

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Stop killer robots, before it's too late

Perhaps it seems that the gulf between Democrats and Republicans, Catholics and Protestants, Californians and Oregonians, is too vast to overcome.

Everything divides us these days — gun control, free trade, and whether or not a hot dog is a sandwich.

Yet there is no need to get all down in the dumps. We've scoured the globe to find an issue that a wide majority of people can get behind — and must get behind — in order for our world to be peaceful and supportive of human life.

It's the worldwide Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. Yes, you read that right. The idea of killer robots is no longer Hollywood sci-fi: It's real, it's really important, and it's really scary. Dozens of international organizations, mostly supporting peace and disarmament and human rights worldwide, have combined to lobby government, corporations and thinkers the world over to confront this issue before it's too late.

Stuart Russell, a leading AI scientist at the University of California in Berkeley, told the United Nations last year that "pursuing the development of lethal autonomous weapons would drastically reduce international, national,

local, and personal security."

As the campaign argues, the expanded use of unmanned vehicles over the past decade has already changed warfare. It's now possible to create fully-autonomous weapons that are able to fire and "think" on their

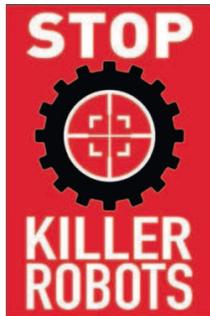
own, without any human intervention. That carries tremendous ethical, legal, moral, and technical concerns that humanity and government have yet to grapple with.

The campaign argues that "giving machines the power to decide who lives and dies on the battlefield is an unacceptable application of technology. Human control of any combat

robot is essential to ensuring both humanitarian protection and effective legal control. A comprehensive, pre-emptive prohibition on fully autonomous weapons is urgently needed."

To get to that end, international treaties that call for a pre-emptive ban are necessary. And there is no time to waste.

Militaries in many nations, including the United States, China, Russia and the United Kingdom, are already moving toward systems that could give greater



combat autonomy to machines. A step beyond remote-controlled warfare drones, it could be the beginning of a robotic arms race. If we head down that road technologically, it may soon be difficult to change course.

"Allowing life or death decisions to be made by machines crosses a fundamental moral line," the campaign argues. "Autonomous robots would lack human judgment and the ability to understand context. These qualities are necessary to make complex ethical choices on a dynamic battlefield, to distinguish adequately between soldiers

and civilians, and to evaluate the proportionality of an attack."

The scientific community is heavily united in desiring hard and fast rules, and in establishing international norms — such as we have done regarding biological and nuclear weapons.

This may seem futuristic and hypothetical, but it won't be for much longer. So now is the time to give thought to how to limit robotic weaponry, and the rules and rule-enforcing bodies that will allow us to benefit from those technologies, not be destroyed by them.

OTHER VIEWS

Good leaders make good schools

The solutions to the nation's problems already exist somewhere out in the country; we just do a terrible job of circulating them.

For example, if you want to learn how to improve city schools, look how Washington, New Orleans and Chicago are already doing it. Since 2011 the graduation rate at Chicago public schools has increased at nearly four times the national average, to 77.5 percent from 56.9 percent. The percentage of Chicago students going to two- or four-year colleges directly after graduation increased to 63 percent in 2015 from 50 percent in 2006.

Sean Reardon of Stanford compared changes in national test scores between third and eighth grade. He found that Chicago students were improving faster than students in any other major school district in the country. Chicago schools are cramming six years' worth of education into five years of actual schooling.

These improvements are proof that demography is not destiny, that bad things happening in a neighborhood do not have to determine student outcomes.

How is Chicago doing it? Well, its test scores have been rising since 2003. Chicago has a rich civic culture, research support from places like the University of Chicago and a tradition of excellent leadership from school heads, from Arne Duncan to Janice Jackson, and the obsessive, energetic drive of Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

Chicago has expanded early childhood education and imposed universal full-day



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

kindergarten. After a contentious strike in 2012, Emanuel managed to extend the school day. But he and the other people who led this effort put special emphasis on one thing: principals.

We've spent a lot of time over the past few decades debating how to restructure schools. We've spent a lot of time trying to help teachers. But structural change and increasing teacher quality don't get you very far without a strong principal.

Researchers from the University of Minnesota and the University of Toronto studied 180 schools across nine states and concluded, "We have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership."

What do principals do? They build a culture. Researchers from McKinsey studied test scores from half a million students in 72 countries. They found that students' mindsets were twice as powerful in predicting scores as home environment and demographics were. How do students feel about their schooling? How do they understand motivation? Do they have a growth mindset to understand their own development?

These attitudes are powerfully and subtly influenced by school culture, by the liturgies of practice that govern the school day: the rituals for welcoming members into the community; the way you decorate walls to

display school values; the distribution of power across the community; the celebrations of accomplishment and the quality of trusting relationships.

Principals set the culture by their very behavior — the message is the person.

Research suggests that it takes five to seven years for a principal to have full impact on a school, but most principals burn out and leave in four years or less. Chicago has one of the highest principal retention rates of any large urban system, 85 percent. Principals are given support, training and independence. If you manage your school well for a couple of years in a row, you are freed from daily oversight from the central office.

But the big thing is transforming the role. Principals used to be administrators and middle managers, overseeing budgets, discipline, schedules. The goal was to be strong and decisive.

Today's successful principals are greeting parents and students outside the front door in the morning. That Minnesota-Toronto study found successful principals made 20 to 60 spontaneous classroom visits and observations per week.

In other words, they are high-energy types constantly circulating through the building, offering feedback, setting standards, applying social glue. In some schools, teachers see themselves as martyrs in a hopeless cause. Principals raise expectations and alter norms. At Independence Middle School in Cleveland, principal Kevin Jakub pushes a stand-up desk on wheels around the school all day.

Research also suggests a collaborative power structure is the key. A lot of teachers want to be left alone and a lot of principals don't want to give away power, but successful schools are truly collaborative.

The Wallace Foundation website recently described the exemplary activism of former Kentucky principal Dewey Hensley. In his first week he drew a picture of a school on a poster board and asked the faculty members to annotate it together. "Let's create a vision of a school that's perfect. When we get there, then we'll rest," he told them. School governance was led by a simple structure of three committees, populated and headed by teachers. Hensley also visited the homes of the 25 most disruptive students.

When you learn about successful principals, you keep coming back to the character traits they embody and spread: energy, trustworthiness, honesty, optimism, determination. We went through a period when we believed you could change institutions without first changing the character of the people in them. But we were wrong. Social transformation follows personal transformation.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003. He has been a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*, a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, and is currently a commentator on PBS.

YOUR VIEWS

Bailor was promoting diversity, not age discrimination

As a person in my 70s, I'm as sensitive to age discrimination as I hope you are — however old you happen to be. But unlike County Commissioner Bill Elfering, I didn't hear age discrimination in candidate Tom Bailor's comments in the March 6 *East Oregonian* ("Bailor, Pullen challenge George Murdock for county commissioner"). I heard a recommendation for diversity: "As someone in my 50s, I think it is important to have leadership with diverse generational experience and connection."

If all three commissioners were in their 50s, that wouldn't be diversity, either. But a mix of ages, all with differing experiences and insights, is invaluable.

Bailor works with older adults every day, and he treats everyone with the respect people of every age deserve.

Bette Husted
Pendleton



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