

PLATFORM POWER



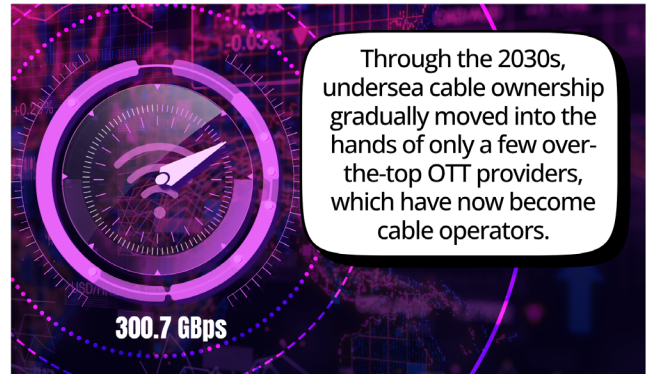
Through the 2030s, undersea cable ownership gradually moved into the hands of only a few over-the-top (OTT) providers, which have now become cable operators.



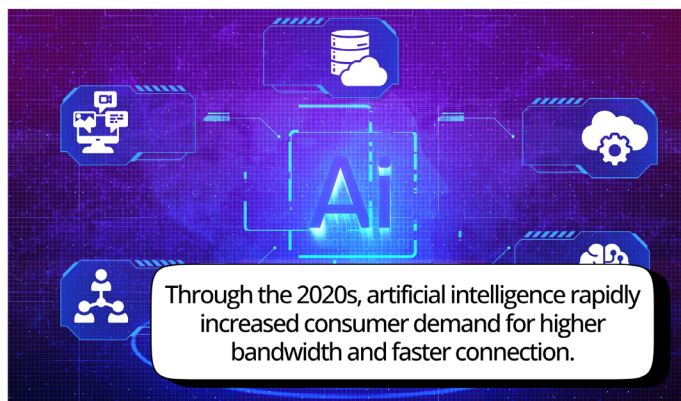
Control of this essential infrastructure shifted away from telecom carriers to a small group of large multinational technology companies.



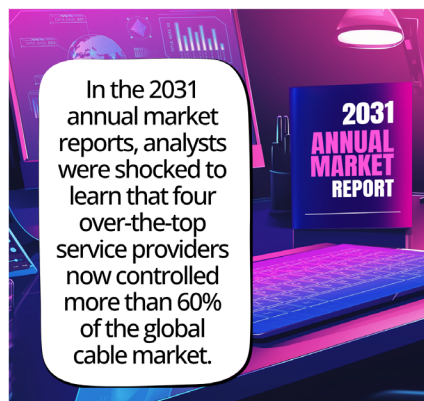
By the 2040s, decisions about establishing and maintaining international cable connections are driven primarily by private sector interests.



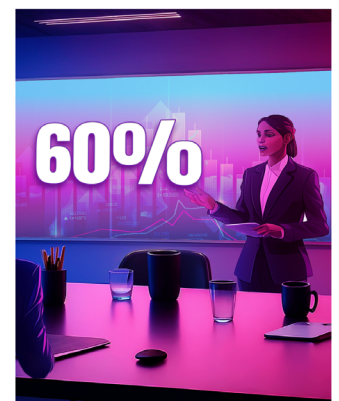
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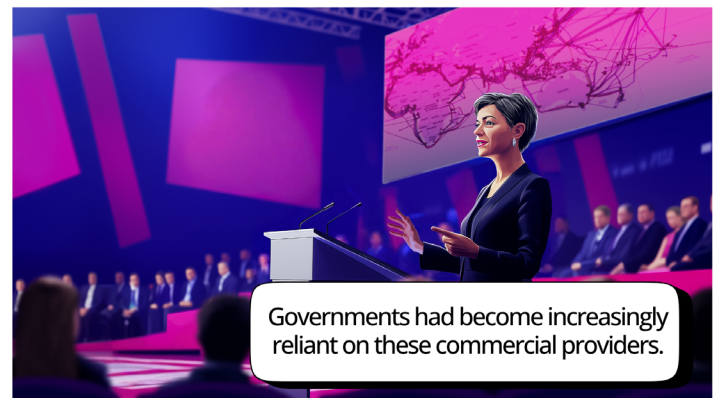
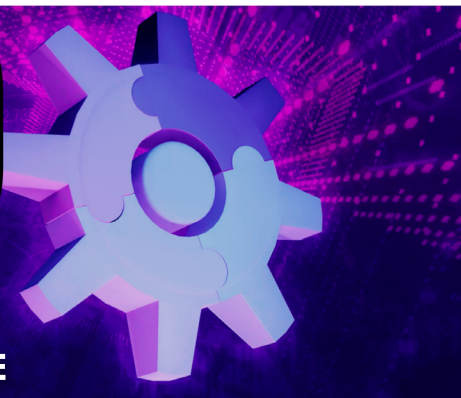
Through the 2020s, artificial intelligence rapidly increased consumer demand for higher bandwidth and faster connection.



