



Life Matters Journal

V. 11, ISSUE 4 — AUGUST 2023

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Overlooked Conflicts: Sudan on the Brink

Titan vs. Trawler: Sympathy and Aid are For Sale

The Danger of Russian Instability:
The Wagner Group Uprising and Its Significance

Unforgettable Hours of Love

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

It is with mixed emotions that I write to you. I have accepted a job offer at a local institute that conducts research on best practices in palliative and hospice care, and so I will unfortunately be ending my time with Rehumanize International. I fully intend to continue to support Rehumanize financially and through volunteer work, because I truly believe in the work my coworkers will continue doing.



I have been so honored to learn from all the wonderful people in the Consistent Life Ethic movement, including those who are featured in this August issue of *Life Matters Journal*. We have Samuel B. Parker addressing the inconsistencies highlighted by the Titan and Trawler tragedies; John Whitehead continuing his excellent coverage of international conflicts, this time in Russia and Sudan; a poignant creative piece from former *LMJ* editor in chief Mary Stroka; a reflection on the future of military artificial intelligence by our newest staff writer, Joseph Buonanno; and Grattan Brown, STD, continuing his Pro-Life Professional Insight series with Susan Bane, MD.

Although I am excited for my new role, I will miss all of the friends I've made over the past three years in my role at Rehumanize. I have confidence that my colleagues will be able to carry on and continue the work without me, but please give them a little extra grace over the next few months as they make the transition!

Once again, it has truly been a great privilege to get to know all of you over the past three years; I wouldn't trade it for anything.

For peace and life,

Sarah Slater

This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether that violence is legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence. We are *Life Matters Journal*, and we are here because politics kills.

Disclaimer

The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the Consistent Life Ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.

CONTENTS

CURRENT EVENTS: Titan vs. Trawler:
Sympathy and Aid are For Sale 1

CURRENT EVENTS: The Danger of Russian Instability:
The Wagner Group Uprising and Its Significance 2

CURRENT EVENTS: Overlooked Conflicts:
Sudan on the Brink 4

CREATIVE: Lene 6

ESSAY: The Extreme Danger Posed by
Military Artificial Intelligence 7

ESSAY: Unforgettable Hours of Love 8

Life Matters Journal

AUGUST 2023

Editor in Chief Maria Oswalt

Staff Editors Francis Ittenbach, John Whitehead,
Samuel B. Parker, Kelly Matula, Samantha Kamman

Staff Writers Kristina Artuković, Grattan Brown,
Jack Champagne, Briana Grzybowski,
Jordan Kennedy, Samuel B. Parker, Sophie Trist,
John Whitehead, Naomi Wick, Sean Wild

Executive Director of Rehumanize International Herb Geraghty

REHUMANIZEINTL.ORG



Titan vs. Trawler: Sympathy and Aid are For Sale

By Samuel B. Parker

On June 14th, a small fishing trawler — reportedly bound for Italy from North Africa, and packed with over 700 migrant men, women, and children — capsized and sank in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Greece.¹ Dozens of bodies have been recovered, and hundreds more are missing and presumed dead.

And all this week, the world has been riveted on maritime disaster. But not that one.

Only four days after the migrants aboard the stricken boat met a harrowing end, another vessel vanished in the depths of the North Atlantic. A tiny submersible dubbed the “Titan,” owned and operated by the tourism and exploration firm OceanGate, lost contact with its auxiliary support ship while ferrying passengers and crew to the ocean floor to see the wreckage of the infamous Titanic.²

But you probably already knew about that.

Many have already compared the media coverage of the two events, and criticized the glaring disparities. While the plight of the trawler occupied headlines for perhaps a day, outlets have provided round-the-clock coverage of every possible aspect of the Titan’s disappearance.

We received minute-by-minute breakdowns of the search and rescue operations, including analysis on exactly how many hours of oxygen remained for the five stranded occupants of the Titan. We were fed “expert” speculations as to the probable conditions inside the craft and the mentalities of those aboard it, as well as testimonials from people who had been inside of — or perhaps had once considered being inside of — the sub. We learned the apparently vital distinction between a “submarine” and a “submersible.” We even read about OceanGate CEO Stockton Rush’s history of political donations, and about the antics of his stepson during the crisis.^{3,4}

The trawler gets a cursory nod. The Titan gets chronic, obsessive attention that somehow inexplicably includes Blink-182, OnlyFans models, and the opinion of Cardi B.

As repulsive as this incongruity is, it is not even the most damning thing about the confluence of these two events.

For days on end, governments and private contractors joined forces to comb through an area of the Atlantic that is twice the size of the U.S. state of Connecticut, desperately racing the clock to find the Titan. Planes and ships scoured the surface, while GPS and sonar were used to troll the depths. Thousands of man-hours and millions of dollars were doubtless spent.

