



Life Matters Journal

V. 5, ISSUE 7 — AUGUST 2017

Cooperation, Not Confrontation

American peace activists must act now to encourage a policy of cooperation with Russia; the current hostile US-Russian relationship cannot be allowed to continue.

Save the 8th

Maria Pane interviews Niamh Uí Bhriain, who explains Ireland's fight to keep constitutional protection for the preborn.

Small Matters

Are there such things as small matters when it comes to the matter of a human life?

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

I like to work from the city. Boston teems with upscale coffee shops, libraries, and co-working offices...but I find where I work best is in a scruffy corner, sometimes. In Burger King, or McDonald's. And human beings trudge in and out, and often, they hit me up for change, or tip their hat — or squint at my binder peppered with stickers: *the kindness project*. *pro-science pro-life*. *human rights for all humans*.



I get the global and universal rooting in human community at the same time as the wholly individual and local. Doesn't need sum up humanity like a boss?

I get macrocosm in microcosm. That sums up the human being even better. Because a human being is that macro-individual-complete-value as *one* small single person— the immensity of their worth is not expanded by numbers, nor lessened by singularity. Each person I touch is Boston-local; and yet they're human, and that means universal and global too. You have to touch *human* to touch *humanity*.

This was my reflection as I scribbled out this letter on scrap paper in Burger King on Cambridge Street. While I did, a woman peered over my shoulder and asked for a quarter.

And I thought, what if ending violence worldwide is as simple as that human connection: asking, answering: relationship. And a quarter.

In this issue, we explore the whole gamut of ugly violences against our fellow humans, on the international stage. I was especially excited to partner with Ireland's Youth Defence this Summer — and Maria Pane's profile of Niambh, one of the founders of this grassroots pro-life organization is a valuable snapshot of perseverance, tactics — and the building of a human centered culture through pro-life laws and relationships that demonstrably improve the lives & health of an entire nation. John Whitehead also delves into our relationship with Russia, and a new "Cold War" (and war itself) while I look at the idea of "accepted" violence, through the lens of the One-Child Policy in China.

So all in all, this issue gives a lot of food for thought. Ultimately, I think we learn a lot by looking outward, and broadly — we have a macrocosm of the quest to end aggressive violence on the world stage. Our job? Take that macrocosm, ideas, tactics, global movements past and present, and apply it microcosmically. You have to touch *human* to touch *humanity*. Give and love a fellow human, to love humanity. End an act of violence, often, to end a culture of violence.

Ask. Answer. "Yes, I have a quarter."

Yours for peace and every life,

CJ Williams

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

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Save the 8th:

An Interview and an Overview of Ireland's Fight to Keep Constitutional Protection for the Preborn

By Maria Pane

Niamh Uí Bhriain has been actively involved with the pro-life movement in Ireland for twenty-five years. She has helped to spread the message that Irish women do not need abortion, and statistics support that pro-life laws protect mothers' health. She began her work as one of the founding members of Youth Defence, which started in 1992 with the mission "to insure that Ireland's Constitution continues to protect unborn babies and their mothers." Then, she began writing for the affiliated organization Life Institute. Through her dedication to the movement she has become well-informed and familiar with pro-life activism, especially from the viewpoint of the Irish people, and she has seen first-hand how changes throughout the world have contributed to the Irish people's current struggle in their country to save the 8th Amendment, and protect their women and preborn children.

The 8th Amendment in Ireland was "an addition to the constitution" that made abortion illegal, protecting both mother and baby. This idea of protecting both a woman and her child has always been alive in the pro-life movement, but until recent years the public hasn't always understood this broader concern as the main focus of efforts to protect Irish lives, which is one thing Niamh and Youth Defence try to work on. Youth Defence explains this more comprehensive approach to defending life, especially when answering questions and concerns about the legalization of abortion, by discussing Ireland's low maternal mortality rate and how the 8th Amendment contributes to Ireland's focus on the health of the mother and baby. Niamh explained:

According to abortion campaigners, where abortion is banned women are going to die. But it didn't happen here. If women require medical interventions during pregnancy, they are given those interventions. Doctors here rightly do not consider those interventions to be abortions, even if the baby dies, because the intention is not to harm the

baby. So if you have cancer, an ectopic pregnancy, sepsis, or any other condition with the pregnancy that threatens your life, you are treated for that condition even if your baby dies.

This is a huge factor supporting the amendment because it shows the basis of the law is in care for both woman and child. Ireland, having one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the world, crushes one of the common myths spread by pro-abortion activists: that women's health will be hurt where abortion is made illegal.

The amendment also shows that when you ban abortions, you save lives. "People often point to the fact that if women want abortions, they go to England, but what abortion campaigners leave out of that statement is in the last ten or eleven years, the number of women going to England for an abortion has fallen 50%," Niamh stated. "That is an amazing thing and something we welcome. What that means in real terms, for example, is that 5% of Irish pregnancies end in abortion, so in other words, 5% of babies' conceived lives will end in abortion and in contrast, in Britain, 25% of pregnancies end in abortion, so 25% of all babies will have their lives ended before birth and that is a tremendous difference. Clearly, laws shape the culture and clearly easy accessibility and cultural implications that have changed [because of] the law really matter because when abortion is not easily accessible [there will be fewer lives lost]." Looking at the 8th Amendment in light of Ireland's maternal health record and low abortion rate, the amendment becomes an example of how you can ethically care for both mother and baby, while banning abortion. The 8th Amendment protects them both.