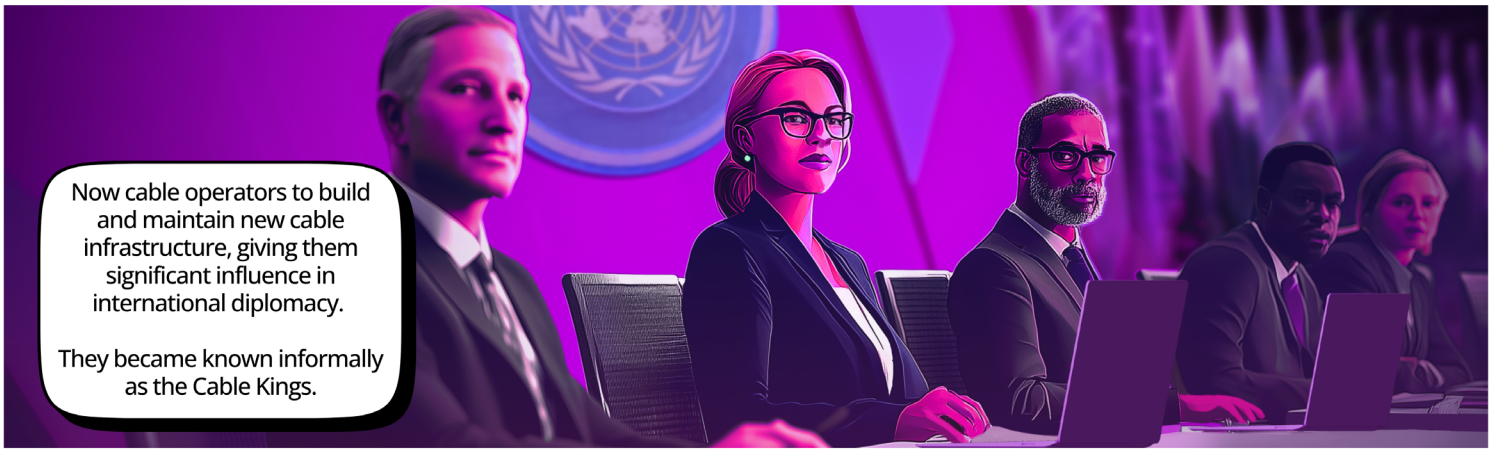
In the 2031 annual market reports, analysts were shocked to learn that four over-the-top service providers now controlled more than 60% of the global cable market.



Traditional consortia models had been largely replaced by single company ownership



Governments had become increasingly reliant on these commercial providers.



Now cable operators to build and maintain new cable infrastructure, giving them significant influence in international diplomacy. They became known informally as the Cable Kings.



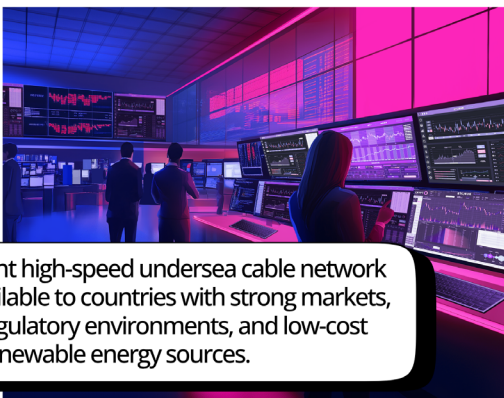
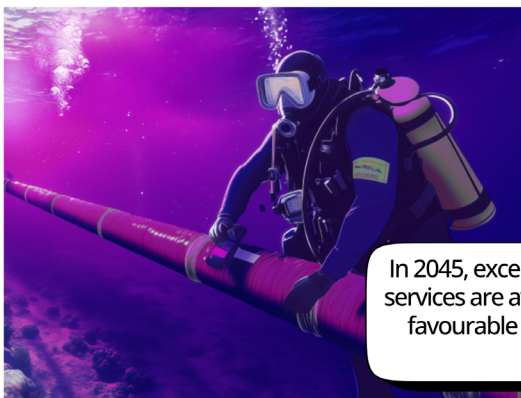
In 2037, two countries - Solkara & Brenthia - were vying for a significant cable bid to establish a new data hub in the region. Surprisingly, the bid was won by Brenthia despite it being a less favorable location for cable endpoints.



Commentators attributed Solkara's loss of the bid to its lack of affordable green energy and strict cabotage laws that require Solkara's domestically owned vessels to carry out any cable repairs within their maritime zones.

