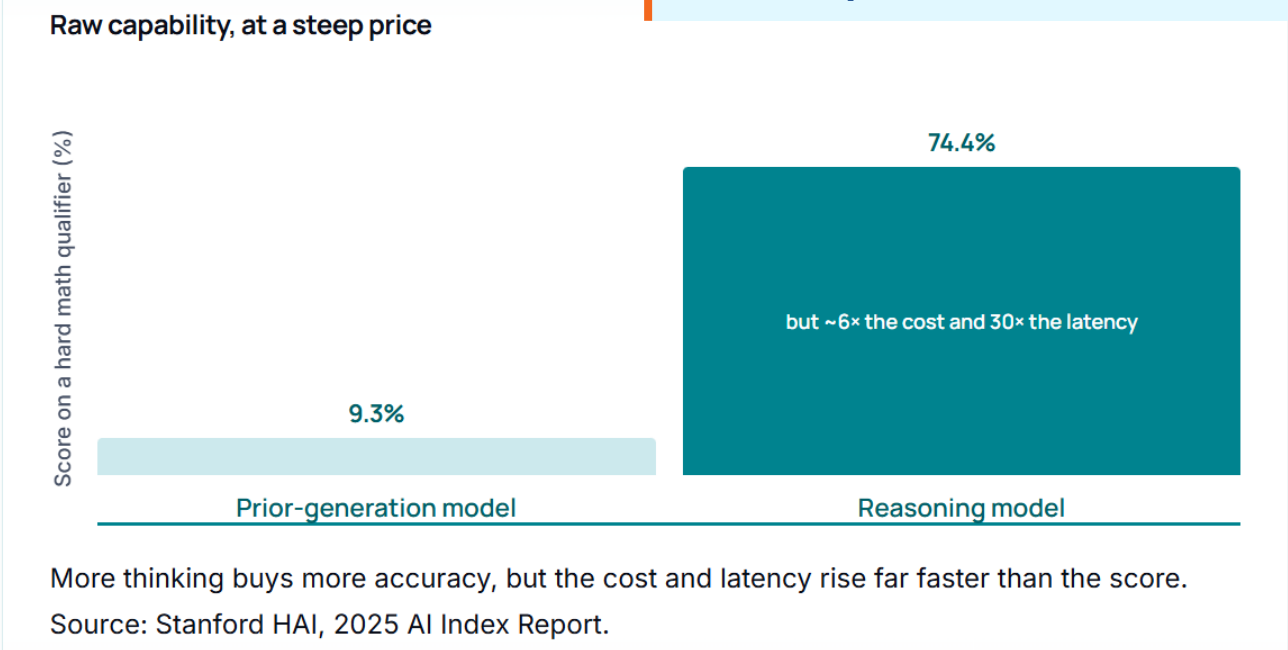

Figure 1. What more thinking buys, and what it costs. Source: Stanford HAI, 2025 AI Index Report.

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3. Efficiency Is Already Compounding

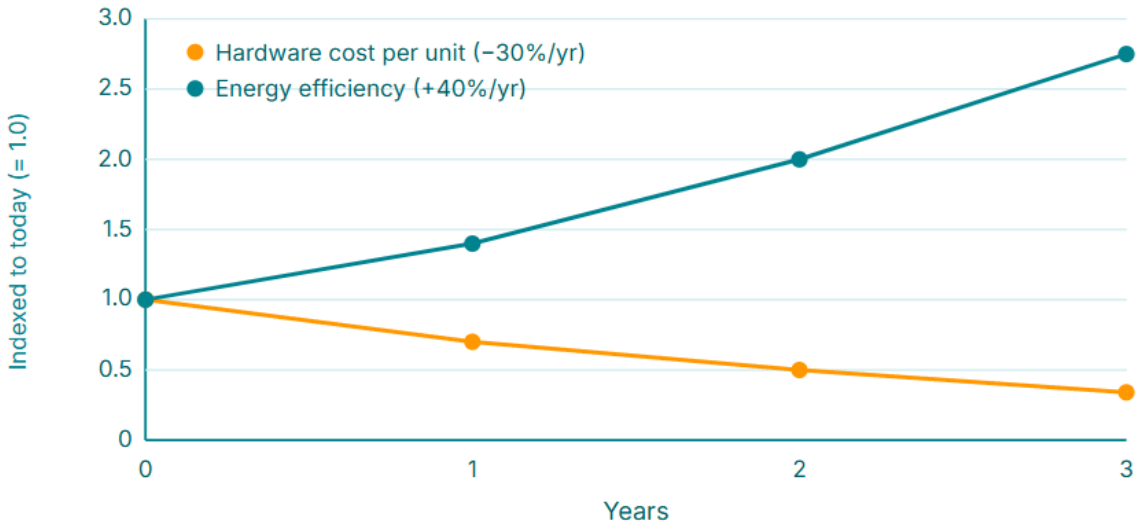
While brute force spends, efficiency compounds on its own. The unit cost of computation is falling about 30 percent a year, energy efficiency is rising about 40 percent, and small models keep matching far larger ones.

This matters strategically: in a market where the cost of raw capability drops this fast, the lasting advantage does not belong to whoever buys the most compute this year, because that purchase depreciates rapidly. It belongs to whoever wastes the least, because a system designed for efficiency captures every one of those annual gains, while a system designed for brute force pays full price to ignore them.