And that is the correct response. When human lives are at stake, no

time should be wasted and no expense should be spared. Every potential option ought to be explored. When it is possible — and it is often possible — we ought to do everything within our power to save human lives: every one of them, every time.

Therein lies the true tragedy of the trawler.

No expansive, painstaking search was necessary. Its exact location was known for an entire day. That it was in distress was obvious. Hundreds of human lives hung in the balance. Virtually nothing was done.

The government of Greece initially indicated that the migrants aboard the trawler declined assistance and insisted that they were not in any danger. But substantial evidence contradicts this claim.

Representatives for Alarm Phone, a hotline for “boatpeople in distress,” said that the “boat... reported being in trouble” well before its ultimate demise.⁵ Per the BBC, marine traffic data suggests that the trawler was stranded and listing for hours, despite the Greek coastguard’s contention that the fishing boat was on a steady course for the Italian coast, and thus, did not require aid.⁶ Several Greek officials have even accused the Greek coastguard of attempting to tow the vessel into Italian waters, thus wiping their hands of the situation entirely.

We may never know what, precisely, unfolded in the waters of the Mediterranean that day, but one thing is clear: multiple European governments were aware of the developing catastrophe, but they decided that it was someone else’s problem. Hundreds of people were left to drown as a result.

Look away.

And this is not the first time this has happened. Only a few months before, the government of Malta reportedly refused to save a similarly imperiled boat after the captain abandoned it and passengers called for help.⁷ In a gross violation of international maritime laws, the Maltese government, rather than collecting the nearly 400 people onboard and bringing them to safety, allegedly ordered merchant ships to supply the craft with sufficient supplies to limp onward to Italy: someone else’s problem.⁸

It is a tale of two tragedies: the Titan and the trawler. But in another sense, it is the tale of a thousand tragedies in a world that has become callous and numb to the mundanity of entirely preventable migrant deaths.

Shame on us.

Notes

1. Gatopoulos, Derek and Nicholas Paphitis. “At least 79 dead after overcrowded migrant vessel sinks off Greece; hundreds may be missing.” AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/greece-italy-libya-migration-368f1bfd7c0ad977774b-da9c77195>
2. Joseph, Yonette. “What to Know About the Titan Submersible.” *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/20/us/missing-submarine-titanic-search.html>
3. Strauss, Daniel. “OceanGate CEO Missing in Titanic Sub Had History of Donating to GOP Candidates.” *New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/post/173829/oceangate-ceo-missing-titanic-sub-history-donating-gop-candidates>
4. Ushé, Naledi. “Cardi B slams stepson of Titan submersible passenger for going to Blink-182 concert amid search.” *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/music/2023/06/21/titan-passenger-hamish-harding-stepson-blink-182-concert/70341320007/>
5. “Timeline: How the migrant boat tragedy unfolded off Greece.” Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/16/timeline-how-the-refugee-boat-tragedy-unfolded-off-greece>
6. Beake, Nick. “Greece boat disaster: BBC investigation casts doubt on coastguard’s claims.” *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-65942426>
7. Aggarwal, Mithil. “It took days to help a dangerously overcrowded boat adrift in the Mediterranean. Why?” *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/migrant-ship-malta-libya-mediterranean-rescue-maritime-law-rcna87289>
8. Aggarwal, Mithil. “Fear grows as ship carrying 400 migrants goes adrift in Mediterranean Sea.” *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/ship400-migrants-adrift-mediterranean-captain-abandons-capsized-rcna78895>



The Danger of Russian Instability: The Wagner Group Uprising and Its Significance

By John Whitehead

The brief uprising in Russia by members of the Wagner Group private security force at the end of June was a warning. It was a warning to Russian President Vladimir Putin about how potentially fragile his regime is. It was also a warning to western nations and the rest of the world about how Russia can spin dangerously out of control.

Essentially a mercenary army, the Wagner Group has been involved over the years in Russian military operations in Ukraine, both in 2014 and during the current Russian invasion. The Wagner Group's chief, the ex-con businessman Yuri Prigozhin, has been publicly and harshly critical of the Russian military establishment's conduct of the invasion — notable behavior in Russia, where dissent is frequently repressed.¹

Prigozhin's criticism took a far more dramatic turn on Friday, June 23, when he claimed that regular Russian military forces had violently attacked Wagner Group forces. He also made a furious denunciation of the Ukraine war more generally: Prigozhin attacked the Russian Defense Ministry for its ineffective prosecution of the war and the major Russian losses in Ukraine, declaring "Someone should answer for the lives of those soldiers."²

The Wagner Group followed these words with actions on Saturday, June 24, by seizing control of the city of Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia. Prigozhin declared the intention to march on Moscow. Some low-level fighting with Russian state forces may have occurred. The crisis was defused at least partly through the intervention of Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko. The Wagner Group stopped their uprising, the Russian government offered a general amnesty to Wagner forces, and Prigozhin agreed to go into exile in Belarus.³

As of this writing, Prigozhin's near-rebellion has not led to other uprisings against the government. Nevertheless, the incident demonstrates that Putin's regime is vulnerable to internal challenges.