In order to fully interact with the Irish people and discuss the 8th Amendment, Youth Defence has focused on two strategies in relation to the Save The 8th initiative. The first is their grassroots campaign, which has always been at the heart of their work. "This

is a platform that is completely in your control. It isn't a case of free speech or Facebook or YouTube stopping your ads," Niamh stated, "It is you talking to the ordinary person face-to-face and to me, this has always been one of our key strengths. Nothing will ever trump that one-to-one person interaction when it comes to changing hearts and minds, even the smartest social media message or the cleverest billboard. Nothing beats actually talking to somebody, while looking them in the eye and explaining why abortion is not the answer, telling them facts or sharing your personal story with them."

Youth Defence is motivated by this philosophy to train their volunteers to commit to go canvassing week in and week out, knocking on doors and speaking at churches, campuses, and street stalls (tabling). Their aim is to have discussions about life instead of debates. Niamh explained, "You are not going head-to-head with someone from the abortion rights campaign, you are talking to an ordinary person who has genuine questions and concerns and maybe fears about what would happen if we don't change the law and what would happen if we do. And you have to be there to answer them in a way that is convincing and sincere. To me, that has been the greatest tool that we are currently engaging in the Save The 8th [campaign]." Specifically, the Save The 8th campaign has started something called Life Canvas, where Youth Defence has mapped all the postal constituencies of the 1.2 million homes in Ireland and is can prioritize where to reach out to those most open to listening. "So far we have gone to 200,000 of those homes and are aiming at another half a million before the referendum [to overturn the amendment is held] likely in the spring [2018]," Niamh explained enthusiastically.

The other big initiative Youth Defence is focusing on is digital campaigning and within that, making sure the language and rhetoric used is correct and consistent. Niamh explained:

Sometimes in the movement people are caught up in different campaigns and they can forget that you are always talking to the middle ground. In Ireland, the middle ground is largely pro-life, so what you have in this country are very strong constituents of people who are absolutely pro-life. Then, you also have another group of people who in another country would be considered very pro-life. They are against abortion in almost all circumstances but have concerns like the health of the mother or whether the child was conceived in rape. I think sometimes when we are caught up in campaigns we forget that you always have to talk to these people who are sincere and genuine people of good will who have concerns and questions about abortion. They are the people who are important to talk to and they are people whose concerns you have to allay.

In getting their messaging and narrative right, while not losing sight of the basic principal that abortion is wrong and explaining the concept of protecting both the mother and the baby, Youth Defence can inspire in-

dividuals to think about abortion in a way they may never have before. Youth Defence focuses on the human rights perspective when discussing abortion, much like Rehumanize International, to help humanize the preborn and change hearts and minds, while also discussing health concerns and legality issues in a compelling manner. Making messaging consistent and cohesive is an element of Ireland's pro-life work that groups in the United States and around the world could learn from and develop in order to make the pro-life movement stronger.

One of the biggest changes that Niamh has seen since first starting Youth Defence is how social media has influenced the evolution of the pro-life movement. Social media has shaken the world by making available a platform for pro-life groups/messages in countries with high levels of public censorship. It has also facilitated the consolidation of and cooperation between pro-life movements across the world because everyone sees what other groups are doing and are able to learn from each other's campaigns.

"From a medical point of view [when I first started working for Youth Defence, individuals already had] a much greater understanding of what the preborn baby looked like and the amazing things the baby could do," Niamh explained. "However, the public's understanding of just how incredible life [was] before birth was not what it should have been." It was and still is a pro-life activist's role to get that information to the public and show them how incredible preborn life is. Now that social media has become more prevalent, spreading this information has become easier, especially in Ireland where there is a very closed media market. For example, there is extraordinary bias in the media: the newspapers have what Niamh calls a "90% bias in favour of the pro-choice position and abortion", and anti-abortion ads have always been banned from radio and television. Niamh described the shift in the movement since social media arrived:

We have had a whole new platform open, in which we can spread our message and reach out to people. And also it's true for the ordinary person that the internet has opened up for them the humanity of the baby and how amazing it is. They can look up an 8-week embryo, for example, and they can see many sites, not just pro-life sites, but educational sites and other things that show how incredible and wonderful human life is. It also opens up the ability of people to understand the fact that abortion harms women. Stories that might have been buried by the

"Nothing will ever trump that one-to-one person interaction when it comes to changing hearts and minds, even the smartest social media message or the cleverest billboard."

media previously such as women dying in abortion clinics and women who are deeply scarred and wounded by their experience undergoing abortion. All of these stories that might have been covered up by the media previously because they hid the abortion narrative, now are just open and accessible by anyone and I think that's amazing. I think it is a really big step forward.