+40% / -30%

Efficiency rises and cost falls every year, so the durable edge goes to whoever wastes the least, not who spends the most.

Efficiency is compounding, year over year



The unit cost of computation is falling ~30% a year while energy efficiency rises ~40% a year. Source: Stanford HAI, 2025 AI Index Report.

Figure 2. Cost falling, efficiency rising, year over year. Source: Stanford HAI, 2025 AI Index Report.

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4. Orchestration Beats Brute Force

Orchestration is also what keeps a fleet of agents from becoming a cost of its own. As agents multiply and begin passing work between one another, a growing share of the compute goes not into output but into coordination, agents re-establishing context, checking one another, and redoing work a less precise step got wrong. Owned orchestration over efficient, purpose-fitted models contains that coordination tax; a swarm of heavy rented agents on a meter amplifies it. The more agentic the estate becomes, the more the orchestration layer, and who owns it, decides whether scale produces leverage or overhead.

Put the two together and the strategy is clear. If efficiency compounds and brute force is expensive, the highest capability per unit of compute comes from orchestration: sending each task to the least costly capability that can do it well, reserving the expensive reasoning for the tasks that truly need it, grounding answers in retrieval rather than paying a giant to memorize, and keeping specialized models for the domains they serve. Orchestration is not a smaller version of brute force. It is a different and better machine, one that gets more done for less and gets more efficient every year the underlying costs fall.

A single giant model applies its full weight to every task. An orchestrated system applies exactly what each task requires, and no more.

5. Why Orchestration Must Be Owned

Orchestration only pays off if the one who benefits controls it. A rented, one-model service decides for the buyer how much thinking each task gets, and prices accordingly; the buyer cannot route, tune, or capture the compounding efficiency gains, because the routing happens inside a system it does not own. An owned orchestration layer puts those decisions where they belong: the enterprise or nation chooses which capability meets which task, tunes the balance of cost and quality to its own needs, and keeps every efficiency gain for itself. Ownership is what turns orchestration from a vendor's optimization into the buyer's advantage.

Per task
Owned orchestration meters intelligence to the task, so a productive year does not become a punishing bill.



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Rented brute force	Owned orchestration
One model, maximum thinking on every task	The right capability matched to each task
Pays the premium on easy tasks too	Reserves the premium for tasks that need it
Efficiency gains accrue to the supplier	Efficiency gains accrue to the owner
Capability capped by one model's economics	Capability compounds as the system is tuned

6. What Leaders Must Do

- **Stop paying brute-force prices for routine work.** Reserve maximum-thinking models for the hardest tasks and route the rest to cheaper capability.
- **Build an orchestration layer you own.** Own the routing, so the choice of which capability meets which task, and the savings, stay with you.
- **Design for the falling cost curve.** Build a system that captures the annual efficiency gains rather than one that pays full price to ignore them.
- **Ground, don't memorize.** Use retrieval to

The most capable AI system is not the one with the biggest model. It is the one that wastes the least to get each task done.

7. The Reframe

Brute force made the headlines, because a single model doing everything is a simple and impressive story. But the economics point elsewhere. Capability is converging, efficiency is compounding, and the durable advantage belongs to the system that spends the least to do each task well. That system is orchestrated, not monolithic, and it is owned, not rented, because only an owner can route the work, tune the trade-offs, and keep the gains. The future of capable AI is not a bigger brain. It is a better-run one.

Intelligence advances by orchestration now, not by mass. The advantage goes to whoever conducts it, and owns the score.

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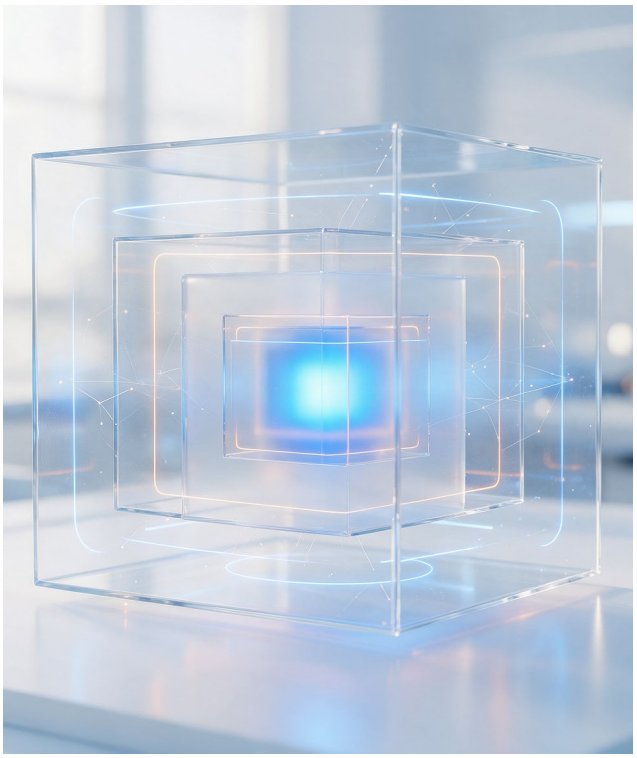

About This Series

Sovereign Perspectives is a research program on the ownership and governance of intelligence, published by Concierto. Its papers examine the strategic, economic, and institutional questions that artificial intelligence raises for governments and other accountable institutions, and they are written for the leaders making those decisions. The program's aim is to advance the public argument, not to promote a product.

Sources

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