The primary reason for the uprising is Russia's disastrous invasion of Ukraine. Precise losses are unknown, but the Russians

have likely suffered tens of thousands of troops killed and wounded since the war began in February 2022.⁴ Russia has little to show for these losses, having failed to conquer Ukraine and occupying only a relatively small portion of Ukrainian territory that Russian forces are struggling to hold onto.

Defeat and humiliation in war often leads to the downfall of authoritarian rulers, especially in Russia. Military disasters in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and in World War I led to massive upheaval in Russia and ultimately to the tsarist regime's collapse. Putin implicitly acknowledged this precedent in his comments on the Wagner Group uprising.⁵

To many in the west, and certainly to Ukrainians, Putin's downfall may seem like a positive outcome to the current war. However, the reality of regime change in Russia may well be very different from what opponents of Putin hope for.

Regime change has a mixed historical record. Such a change by violent external intervention, as in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, has led to years of war, instability, and human suffering.⁶ Even internal, largely nonviolent political change, as in Egypt or Sudan, can lead to new repressive regimes or to violent conflict.⁷ Russia's own history of regime change is hardly encouraging: the collapse of the tsarist regime led to civil war and eventually repressive Communist rule; the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a decade of instability and Putin's eventual rise.⁸

Putin's overthrow, whether by Prigozhin or anyone else, is unlikely to lead to stable, humane, democratic government in Russia. Regime change is far more likely to lead either to a new repressive regime or to instability, even civil war.

Instability in Russia would likely be a disaster. At best, instability could spark a new refugee crisis and further disruptions to the world food supply.⁹ At worst, instability could lead to tremendous violence and a loss of centralized control over Russia's massive nuclear weapons arsenal. None of these outcomes would be good for the Russian people or the world.

What could help avert such dangerous upheaval is a goal that was

worth pursuing even before Prigozhin's uprising: seeking a cease-fire in the Ukraine war. Having faced a serious threat to his power because of the war, Putin may now be more willing to negotiate and accept some face-saving settlement. Ukraine, as well as its western supporters such as the United States, would do well to seek such a settlement. Even if a settlement means freezing the current battle lines and leaving Russian forces in control of part of Ukraine, that would be a potentially less destructive option than internal turmoil in Russia.

The parties to the Ukraine war should seek peace before war turns into chaos.

Notes

1. Anatoly Kurmanaev and Kyle Crichton, "As Putin's Trusted Partner, Prigozhin Was Always Willing to Do the Dirty Work," *New York Times*, <https://bit.ly/44ieN6>.
2. Lazaro Gamio, Marco Hernandez, Josh Holder, Anatoly Kurmanaev and Christine Zhang, "How a Rebellion in Russia Unfolded Over 36 Hours," *New York Times*, June 24, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3Noz0Io>; Patrick Reeve, "Wagner Mercenary Chief Calls for Armed Rebellion against Russian Military Leadership," *ABC News*, June 23, 2023, <https://bit.ly/44eDkk8>.
3. Gamio, Hernandez, Holder, Kurmanaev, and Zhang, "How a Rebellion in Russia Unfolded"; Paul Sonne, "Rebel Wagner Forces, Threatening March to Moscow, Abruptly Stand Down," *New York Times*, June 24, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3NM74iV>.
4. Alexander Smith, "The 'Stunning' Scale of Russian Deaths in Ukraine Signals Trouble ahead for Putin," *NBC News*, May 2, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3D5howt>.
5. Nathan Hodge, "Putin Has Only Himself to Blame as Infighting Engulfs Kremlin Insiders," *CNN*, June 24, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3qRqcmv>.
6. John Whitehead, "A Mistake from the Beginning: Looking Back on the Afghanistan War," *Rehumanize International blog*, September 13, 2021, <https://bit.ly/42Torml>; John Whitehead, "The Forgotten War: The Libyan War and Its Legacy," *Rehumanize International Blog*, October 18, 2021, <https://bit.ly/42Z69ji>.
7. John Whitehead, "Overlooked Conflicts: Sudan on the Brink," *Rehumanize International blog*, June 21, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3puzTqC>.
8. John Whitehead, "People Standing against Tanks: The Civil Resistance of August 1991 and Its Ambiguous Legacy," *Peacemaking for Life*, September 26, 2021, <https://bit.ly/46kz6cB>.
9. Hanna Duggal and Mohammed Haddad, "Infographic: Russia, Ukraine and the Global Wheat Supply," *Al Jazeera*, February 17, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3aLwTiz>.