Youth Defence and Life Institute have both been able to embrace the new platform by actively sharing their message online through compelling videos and articles that are widely viewed, read, and shared. Recently, one video called "I Am Human" received 2 million views, which shows that they are reaching more people with pro-life messages than they would have ever imagined ten years ago. One thing Niamh advises for the changing culture of the world filled by social media is that, "Now there is so much more you can do. So we need to be open to [a] game changing process, changing models, being more flexible, being more multi-faceted and not thinking that there is only one way of doing things. It is important that we look at what is working first and we adopt all of that into our activist model."

There is so much to learn from the pro-life work being done in Ireland from Youth Defence's hands-on grassroots campaigns to their cohesive messaging and attempts to have conversations rather than debates and to answer all the hard-hitting questions and concerns the Irish people have about abortion. Now, Youth Defence can also use social media to spread the message of Save The 8th worldwide, with peace and love hopefully combating the power of the influx of cash from outside sources that are funding the repeal movement in Ireland. Most of all though, they actively try to discuss abortion as a human rights issue instead of a religious issue, even though Ireland's population is predominantly Catholic.

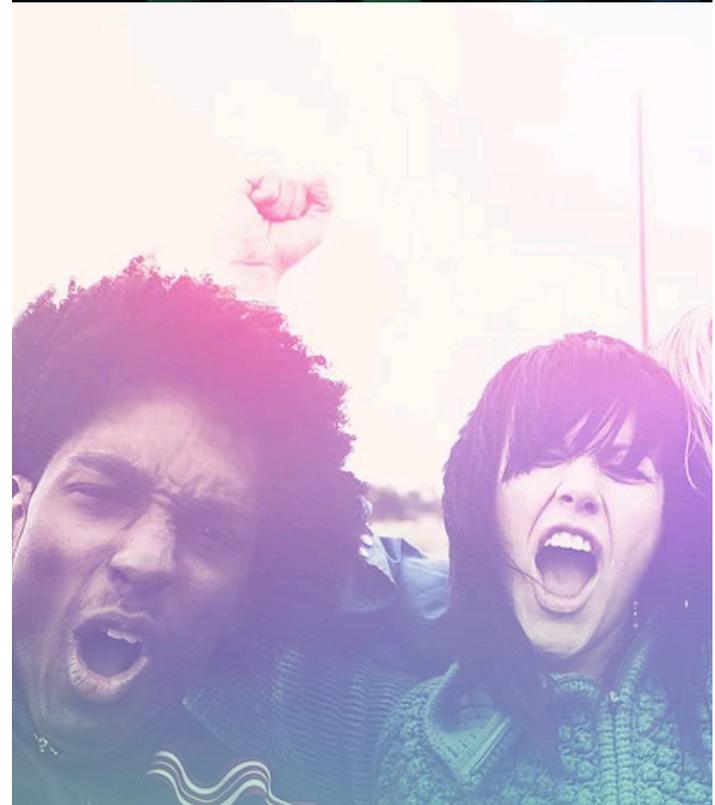
"I think it is summed up in that video that has got 2 million views," Niamh explained.

At the end it says "the humanity of the preborn child cannot be denied. Do not deny them the human right to life." It is a point that is resonating more and more with people that this is a human rights issue, it's the human rights issue of our generation and I know that has become a kind of rallying cry for the movement, but for me, it's absolutely true. Knowing what we know, abortion has to be unconscionable and it is up to our generation that it become the unthinkable.

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*we have no right to end
that which we did not begin*

By Genevieve Greineitz

like moss clinging to rocks
our sinews clutch bone –
these earthen limbs
— flesh, blood, hair, nails, lips
to hide the earth we came from

What is it that animates these clattering bones?

legs walk me to a water's edge
& beauty lays herself over me
swirls into my skeleton
& sits deep into my marrow

What magic makes me feel?
Which breath makes my lungs unique?

wind hits my frame
the dust from which i came awakes in its breath
Inside these ribs are cathedrals of amethyst
Breath a humble guest –
patient & yet desperate to come back in

this love affair
—between bones, breath & mystery—
just a moment
before the magic dissipates

& these bones lay back, amidst rocks & stones
blushing with the dew swept moss
where memory lives



The Path of [Non] Violent Resistance: *Little Town of Bethlehem* Review

By Emily Snyder

Years of fighting have fueled deep animosity among the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities in the Israeli-Palestinian region. The ancient town that is said to have witnessed the anointing of David as the King of Israel and the birth of Jesus Christ is now an unrecognizable place of violence and destruction. Deep-seated resentment runs rampant through enclaves and refugee camps, working contrary to the active peace movements. The city of Bethlehem, located in the central West Bank of Palestine, has been caught in the middle of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for upwards of fifty years. The conflict, which when described in its detailed entirety fills textbooks, can be described with brutal generality as the world’s “most intractable conflict of our time”—an ongoing territorial, cultural, and religious battle between Israel and Palestine.¹

