
The Element of Surprise:

Global Issues and Solutions in the 21st Century

同志社国際中学校2年 北村悠真

The most widely discussed problems may not be the most urgent. It may well be that artificial intelligence and xenophobia are in fact bigger problems than global warming and war. A wider range of problems should be acknowledged in order to better prepare ourselves for the future.

Robots are perhaps the most powerful inventions created, but with great power comes great responsibility. “The Matrix” is a trilogy of movies depicting a future in which humans have been enslaved by robots. This is an idea that has not been taken seriously enough because it seems far-fetched. Robots are becoming more advanced by the year. The computer program Alpha Go defeated the champion of a game called “Go”, disproving the theory that robots cannot defeat humans at Go because of its reliance on intuition.

As robotic technology improves, the danger increases. Even malicious computer programs are threats; there are many different programs that trick humans into revealing private information. Keystroke Logging is a program that records every letter typed with a device, such as a phone or a computer. It reveals private messages, passwords, and more if activated. If robots gain the ability to do this autonomously, everybody using a device is at risk.

However, the main problems with robots are caused by the humans that program them. The dangers that we think about, such as rogue and greedy robots, are programmed in by the builder of the robot. We humans, in order to prevent artificial intelligence from taking over, need to fix ourselves, and thereby fix the robots. One possible solution is kindness: greed is caused by a fear of exhausting supplies and also because people want to feel happy. With fMRI technology, scientists have discovered that being kind raises dopamine (the chemical that makes people feel good) levels for a long time, but getting material goods only raises dopamine levels temporarily.

In the media, news of Islamic radicals that have committed terrorism is widespread. This has caused more Islamophobia around the world; surveys done by FactTank and The Guardian indicate a less positive view towards Islamic people after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center than surveys done years before. However, I would

like to look at the other side of the conflict.

14 different predominantly Islamic countries have been attacked and invaded, including Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. In Japan, the government has authorized the surveillance of Islamic people in Japan, even though very few, if not any, terrorist attacks in Japan have been committed by Islamic people. I do not think that this is the way Islamic people should be treated; they should be treated with dignity. More people feel that they are hated by the outside world and join groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), causing more xenophobia and therefore more war.

Territorial disputes, refugee influxes, and fear cause xenophobia. This is why diplomacy may prove to be the best solution. If a dispute cannot be resolved, we should try and compromise. By sharing what we all have, we create a society where nobody needs to fight for their needs or try and take from each other. Japan has tainted by its actions during World War 2, but can improve its reputation by helping countries like China with their pollution problem, as Japan has advanced air purifying systems. It will be difficult, but it will result in a world beneficial to everybody.

Everybody in the world has at least one person they dislike. This is a waste of time; when we are focusing on killing each other; we are being distracted from the larger issues. It would be easier for robots to take over if humans are fighting each other, would it not?

These problems are not to be taken lightly and if ignored could have devastating effects on the world. Neither of these problems was listed on the United Nations Global Issues list nor was mentioned very often a global issues poll in the European Union. This is an indication that people underestimate the danger. We need to widen our focus on global problems; we should never underestimate the element of surprise.