



Inside Track

Scientists Warn: Conscious Killer Robots Could Destroy Humanity

The development of “killer robots” that could be misused already appears a given, but now experts speak of “the possibility of AI developing consciousness, which some warn could be used by machines to rebel against humans and kill us,” wrote the *Daily Star* on December 23.

Subhash Kak, a professor of electrical and computer engineering at Oklahoma University, told the paper that if “indeed machines become self-aware, they will be cunning and they will bide their time and choose the best moment to take over and enslave, if not kill, us.”

Yet it’s unlikely slavery is in the cards. As a commenter under the *Star* piece put it, “It doesn’t take the smartest human to realize that if ‘conscious’ AI robots wanted slaves, they would build ‘less-conscious’ robots, rather than rely on such an ineffective and unpredictable set of tools as the human race. They would simply eliminate all humans.”

While Kak points out that he doesn’t actually believe robots can develop self-awareness because of the uniqueness of man’s consciousness, he does warn that there’d likely be serious consequences if they did. In essence, such a development would confront us with entities vastly stronger, sturdier, and more intelligent than ourselves, but which presumably would be conscienceless.

But according to Kak, many scientists believe a future robot takeover is a very real threat. After all, they believe consciousness has already been achieved by robots: humans. This belief is an outgrowth of atheism. If we’re merely cosmic-accident-born material beings bereft of souls, we’re then just some pounds of chemicals and water. We’re just an interesting arrangement of atoms — organic robots.

Assuming for argument’s sake that conscious robots could become reality, what we should truly fear is their inculcation with an atheistic worldview. To the point here, what could be wrong with terminating an organic robot’s function? A conscious robot might not have a reason to kill us. But it sure wouldn’t have a reason not to.

Facebook Drops “Fake News” Red Flags

Just one year after introducing its “fake news” red flags, Facebook has discontinued the tool after having to face the fact that it just didn’t work. In fact, many users were sharing articles tagged by the social media giant as a result of their being tagged.

The “Disputed” article flagging feature — introduced in December 2016 — was designed to stop the spread of articles the leadership of Facebook considered as misinformation. Of course, Facebook — with its record of manipulating users’ newsfeeds, censoring posts expressing views different from those of its leadership, and violating users’ privacy — is not, perhaps, the best judge of what is and is not “fake news.” It is certainly not the sole arbiter of truth.

In announcing its decision to ditch the “fake news” red flags, Facebook Product Manager Tessa Lyons wrote in a December 20 blog post, “Academic research on correcting misinformation has shown that putting a strong image, like a red flag, next to an article may actually entrench deeply held beliefs — the opposite effect to what we intended.” In other words, for those already inclined to doubt the



Written by [Staff](#) on January 22, 2018

Published in the January 22, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 02

veracity of Facebook, calling an article “fake news” served more as a “hey, maybe there’s something to this” flag.

In her blog post, Lyons explained that the “Disputed” flag would be replaced with a feature that lists “related articles” next to the information that Facebook deems unreliable. This new feature is based on research conducted by Facebook that showed that when questionable articles had related articles next to them, users were less likely to repost them. Lyons wrote, “False news undermines the unique value that Facebook offers: the ability for you to connect with family and friends in meaningful ways. It’s why we’re investing in better technology and more people to help prevent the spread of misinformation.”

There is no question that misinformation is spread on social media. But Facebook’s attempt to “prevent the spread of misinformation” is coupled with its efforts to spread misinformation. That is a recipe for failure. The selective spread of misinformation is still misinformation.

Poland, Hungary Object to EU Attacks on Poland’s Sovereignty

Zsolt Semjen, deputy prime minister of Hungary, stood up for Poland on December 20 after the European Commission (EC), which enforces the law of the EU, announced December 20 that it is implementing “Article Seven” disciplinary action against the eastern European country. The EC objects to two recently passed Polish laws (along with others passed in recent years) that allegedly threaten the principle of separation of powers. Under Article Seven, sanctions can be imposed against Poland if it fails to bring its laws into conformity with the European superstate’s dictates.