Despite the looming threats of brutality, some brave citizens seek to change this pattern of violent resistance. The Holy Land Trust (a NGO dedicated to the principles of nonviolent resistance to oppression and seeking to reestablish the Holy Land as a “global model and pillar of understanding, respect, justice, equality and peaceful coexistence”) was centrally involved in producing the documentary entitled *Little Town of Bethlehem*.² This documentary focuses on the stories “of three men of three different faiths and their lives in Israel and Palestine. The story explores each man’s choice of nonviolent action amidst a culture of overwhelming violence.”³

These three men are Yonatan Shapira, Sami Awad, and Ahmad Al’azze. They begin the documentary by describing their family’s historical roots in the region. Including their backstories does an excellent job of showing just how long the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been affecting and haunting citizens along the West Bank. The sharing of human stories often reveals the source of motivation for an individual, and this documentary does nothing short of provide miraculous motivation to any viewer fortunate enough to encounter the human stories it portrays. While many would approach this cycle of violence with apprehension and despair, Shapira, Awad, and Al’azze face it head-on with a message of hope.

They recognize their shared humanity despite their starkly contrasting backgrounds and beliefs. Shapira’s journey toward peace activism revolves around his admiration for his father, a member of the Israeli Defense Forces; Awad’s journey is marked with mem-

ories of growing up in the Israeli-occupied West Bank; Al’azze’s journey is shaped by his humble experiences in a Palestinian refugee camp. Inspired by the likes of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, all three men came to dedicate themselves to the principles of nonviolence as possible solutions to the pervading violence in their homelands.

Their stories all originate from different places and different experiences, but in the documentary they are made parallel. The side-by-side nature of their struggles show that they are each human—no matter where they came from or what they believe. Thus, Shapira, Awad, and Al’azze’s very existence and shared goal breaks down the artificial dehumanizing labels that seem to be at the core of this conflict and the motivations for violence in general. The film truly exhibits the power of rejecting cultural prejudices so as to embrace true human-centered solutions and engagement.

Seeing nonviolent solutions presented to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict truly offers a fresh perspective and hope. After all, modern-day news inundates the viewer with problems: with military strikes and dangerously dehumanizing rhetoric. However, at the end of this 77-minute documentary, a viewer is hopeful but not fulfilled. This brings us to the crux of *Little Town of Bethlehem*’s message: this emerging nonviolence movement has far to go.

Awad founded the Holy Land Trust—a very positive step in the right direction. Yet the documentary does little to address the successes or effectiveness of the organization, perhaps because both the Palestinian and Israeli communities constantly discredit their activities. Awad and Al’azze have been branded as “Israeli collaborators” by some, while Shapira has been rejected by other Israelis for refusing to participate in offensive military actions that threaten Palestinian civilians.⁴ The documentary does not sugarcoat current situations, and an invested viewer could very well come away frustrated. It is important to understand that this documentary provides a sense of opportunity—but not a sense of closure.

And perhaps that is precisely the point the film’s producer, Mark Arnold, is trying to make. The situation in the West Bank and its surrounding area is far from over. Violence still prevails. The nonviolence movement has only just begun to change hearts and minds. Human beings naturally desire closure, but this documentary does not exist to please our ideas of how a proper story should play out. It exists to inform and inspire. It exists to show us—through the stories of these three courageous and diverse men—that our shared humanity is the most important and inspiring mobilizing factor to achieve the desired change.

Notes

¹ Chris Rice, endorsement of quoted in Salim J. Munayer and Salim J. Loden Lisa Loden, *Through My Enemy’s Eyes: Envisioning Reconciliation in Israel-Palestine* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2014), quote: “The Palestinian-Israeli divide may be the most intractable conflict of our time.”

² “Holy Land Trust (HLT),” *NGO Monitor*, November 6, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2vgWeqL>. http://www.ngo-monitor.org/ngos/holy_land_trust_hlt/.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ “About *Little Town of Bethlehem*,” *Little Town of Bethlehem*, accessed July 18, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2vAcRNL>.



Cooperation, Not Confrontation: The Need for a New U.S. Policy Toward Russia

By John Whitehead

The United States and Russia are currently engaged in a new Cold War: a conflict marked by mutual suspicion and hostility; confrontation in certain regions of the world, such as Ukraine and Syria; and at least potential military competition. Over a quarter-century after the last Cold War ended with the Soviet Union's formal dissolution in December 1991, the world once again faces the possibility of open military conflict breaking out between the United States and the Russian Federation (the Soviet Union's heir), with the catastrophic consequences such conflict might involve. This situation must not continue.

Avoiding war and de-escalating tensions between the United States and Russia should be top priorities for US policymakers and citizens. However, the prospects for such a rapprochement are currently dismal. While alleged conspiratorial connections between associates of US President Donald Trump and the Russian government receive much attention, what is often overlooked is the fact that the new president has continued existing hawkish policies toward Russia.¹