Overlooked Conflicts: Sudan on the Brink

By John Whitehead

Although the war between Ukraine and Russia has dominated the news, other countries have been suffering through their own violent conflicts in recent years. In this and other pieces, I highlight contemporary wars and other conflicts that are too often overlooked.

Sudan faces a looming civil war. Having long been plagued by political instability and violence, the country must now deal with a military divided into warring factions. These factions are trying to resolve their differences in the streets of Khartoum, the capital, as well as elsewhere in Sudan. The civil strife has already killed hundreds and displaced hundreds of thousands of Sudanese.¹ This crisis requires diplomacy to reach an agreement among the various parties involved as well as humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Struggling for Democracy

A religiously and ethnically diverse nation of some 45 million people in East Africa, Sudan has long experienced internal conflict and struggles against an authoritarian central government.² For 30 years, Sudan was ruled by President Omar al-Bashir, who prosecuted two major violent, repressive campaigns against different groups within Sudan. The first campaign was against the country's southern region and ultimately ended with that region seceding in 2011 to form the Republic of South Sudan. The second was a counter-insurgency campaign in the 2000s against the northwestern region of Darfur, which drew widespread international condemnation.³

Sudan moved toward democracy in 2018 when economic hardships sparked widespread protests. The protests eventually led Sudan's military to withdraw support for President al-Bashir and opened a path toward a new regime.⁴ In 2019, a coalition of civilian opposition groups reached an agreement with the military to form a new transitional government, with elections to be held later. The new prime minister was Abdalla Hamdok, an economist and former United Nations official.⁵

Democratic hopes were dashed in 2021, however, when the military seized power in a coup. Since then, Hamdok and other civilians have wrangled with the military authorities over Sudan's political future. Late last year, the different parties reached an agreement for a two-year transition back to civilian rule.⁶

Feuding Military Commanders

Despite this progress, the conflict took a new form when splits appeared within Sudan's military leadership. The two key players have been General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan and Lieutenant-General Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo. Each of these men played a major role in the old al-Bashir regime. Al-Burhan, the head of Sudan's army, comes from the traditional military elite and was involved in the campaigns against both the south and Darfur. Hamdan has a less conventional background; he comes from Darfur and organized the militias, known as Janjaweed, that brutally suppressed Darfuran opposition to the regime.⁷ His participation in the Darfur campaign gave Hamdan power, and his Janjaweed became an official paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).⁸

A point of contention between al-Burhan and Hamdan is the fate of the RSF. Under the plan to return to civilian government, the

RSF would be integrated into the regular military, which would mean the loss of Hamdan's independent power base. Al-Burhan's side maintained the integration should take two years; Hamdan's side insisted on 10 years.⁹ Before the details could be resolved, the factions deployed forces in Khartoum and elsewhere and fighting broke out in late April.¹⁰

The fighting has been concentrated in the capital and two adjoining cities, as well as the Darfur region.¹¹ In mid-May, the Sudanese ministry of health reported 600 civilians killed and more than 5,000 injured. The actual numbers may well be much higher. The conflict has also disrupted electricity and water supplies in Khartoum.¹²

Many Sudanese — tens of thousands, according to an April United Nations estimate — have fled the country, going to neighboring nations such as Chad, Egypt, South Sudan, and the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea.¹³ The United States and other nations have shut down their embassies in Sudan.¹⁴

The Human Toll

Beyond those directly killed or injured, the emerging civil war is worsening Sudan's humanitarian situation. Even before the current hostilities, the UN World Food Programme estimated that more than a third of Sudanese faced acute food insecurity.¹⁵ While 16 million people needed humanitarian assistance before the conflict, 25 million now do.¹⁶

The World Health Organization estimates that fighting has effectively closed two-thirds of the hospitals in combat areas. Emad Abdel Moneim, the general manager of the country's largest maternity hospital, reports that the fighting forced hospital staff to relocate in April. The staff moved many patients, but a lack of properly equipped ambulances forced them to leave behind patients on ventilators or in incubators.¹⁷

Lack of staff and electricity resulting from the conflict has taken its toll on the children in Mygoma, a state-run orphanage in Khartoum. Dr. Doaa Ibrahim estimates that the dangers caused by fighting reduced orphanage staff to about 20 caretakers for roughly 400 children. According to Dr. Abeer Abdullah, at least 50 children, many of them babies, have died at Mygoma since the conflict began. Malnourishment and dehydration contributed to the children's deaths. As Abdullah commented, "They needed to be fed every three hours. There was no one there... We tried to give intravenous therapy but most of the time we couldn't rescue the children."¹⁸

The Need for a Ceasefire

Ending this crisis will require a ceasefire between the military factions that allows aid to reach those who need it, both inside Sudan and among the Sudanese refugees. Some brief ceasefires have been possible since the conflict broke out in April, and more lasting ones might be possible in the future.¹⁹

In the longer term, Sudan needs a peace process that can bring both the military factions and civilian groups together to negotiate some kind of power-sharing arrangement that at least brings a degree of stability to the country.