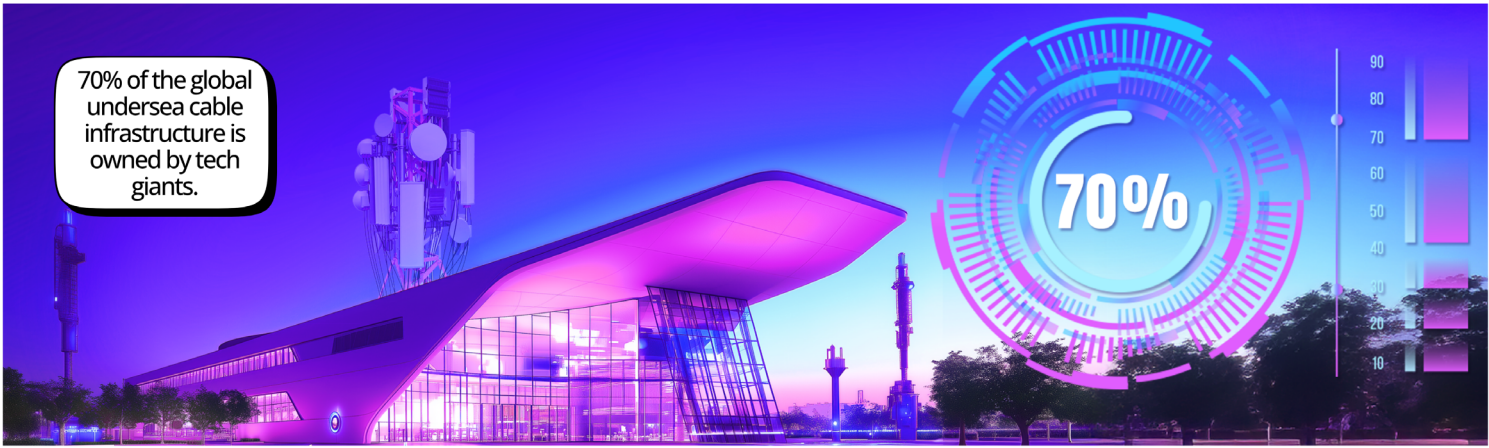


Investment in research and development of satellite technology increased during the 2030s as countries wanted to supplement cable connectivity with satellite connectivity.



In 2045, excellent high-speed undersea cable network services are available to countries with strong markets, favourable regulatory environments, and low-cost renewable energy sources.

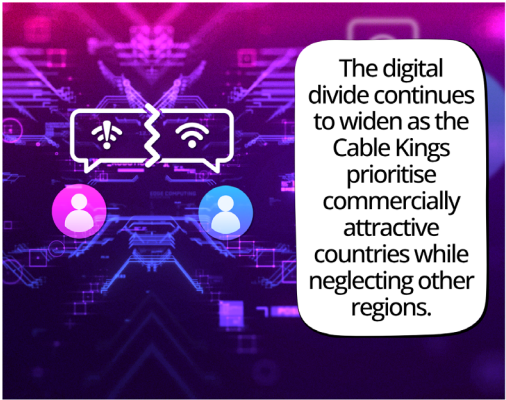




70% of the global undersea cable infrastructure is owned by tech giants.



Across the region, operators concentrated their cable endpoints in a few countries the United States, Indonesia, Singapore and Australia to reduce the cost of maintenance and energy requirements, turning them into central data hubs.



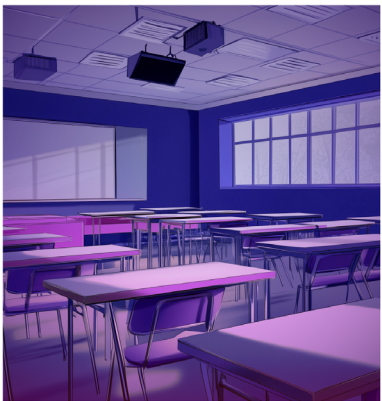
The digital divide continues to widen as the Cable Kings prioritise commercially attractive countries while neglecting other regions.



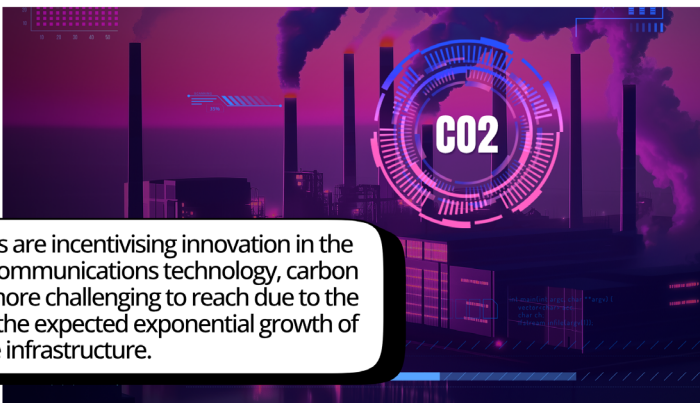
This results in less commercially attractive countries needing to rely on satellites with slower connectivity speeds.