Consider the many current US policies that could reasonably be viewed by Russian policymakers as threats to their country's interests, either because they extend American power into Eastern Europe or northern Asia or because they directly harm Russia or a Russian ally. As of mid-2017, the United States continues to station military personnel in Poland.² These personnel are part of the increased NATO troop deployments in Eastern Europe that were a response to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. The expansion of NATO that started in the 1990s also proceeds, with Montenegro joining the military alliance this year.³ Meanwhile, as part of another ongoing policy begun in response to the Crimean annexation and Ukrainian civil war, the United States is providing military training and advice to the government of Ukraine.⁴ The US deployment of an anti-ballistic missile system in Eastern Europe, first undertaken by George W. Bush and continued in a more limited form by Barack Obama, also continues.⁵ An anti-missile system has also been deployed to South Korea.⁶ In addition to such extensions of American power, economic sanctions that were placed on Russia because of the Crimea annexation have not been lifted: indeed, the Trump administration has imposed new economic sanctions on Russia.⁷

Moreover, while continuing these existing hawkish policies, Trump has heightened tensions between the United States and Russia by escalating American involvement in the Syrian civil war. Since Trump became president, the United States has repeatedly attacked Syrian government forces.⁸ Because Russia is offering political and military assistance to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, American attacks on Syrian forces increase US-Russian antagonism. Such attacks also make direct confrontation between American and Russian military forces more likely. The Russian Defense Ministry has already warned that US planes that enter the area of Russian air force operations in Syria may be regarded as targets.⁹

The current hostile US-Russian relationship cannot be allowed to continue. American peace activists must act now to encourage a policy of cooperation with Russia. Our goal should be for the US government to de-escalate tensions with Russia and to replace the current relationship with a more civil and cooperative one. To advocate such a stance is not to overlook the myriad injustices perpetrated by Vladimir Putin's regime—repressive domestic policies, the invasion of Ukraine, backing Assad's brutal war against the Syrian people—but to recognize which approach to Russia is most beneficial to US national security.

Americans must recognize that while Russia's actions in Ukraine and Syria may have been unjust or even barbaric, they do not pose a threat to the United States. That is, Russia's actions do not threaten the safety or well-being of American citizens or the independence or territorial integrity of the United States. Recent Russian policies do not necessarily presage some grand plan of conquest in Europe or the Middle East but are consistent with limited goals meant to protect Russian national interests. In Ukraine, Russia's goal is most likely to secure influence in a country important to Russian security and identity; and in Syria, the probable goal is to protect a Russian ally in the region.¹⁰ Working with Russia can co-exist with protecting American national security. To persist in a confrontational policy toward Russia, however, carries two major but very different risks.

The first risk is that a US-Russian relationship characterized by mutual suspicion, an arms race, and friction in various "flashpoint" regions such as Eastern Europe and the Middle East will lead to

open military conflict. Any such conflict means at best the loss of life and at worst escalation to the nuclear level. The necessity of avoiding this risk is clear.

The second risk is that a second Cold War between the United States and Russia could lead to a similar outcome as the first one. Economic sanctions and low oil prices (oil being a vital Russian resource) have already taken a toll on the Russian economy—which is clearly weaker than the American one.¹¹ The continued economic burden of sanctions and unpredictable oil prices, combined with a new arms race, may result in some kind of political upheaval within Russia.

To many policymakers and others in the United States, this outcome might appear to be eminently desirable. From their perspective, such a scenario would constitute “victory” in the new Cold War, as it would diminish Russia’s ability to compete against the United States. Even “victory” carries serious dangers, however.

While Vladimir Putin’s statement that the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century” was hyperbole, it reflected how tragic the aftermath of the Soviet state’s dissolution was for Russia.¹² The decade of the 1990s was marked by a series of crises for the new Russian Federation. The economy contracted dramatically and suffered a series of upheavals related to low oil prices and the 1997-1998 financial crisis that resulted in millions of people losing their savings.¹³ A violent separatist movement arose in the Caucasus, leading to a bloody war and to the Russian federal government effectively losing control over the separatist region (the region subsequently became a center of criminal and terrorist activity).¹⁴ The Russian military, which was already suffering in the late Soviet era from poor training and housing, as well as a lack of discipline, experienced shortages of funds and equipment in the post-Soviet period.¹⁵ Divisions between the president and parliament led to bitter, and in one case violent, confrontations.¹⁶

A repetition of the Russian experience in the 1990s is not a scenario responsible American policymakers should risk. Political and economic instability in one country can eventually affect others, and such a ripple effect is of particular concern when the unstable nation possesses one of the largest nuclear arsenals in the world. A Russia wracked by political instability is one where military chains of command can become confused or where the national government can lose effective control of territory and of the nuclear weapons based there. An economically unstable Russia with a cash-starved military establishment is one where military personnel could sell weapons and expertise, including the nuclear kind, on the black market.

In a worst-case scenario, Russian political or economic instability could cause nuclear weapons to fall into the hands of terrorists, such as those who have been active in the Caucasus. The danger of such a scenario is already growing. The United States and Russia had previously cooperated in efforts to secure nuclear materials in Russia and other nations. As a result of the current chill in

US-Russian relations, however, these cooperative efforts have been suspended.¹⁷

A situation in which confrontation with the United States pushes Russia into a weak, unstable condition is almost as dangerous as one in which open war breaks out between the two countries. A politically and economically stable Russia is in the United States’ interests.