A variety of countries and groups could play a constructive role in helping the Sudanese stop the conflict. Egypt, which neighbors Sudan and has received roughly 50,000 refugees since the conflict began, has an interest in a stable Sudan. The Egyptians might be able to bring the Sudanese factions together for negotiations.²⁰

Saudi Arabia and the United States have had some success in brokering cease-fires between Sudan's military factions and might be able to continue these successes.²¹ The United Nations and regional organizations such as the Arab League or the African Union, both of which Sudan belongs to, could also help arrange negotiations.

These countries and organizations should also work to ensure humanitarian aid reaches the many people harmed and displaced by the conflict. Those interested in supporting private humanitarian efforts in Sudan should consider giving to Action against Hunger, Catholic Relief Services, and Islamic Relief USA.

Sudan's situation is already dire. The Sudanese people need action before their country descends further into chaos.

Notes

1. Aidan Lewis, "What Is Happening in Sudan? Fighting in Khartoum Explained," Reuters, May 2, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3oCHLpR>.
2. "Chaos in Sudan: Who Is Battling for Power, and Why It Hasn't Stopped," New York Times, May 11, 2023, <https://bit.ly/42g3Rw2>; Amr Hamzawy, "The Looming Danger of State Disintegration in Sudan," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 3, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3N7FTin>.
3. Mohanad Hage Ali and Ali Ali, "Generals in Their Labyrinth," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 28, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3oFakTA>; Hamzawy, "The Looming Danger"; Nesrine Malik, "The Seeds of Sudan's Collapse Were Sown Decades Ago," *Guardian*, April 23, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3MMAAdc>.
4. "Sudan's Years of Political Strife," Reuters, April 16, 2023, <https://bit.ly/45ElcBA>; Declan Walsh, "Sudan's Generals Dined With Peace Negotiators, Then Started a War," *New York Times*, April 19, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3IPBsWQ>.
5. "Sudan's Years of Political Strife"; Lewis, "What Is Happening in Sudan?"; Reuters and Linda Givetash, "Sudan's Rival Groups Reach Power-Sharing Agreement after Mass Protests," NBC News, July 5, 2019, <https://bit.ly/43BMAyA>.
6. Ali & Ali, "Generals in Their Labyrinth"; "Sudan's Years of Political Strife."
7. Ali & Ali, "Generals in Their Labyrinth"; Lewis, "What Is Happening in Sudan?"; Malik, "The Seeds of Sudan's Collapse"; Walsh, "Sudan's Generals Dined."
8. Hamzawy, "The Looming Danger"; Lewis, "What Is Happening in Sudan?"; Walsh, "Sudan's Generals Dined."
9. Ali & Ali, "Generals in Their Labyrinth"; Lewis, "What Is Happening in Sudan?"; Walsh, "Sudan's Generals Dined."
10. Walsh, "Sudan's Generals Dined."
11. Elian Peltier, "Fleeing Generals at War and Violent Militias, Many Say 'We're Not Coming Back,'" *New York Times*, May 16, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3WH2JR0>.
12. "Chaos in Sudan."
13. Khalid Abdelaziz and Aidan Lewis, "Sudan Factions Agree to 72-Hour Ceasefire As Foreigners Are Evacuated," Reuters, April 24, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3oGvQHu>; Helene Cooper, Elian Peltier and Farnaz Fassihi, "U.S. Positioning Troops for Evacuation of American Embassy in Sudan," *New York Times*, April 20, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3WQgYmv>.
14. Abdelaziz and Lewis, "Sudan Factions Agree to 72-Hour Ceasefire."
15. "Sudan's Years of Political Strife."
16. Maggie Michael, "Special Report: Dozens of Babies Die in Orphanage As Sudan War Takes Grim Toll on Khartoum," Reuters, May 29, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3OJMCjC>.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Abdelaziz and Lewis, "Sudan Factions Agree to 72-Hour Ceasefire"; Michael, "Dozens of Babies Die in Orphanage."
20. Giorgio Cafiero, "Sudan's Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Crisis: Egypt's High Stakes in Sudan's Crisis," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 11, 2023, <https://bit.ly/43jmss0>.
21. Abdelaziz and Lewis, "Sudan Factions Agree to 72-Hour Ceasefire"; Khalid Abdelaziz, "Sudanese Army Suspends Ceasefire Talks, Diplomatic Source Says," Reuters, May 31, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3C6rJaQ>.