The United Nations recognises connectivity inequality as a major cause of negative impacts on population, health, education, and employment outcomes for people outside of core cable hotspots.



While some governments are incentivising innovation in the sustainability of satellite communications technology, carbon emission targets are far more challenging to reach due to the energy requirements for the expected exponential growth of cable infrastructure.





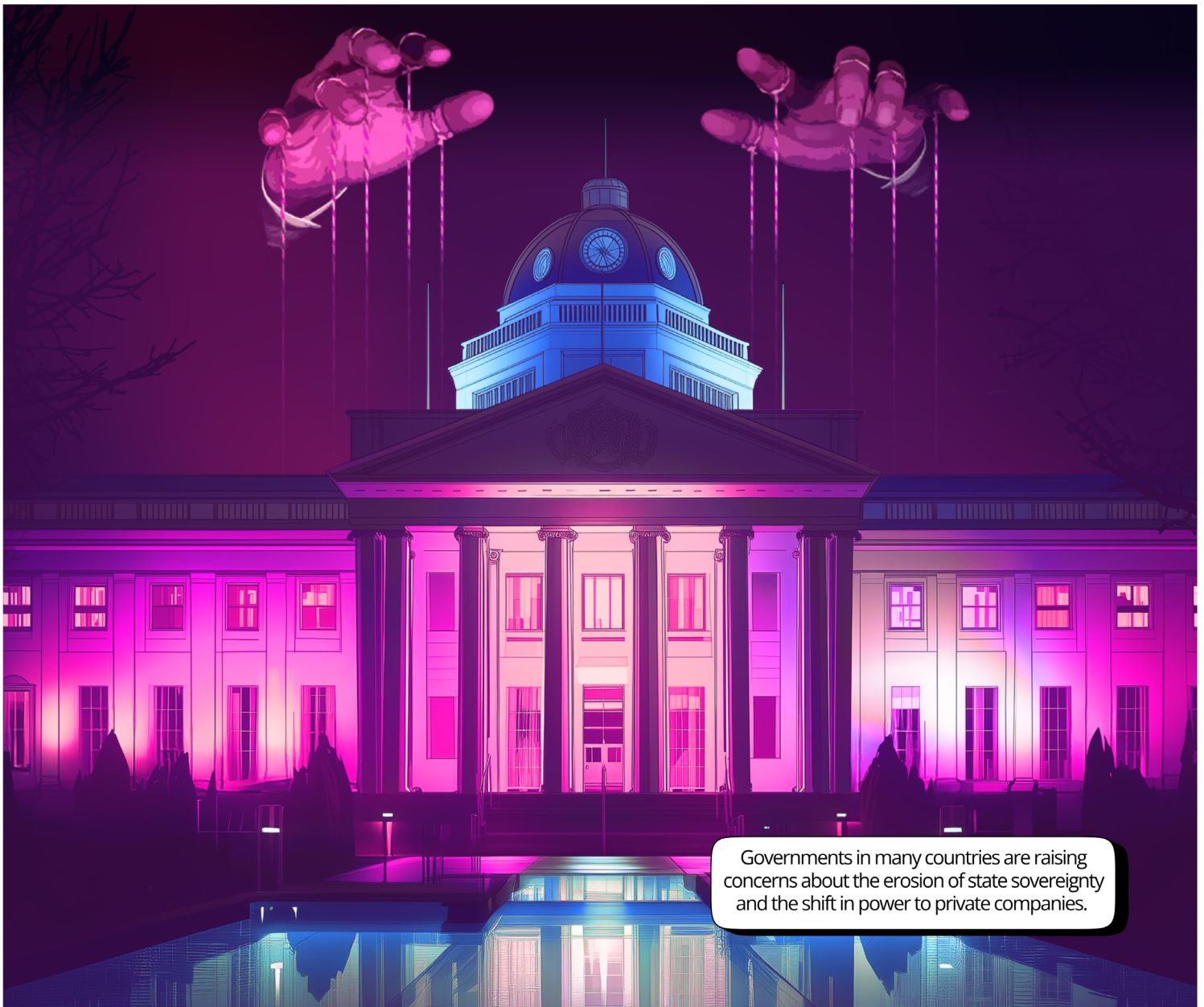
The increased reliance on cable infrastructure is leading to growing reluctance from governments of smaller economies to impose regulations on cable companies due to the fear of corporate retaliation.



I just turned 18, and you would think I'd be excited about finally getting the right to vote.



But what is the point in voting when governments are no longer the ones who decide how we live and talk to each other, and how we access health care and transport?



Governments in many countries are raising concerns about the erosion of state sovereignty and the shift in power to private companies.