Engaging Russia will be a complex diplomatic process, and the precise details will need to be worked out and adjusted by American policymakers over the long term. The broad outlines of engagement, however, should be as follows:

1. The United States should not pursue further expansion of NATO, particularly in traditional Russian areas of interest such as Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
2. In the case of Ukraine, the United States should make it clear—through a formal diplomatic agreement, if necessary—that Ukraine will never be permitted to become part of NATO.
3. The recently increased NATO military presence in Eastern Europe should be reduced (gradually, if necessary) to its previous levels.
4. The missile defense systems in Eastern Europe and South Korea should be cancelled, as the Russians perceive these systems as provocations (the Korean system is also provocative to China).
5. The United States’ efforts to overthrow Assad’s regime in Syria or to assist others in doing so should be abandoned.
6. Joint US-Russian efforts to reduce both nations’ nuclear arsenals and to secure nuclear materials must be resumed at the earliest possible opportunity.

In essence, the United States needs to respect Russia’s (to use an old-fashioned term) sphere of influence and to avoid policies that could justly be interpreted as provocative.

To cooperate with Russia in this fashion does not guarantee that Vladimir Putin or a future Russian leader will never engage in further aggression, whether in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, or elsewhere. Cooperation is by no means an infallible, risk-free approach. It is, however, a less risky, more constructive

approach toward Russia than confrontation. Moreover, cooperation does not require that US policymakers or activists condone or ignore the many injustices perpetrated by Vladimir Putin’s regime. Instead, cooperation requires an ability to distinguish between Russian actions that are unjust or violate human rights and those that threaten the security of the United States. While Putin might pose a threat to Ukrainians, Syrians, or even Russians, he has yet to pose a serious threat to Americans. To treat Russia as a threat, and to respond with economic sanctions, provocative military build-ups, and brinkmanship is more likely to foster dangers to the United States from Russia rather than to avert them.

Cooperation is by no means an infallible, risk-free approach. It is, however, a less-risky approach...

Notes from “Cooperation, Not Confrontation”

¹ I have not attempted to address here the highly complex issue of Russian intervention in the 2016 presidential election and whether any illegal or otherwise inappropriate collaboration took place between the Russian government and Trump. That topic is beyond the scope and available space of this article. I will say only that current congressional and Justice Department investigations should be pursued in full and any actual wrongdoing prosecuted.

² “Near The Russian Border, U.S. And NATO Beef Up Their Presence,” NPR, November 30, 2016, <http://n.pr/2jKj03K>; Lida Kelly, “NATO Deploys Troops to Poland while Concerns about Country’s Army Rise,” *Reuters*, April 13, 2017, <http://reut.rs/2u1tqlq>.

³ “Montenegro Joins NATO as 29th Ally,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, June 9, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2sJXNvg>.

⁴ “Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine,” United States Army Europe, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2nKZE3r>; Charlsy Panzino, “Amid Russia Tensions, US Army Continues to Build Up Ukrainian Forces, Training Center,” *Army Times*, June 8, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2u1MwrF>.

⁵ Ryan Browne, “U.S. Launches Long-Awaited European Missile Defense Shield,” CNN, May 12, 2016, <http://cnn.it/1T9Nqg3>.

⁶ Jesse Johnson, “China, Russia Take Aim at U.S. Anti-missile System Planned for Deployment in South Korea,” *Japan Times*, January 13, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2jvUfZP>; Thomas Watkins, THAAD Missile Defense System Now Operational in S. Korea,” *Agence France-Presse*, May 1, 2017, <https://yhoo.it/2pBRMCG>.

⁷ Alan Rappeport and Neil MacFarquhar, “Trump Imposes New Sanctions on Russia over Ukraine Incursion,” *New York Times*, June 20, 2017, <http://nyti.ms/2tmHyYG>.

⁸ Suleiman Al-Khalidi and Matt Spetalnick, “U.S. Warplane Downes Syrian Army Jet in Raqqa Province,” *Reuters*, June 19, 2017, <http://reut.rs/2sFUTLx>; Joshua Keating, “The U.S. Attacked Syria Again. What’s Going On?,” *Slate*, May 18, 2017, <http://slate.me/2un7fps>.

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¹⁰ For an analysis of Russian actions in Ukraine, see my essay, “Preventing a New Cold War: A Proposal for Solving the Ukraine Crisis,” *Life Matters Journal* 3, no. 4 (2015): 11-19.

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¹² Steven Lee Myers, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 278.