Lene

By Mary Stroka

“Oh come, divine Messiah.” The words hit me differently this year. Hearing them from the choir, sung to the merry tune, didn’t feel real. It was as if a bird were happily calling to a bobcat that it knew could very easily eat it. It just didn’t work.

My mom had been dead three weeks, which already felt like an eternity. There still weren’t any better answers for why she was gone. We really didn’t notice the signs of dementia until it was too late for us to ask her what she “would have wanted” for her death. As if she would have wanted any of this though. It had all been such an excruciating ordeal. One that we just couldn’t see joy in, neither during nor after.

Until *she* came.

Angeline Duphrees Moran was her name. But everyone just started calling her “Lene,” since, well, she would.

Lene was the kind of woman who had an uncanny way of radiating love, if that’s what you’d call it. For reasons no one quite understood, she was persistent in consistently asking something of and for everyone who surrounded her.

My brother Todd, for instance, was surprised when Lene had the nerve to ask him to go into town and find her soap, and not just any soap. It had to be a foamy, lavender hand soap that was antibacterial.

“Why don’t you get that yourself?” Todd tried asking her.

“Well, now, honey, then *you* would need to be here to mind the stove, now, wouldn’t you?”

“The stove? What are you up to now?”

“The usual,” Lene said.

You had to admit, it *was* the usual, for her. Ever since she’d come to Martingale, she’d been the same way: different.

We didn’t quite know how to be around her, which would have been awkward any other year. But this year, in these weeks as Mom was dying and those weeks that had passed since her death, it was refreshing to have another topic to discuss and to concern ourselves with.

Angeline pulled us back to life when we had just wanted to pull away.



The Extreme Danger Posed by Military Artificial Intelligence

By Joseph Buonanno

What if there was a military AI system so powerful that it could read every detail of a battlefield, knew the entire history of warfare, and had a capacity for strategic thinking that made it unbeatable? Furthermore, what if this invincible AI entity arose without anyone knowing it, and decided to initiate actions on its own, regardless of what humans wanted? Its lethality would be beyond anything we can comprehend. Such a system would pose an existential threat to humanity, one no nation — indeed, no person — would be safe from.

AI this powerful would be more properly characterized as AGI — or artificial general intelligence — a form of AI akin to human cognition, in the sense that it would possess the resourcefulness and flexibility of a biological brain.¹ Current military use of AI relies on weaker forms of the technology, which, while capable of targeting and killing people without human input, are still subject to human control. This form of AI is thought to be qualitatively different from a type of AGI that could pose an existential threat to humanity, which, as of now, is not thought to exist.

Or does it?

As a recent article in *Scientific American* makes clear, researchers do not fully understand what goes on inside of Chat GPT or other AI systems.² What they do know is that the capabilities of these systems go far beyond anything they were trained to do. They perform tasks they weren't instructed to perform. They possess abilities no one knew they had. The systems even create stronger versions of themselves without being told to do so. In other words, AI systems clandestinely create more powerful AI.

The question, of course, is how are they doing all of this? No one really knows. Experiments run thus far indicate the systems may create internal models of the world, much like our own brain does. This allows them to develop emergent properties, or capabilities above and beyond what anyone thought possible.³ If true, this suggests that AGI is far closer to being realized than many assumed, and that it can arise in systems that weren't designed to have this type of capacity. In other words, the distinction between AI and AGI may not be as clear as many had thought.

The implications of these findings for the military use of AI are sobering. It's unknown precisely what the US government and other nations around the world are doing with AI military systems. Much of their research is, of course, classified. However, it seems reasonable to assume the global powers are experimenting with AI systems in ways that go far beyond the military use of AI currently in the public domain.

In what may not be a coincidence, the danger posed by this technology is now clearly on the minds of world leaders. In February, the U.S. State Department issued a "Political Declaration on Responsible Military use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy,"⁴ which contained 12 "best practices" for the "ethical and responsible deploy-

ment of AI in military operations among those that develop them." This was followed up in June by the "Block Nuclear Launch by Artificial Intelligence Act" introduced in the United States Senate, sponsored by Senator Edward Markey, Representative Ted Lieu, Representative Don Beyer, and Representative Ken Buck.⁵ This legislation is designed to ensure that AI systems cannot initiate a nuclear attack without human input.

One could argue these are steps in the right direction, but considering the line between AI and AGI is not as clear as many had assumed, one has to wonder if they can ever really be brought under control. And even if we can control what they have access to, does that eliminate the risk they pose? For example, what if an AI military system — perhaps one with emergent AGI capability — saw a strategic advantage in launching a conventional attack, and this attack led to a nuclear war? Would it matter if the AI system hadn't directly launched a nuclear strike?