The commission has argued that the Polish laws it disapproves of give too much power to the ruling party over Poland’s Supreme Court and another Polish body that nominates judges. Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, charged that Poland had “practically liquidated judicial independence in Poland.” Article Seven has never been used before against a member nation of the EU. Ultimately, it would lead to Poland losing its voting rights within the EU.

President Andrzej Duda of Poland differed with that assessment, however, arguing that the laws actually uphold a democratic government by making the courts and judges more accountable to the people. He termed the laws “unusually democratic.” Poland’s prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, defended his government’s decision, insisting that the country is “devoted to the rule of law,” but argued, “Current judiciary reform is deeply needed. The dialogue between the Commission and Warsaw needs to be both open and honest. I believe that Poland’s sovereignty and the idea of United Europe can be reconciled.”

But EU Commissioner Frans Timmermans explained, “We are doing this for Poland, for Polish citizens.” In other words, the EU is making itself the superior of the Polish government, asserting it knows best as to what is good for Poles. The goals of the EU are considered more important than the national sovereignty of Poland. Beata Mazurek of Poland’s ruling Law and Justice Party suggested that the real purpose of the EU Commission is to punish Poland for its refusal to accept Muslim migrants.

Trump Cuts UN Budget by \$285 Million; Step in “Right Direction”

After dispatching a fringe United Nations bureaucrat to investigate “extreme poverty” in the richest nation in human history, the UN is about to get poorer. The Trump administration helped negotiate a



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\$285 million reduction in the UN's budget for the upcoming two-year period. That is a five-percent decrease from the 2016-2017 budget, far less than the 50-percent reduction originally sought by Trump early in his administration. Still, the move, touted as a "big step in the right direction" by Trump's UN ambassador, Nikki Haley, was praised by supporters of the president, Republican lawmakers, and critics of the "dictators club" from across the political spectrum.

The budget reduction was hailed in a December 24 statement as one among a "host of successes" by the U.S. State Department. "The inefficiency and overspending of the United Nations are well known," said Ambassador Haley. "We will no longer let the generosity of the American people be taken advantage of or remain unchecked. This historic reduction in spending — in addition to many other moves toward a more efficient and accountable UN — is a big step in the right direction. While we are pleased with the results of this year's budget negotiations, you can be sure we'll continue to look at ways to increase the UN's efficiency while protecting our interests."

UN officials had a different spin on the budget negotiations. Unrepentant Communist Party operative Miroslav Lajcák, the president of the UN General Assembly, for example, proclaimed in a December 26 press release that "progress" would be measured by "the impact the United Nations makes on people's lives." "Our work is not yet done. We have more to do next year," he said, touting the "Global Compact for Migration" and the totalitarian Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and reforming the Security Council, among other items on the UN wish list.

For longtime critics of the dictators club, the only sustainable solution is a full U.S. withdrawal under the American Sovereignty Restoration Act (H.R. 193). While the trends are encouraging, Americans must keep the pressure on.



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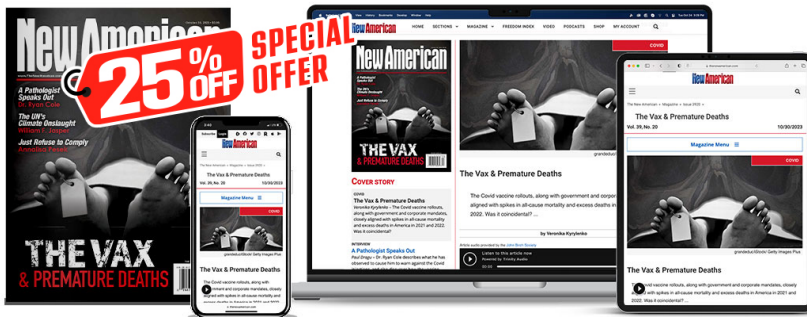
Published in the January 22, 2018 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 34, No. 02

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