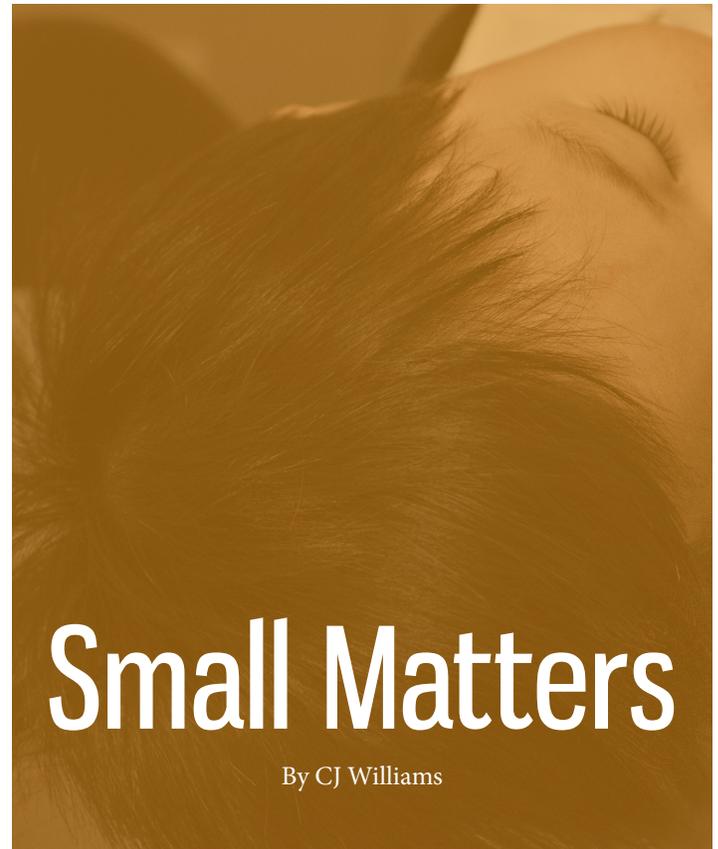
¹³ *Ibid.*, 86, 119-120, 122, 128.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 142-143, 154-155.

¹⁵ David R. Stone, *A Military History of Russia: From Ivan the Terrible to the War in Chechnya* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2006), 235, 241, 243.

¹⁶ Myers, *The New Tsar*, 86, 87, 128-129.

¹⁷ Bryan Bender, “Russia Ends US Nuclear Security Alliance,” *Boston Globe*, January 19, 2015, <http://bit.ly/2iTn8P2>; Bryan Bender, “US-Russia Work on Nuclear Materials in Jeopardy,” *Boston Globe*, August 3, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1zXpm2t>.



Small Matters

By CJ Williams

It is a small thing—a small war. Isn’t it? You don’t see it in the news—that must make it minimal. War is *global*. It isn’t really war-like violence if it’s less than that. There can be small conflicts, can’t there? Small conflicts imply minimal harm and little impact between two nations that are, well, quite small. Conflicts between small factions in an obscure nation... is that even war?

Read that paragraph again, and count how many modifiers dismiss, discount, and subtly rationalize violence.

Count the way in which *small* has been used to convey that something—or someone—*small* may matter less.

After all, it was just a little rape.

After all, it was just a little murder.

After all, it was just a little war.

After all, it was just a woman, a preborn girl, or an immigrant.

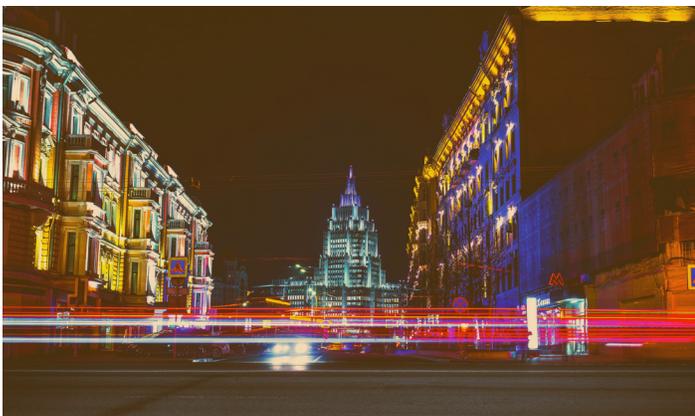
These are small matters—meaning, *small matters when it comes to the matter of a human life*.

But the specific conflict I want to talk about here, while small on the global media screen, is not small. In fact, it is a war with hundreds of millions of casualties. But they are women; and they are small women; and they are easily unseen.

In China today, *small* matters in a magnitude that is anything but small. Along with the vicious suppression of the Falun Gong, repression in Tibet, and the hidden war against Christians and individuals opposed to the Communist Party, China has one small policy that I notice has infrequent and small attention paid to it.

It has supposedly prevented 300 million births—and aggressively wiped out tens of millions of Chinese lives.¹

It is forced abortion. It is a radical triple-violence that not only rips a preborn woman apart (and it most likely is a woman, given



the prevalence of sex selective abortion), but also removes even the semblance of choice from the mother who undergoes the killing of her child. It is quite small though, being performed on an individual basis, performed without media attention, performed—more accurately, perpetrated—under the guise of progressive population control and conservation of resources.

But violence is a concrete and specific thing, not just a word. It is perpetrated against concrete and specific human individuals. Violence is always a small thing in reality.

And to put that in perspective, here are the very small, very specific regulations of the small war in China—the small one-child policy; the small “fundamental national policy” rooted in a small disrespect for human dignity for the greater good.

In 1979, China’s State Council issued a directive that “one (child) is best, two at most, never a third.” The “Marriage Law,” which was adopted in 1980, further advanced what would become the one-child policy.

The process of marrying, conceiving, and giving birth in China follows these small steps:

Couples must apply for a permit (before conceiving).

After having the permitted number of children (often only one), women must submit to sterilization or an IUD.