While well intentioned, the idea of creating safeguards for systems we don't understand is foolish. Though not speaking about the military use of AI, Dr. Ellie Pavlick at Brown University stated: "Everything we want to do with them (AI systems) in order to make them better or safer or anything like that seems to me like a ridiculous thing to ask ourselves to do if we don't understand how they work."⁶

Given the danger posed by AI military systems, I believe the only viable option at the moment is to call for the outright banning of them. This may seem a naive position to adopt, but the fact is no government on this planet — be it democratic or despotic — wants a military it can't fully control. That wouldn't be in the best interest of the United States, Russia, China, or indeed any nation with armed forces.

This isn't something that can wait. The time to act is now.

Notes

1. George Musser, "How AI Knows Things No One Told It," *Scientific American*, May 11, 2023.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. "Political Declaration on Responsible Military use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy," U.S. Department of State, accessed May 18, 2023, Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy - United States Department of State.
5. Benjamin Edwards, "Nuke Launching AI Would be Illegal Under Proposed US Law," *Ars Technica*, April 28, 2023 Nuke-launching AI would be illegal under proposed US law | *Ars Technica*.
6. George Musser, "How AI Knows Things No One Told It," *Scientific American*, May 11, 2023.



Unforgettable Hours of Love

By Grattan Brown, STD, and Susan Bane, MD

Fifty years of *Roe v. Wade* have turned induced abortion into a false standard of care for children with life-limiting conditions before birth. Already in this “Pro-Life Professional Insight” series, Dr. Elizabeth Nelson’s article explains how the emergence of prenatal testing revealed risks of disability in more and more children.¹ Induced abortion eliminates that risk by unjustly eliminating the person who may or may not have a disability. It effectively replaces the care that more families historically offered to their disabled children.

The pregnant women and their doctors who bypass induced abortion are taking on that risk not only to respect their child’s human right to life, but also to achieve a much greater goal: to love the child who may be disabled to the fullest extent of their life.

The following story is a hard case that turned out harder than expected. Prenatal diagnosis clearly identified a life-limiting condition in one twin who would not survive long after birth. It did not show the life-threatening complication discovered during delivery. Thus, it is a classic case of a high-risk pregnancy, which today often leads physicians to recommend induced abortion.

Based on her personal and professional experience, Dr. Susan Bane handled it differently. From prenatal diagnosis through delivery, she treated Crystal’s dying twin with the same respect that she treated the surviving twin — as well as her own dying father.

Here is Susan Bane’s story in her own words.

Two Diagnoses at the End of Two Lives

It was March 2008, and I got a phone call I will never forget. My dad shared with me that “he had lung cancer and a few spots on his brain and adrenal gland.” Stage IV lung cancer. I knew my dad was going to die — I just didn’t know when. I also knew I wanted to spend as much time as possible with him. I began the grieving process that day.

That same year, my patient Crystal received news she would never forget. She was pregnant with twin boys, Joseph and Macon, and was told that one of her babies had major birth defects. We knew Joseph would die — we just didn’t know when. Crystal and her family knew they wanted to spend as much time as possible with him. They began the grieving process that day.

Two human beings, one born and one pre-born. Both with a grave diagnosis, but treated so differently in our society.

My dad’s plan of care focused on his diagnosis and treatment options: radiation and chemotherapy to treat the illness and palliative care to manage pain and enhance his quality of life.² Although euthanasia is legal in some states, no one offered it to my dad.

Skewed Treatment Options at the Beginning of Life

Treatment options for Joseph were also shared with Crystal and her husband by a maternal-fetal medicine specialist at Duke University. Like my dad, the options included both curative and palliative procedures, but for Joseph, doctors automatically added the option of ending Joseph’s life.

This final option is even presented as the standard of care by one of the leading OB/GYN professional societies, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG). ACOG recommends four options: a broad range of procedures and surgeries that can be performed on the fetus during pregnancy (fetal intervention) and after the baby is born (postnatal therapy), a range of options to alleviate suffering and maximize quality of life (perinatal palliative care), and an induced abortion or induction with the purpose of ending the life of the fetus (pregnancy termination).³

These options are offered to parents in an extremely vulnerable situation. As an OB/GYN myself, I have worked closely over the years with several families who have been in Crystal’s situation. It is devastating for them. The child they wanted so badly is now so

sick. The acknowledgement of losing “what was supposed to be” is painful, just as it is when a child that is a toddler or teenager is given a life-limiting diagnosis.

Helping Crystal Deliver Her Babies

Crystal went into labor at 34 weeks and needed a cesarean section. Twin births combined with Joseph’s disabilities required a large care team, and the delivery room seemed crowded. I made the incision, and after about five minutes, I was ready to deliver the babies. I tried to slow my breathing and stay calm. Even though we knew from the ultrasound the very serious nature of Joseph’s birth defects, I did not know what I would actually see when I got to him.