Unauthorized (un-permitted) children must be aborted.

Unauthorized children might be forcibly aborted, in some cases.

If a couple has an unauthorized child, sterilization of one spouse is required.

Other small measures used under Chinese law to enforce one child per couple are imprisonment, house destruction, heavy fines, forced dispossession, kidnapping, and torture. Also, women who conceive girls often face pressure to abort because of a preference for sons.²

These are a “clear violation of the human rights of one-fifth of the world’s women,” to put it in a small way.³

Perhaps this violence against the human individual is so enormous, it is easy to overlook.

Or perhaps it is, like so many acts of aggressive violence, like a global and national culture rooted in power and death, materially instead of personally centered and overlooked because it is perpetrated against the small, the vulnerable, the historically oppressed: women and children.

Perhaps this violence, like so much violence, is left unopposed because the perpetrators are wealthy and powerful, and it is inconvenient to stand up to them.

Perhaps violence is always small, but perhaps the decision to ignore it has always been hideously large and indescribably terrible, with unaffordably deep consequences.

In the case of China’s Small War—its *One Child Policy*—the consequences are tens of millions of human beings killed by abortion (often forced abortion), uncounted many mothers killed or mutilated by forced

abortion, uncounted families—fathers, brothers, sisters, parents—beaten, terrorized, and dehumanized.

It blankets the nation.

Why, then, is China permitted to participate in organizations such as the United Nations, which has very clear regulations regarding human rights—such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—for its participatory nations?

When we speak of human rights globally, the easy route is to look towards explosions. War explodes things. The blood and guts of that sort of violence—while often rationalized—clearly takes the lives of individual human beings. Perhaps we forget that war doesn’t always explode on the surface.

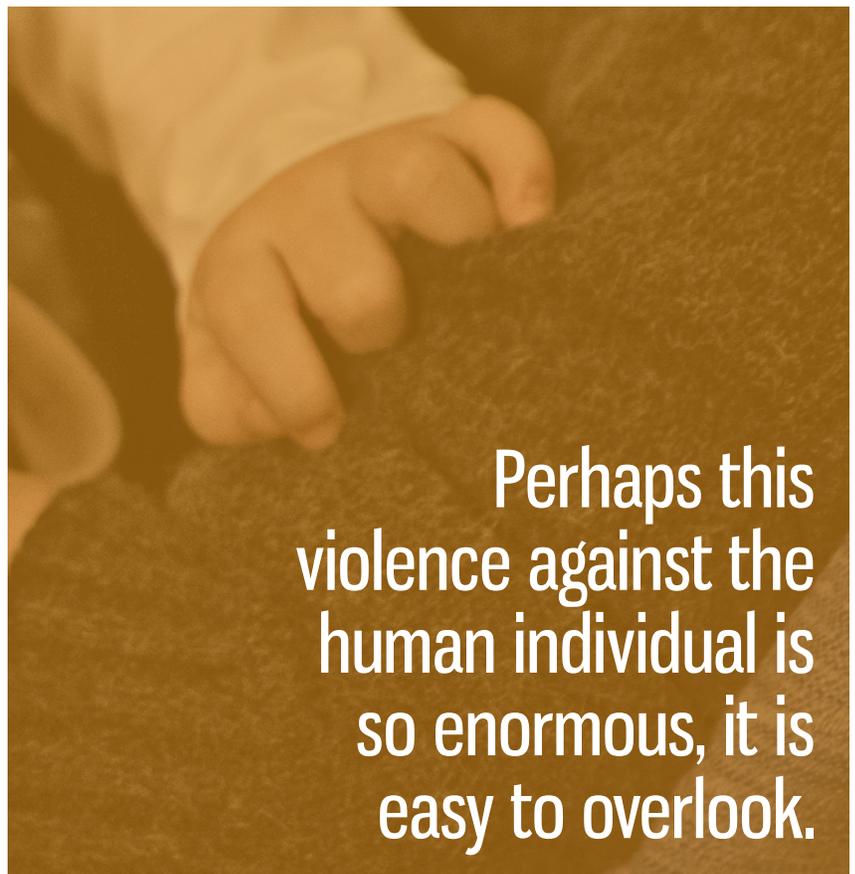
Rationalization—it’s such a small thing. But however small the victim, however unseen the act, violence is never small. *Small* is simply a sly way of saying insignificant, which no human life ever is.

Notes

¹ Yang Wanli, “High Abortion Rate Triggers Fears for Young Women,” *China Daily*, January 27, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1JFqjS4>; Harry Wu, “Prepared Statement,” in *An Evaluation of 30 Years of the One-Child Policy in China*, Hearing before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the United States House of Representatives, November 10, 2009, 7; available at <http://bit.ly/2v8TkDE>.

² Reggie Littlejohn, testimony and “Prepared Statement,” in *An Evaluation of 30 Years of the One-Child Policy in China*, Hearing before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the United States House of Representatives, November 10, 2009, 9-14; available at <http://bit.ly/2v8TkDE>; Wu, personal testimony and “Prepared Statement,” 6-9.

³ Wu, “Prepared Statement,” 7.



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Interested in getting involved?

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