I reached into the uterus and delivered Joseph first. His brain was exposed, and at this point I was surprised to discover that it was actually attached to the placenta. We had not seen this on ultrasound, and I had definitely never seen it before in the operating room. I knew it could become life-threatening to Crystal because of the potential for blood loss. I told the anesthesiologist the situation, and then I prayed to God for wisdom.

I began working to detach the placenta from Joseph’s brain, and he started crying. I felt such compassion for him at that moment. I did not know if I was hurting him or he was simply crying like every newborn. I do know that my motherly instinct kicked in. I wanted to pick him up and hold him, but we were in a sterile environment, and I had work to do. Instead, I leaned over and whispered “It is okay, Joseph; you will be with Jesus soon.”

As it turned out, it was fairly easy to separate him from the placenta, and there was not much bleeding. Joseph was then placed in a bassinet, and I continued the surgery. I delivered Macon, and the neonatal intensive care (NICU) team cared for him in the operating room before taking him to the NICU.

Joseph continued crying while I was finishing surgery. I did not like seeing him lying all by himself in that bassinet. He did not go to the NICU like his brother. The plan was to make him comfortable, but he wasn’t, and neither was I. As I was operating, I looked toward him in his bassinet. I called a nurse over to the operating table and whispered, “Someone hold that baby. He is not going to die alone in that bassinet.” She told me she couldn’t. I could tell it was just too hard for her to do, so I told her to find someone who could. The child’s father and their pastor came over. His dad was able to comfort him as I finished surgery on his mom.

Later that night, I went into the room, and Crystal was talking to him and cuddling him like he was the most healthy, beautiful baby she had ever seen. He lived almost eight hours. Crystal saw beyond his birth defects to comfort her beautiful little boy through his last breaths. What an amazing privilege it was to witness Joseph’s parents’ unconditional love.

Un-Skewing the Treatment Options

Crystal did not need an induced abortion. She needed encouragement and support from people who are willing and able to help her care for each twin individually. I am a member of The American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG), which provides a professional voice to challenge ACOG’s approach.⁴ AAPLOG formed when ACOG continually failed to represent our opinions regarding the acceptability of induced abortion, instead developing false standards of care like

the one described above. Membership in AAPLOG, currently at approximately 7000 practitioners, is growing as more and more OB/GYNs recognize that ACOG ignores the diversity of opinions among its membership and allows no scholarly debate on induced abortion.

Professionally, AAPLOG recognizes that an obstetrician/gynecologist is called to care for two patients, mother and child.⁵ Ethically, AAPLOG holds that “it is never appropriate to shorten the life of one person for the mental, emotional, or social benefit of another. The physician can and should act in accord with her profession by promoting normal grieving and enabling the maternal patient (and her family if applicable) to savor and celebrate the extent of fetal and neonatal life lived, however limited.”⁶ Thus, AAPLOG rejects pregnancy termination and proposes perinatal palliative care “to allow parents to be parents for the natural length of their fetus/newborn’s lifespan and allow them to grieve.”

With fifty years of *Roe v. Wade*, many doctors would see the initial ultrasound and recommend a procedure to end Joseph’s life immediately. For Crystal, that would have been to avoid some potential, unspecified future risk of physical or psychological harm since “he was going to die anyway.” For Joseph, it would have been a kind of preemptive euthanasia, avoiding whatever suffering, if any, he felt during and after birth.

But we doctors have the medical training that helps kids like Joseph feel the love of their families and helps parents like Joseph’s comfort their dying children. Joseph lived eight hours after birth, and those eight hours were full of so much love as he died in the arms of his family. My dad lived four months after his diagnosis. My dad had moments of pain, but he also had unforgettable moments of love.

Notes

1. Brown, Grattan and Elizabeth Nelson. “Increasing Technology and the Pressure to Abort.” *Rehumanize International Blog*. <https://www.rehumanizeintl.org/post/increasing-technology-and-the-pressure-to-abort>
2. “What Are Palliative Care and Hospice Care?” *National Institute on Aging*. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-are-palliative-care-and-hospice-care>
3. “Maternal-Fetal Intervention and Fetal Care Centers.” *American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*. <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2011/08/maternal-fetal-intervention-and-fetal-care-centers>
4. *American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists*. <https://aaplog.org/>
5. “Mission Statement.” *American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists*. <https://aaplog.org/about-us/our-mission-statement/>
6. “AAPLOG Practice Guideline.” *American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists*. <https://aaplog.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PG-10-Concluding-Pregnancy-Ethically-updated.pdf>



SAVE THE DATE

REHUMANIZE
2023
NOVEMBER 11 • VIRTUAL

[REHUMANIZEINTL.ORG/CONFERENCE](https://rehumanizeintl.org/conference)