It Is Impossible To Be “Anti-War”

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"I do not weep at the world–I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife."

– Zora Neale Hurston

"What is a rebel? A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes, from the moment he makes his first gesture of rebellion."

– Albert Camus, *The Rebel*

"I go over my own escape routes all the time. To survive in this state, you have to think like the French Resistance."

— Tim Dorsey, writing about Florida in *The Stingray Shuffle*

Everybody pretends this is Florida in the 30's, the 50's, the 80's. Nobody wants to stare into the ugly mess we've become or the horrible future that lies ahead. This isn't a question of philosophy or ethics but a fundamental problem of perception that leaks into everything. Take foreign policy: **if we don't change something quick we'll be left behind as the planet descends into the fourth layer of robot hell.**

I am parked underneath a causeway, the rhythmic beat of tires against concrete echoing across the Kia which now serves as a small cabin. Pillow behind my back and stretched in the back seat, I'm typing away as I think about how many days we could camp here. The car, as always, is kitted out for misadventure: camping stove, mosquito net, hammock, table, cooking gear, and a host of supplies as well as enough beer to enjoy them.

We weren't in the woods. Florida's Scenic Highway is our preferred hunting ground, a stretch of road riding up from the Keys all the way to the demilitarized zone bordering Georgia. Beside the pavement we travel is a constantly changing landscape: mangrove swamps and dilapidated motels, the Indian River and stark naked ocean, abandoned orange groves and mutated beach communities where palm trees once towered above the buildings.

Those in particular always seem dumbstruck, confused at how big they'd gotten. Rather than change they hold on to a memory, selling the illusion that everything is the same. Condos litter the shore, the mom-and pop's have been shut down by Walmart, hell you can't even buy fresh squeezed orange juice on the side of the road anymore.

So be it. We live and play in the here and now. The spirits of this land still speak to me, still run strong.

As the reassuring stink of low-tide hits my nostrils I laugh at the anxiety of comrades about the future. Will we invade Iran? Will we attack North Korea? And if we do…what then? The anxiety spills out to performative gestures: filters for profile pictures, memes, and the occasional street rally.

But what does that do?

The answer usually given is those in power will become aware that we, the "people," will not stand idly by as they slaughter millions. That our rage has consequences. Politicians that want to get elected will heed the will of the people. We will go to the polls.

But what if the polls no longer matter?

We talk about war like its something that rolls out, like a rug. That it requires mobilization. That at any point the people, given just enough information and just enough voice, could stop the train and end it. We picture presidents and cabinet members rubbing their hands, hoping the voters stay quiet. We *like* to think we have that power.

That our emotions alone, our indignation, might set the world aright.

The truth is being "anti-war" is the same as being "anti-space" on the Space Coast. You might believe humanity nothing more than a pack of locusts, you might truly think the export of capi-

talism beyond our atmosphere will be nothing more than ejaculating the most foul, diseased, and fetid load onto the most pristine face we've ever encountered, **but at the end of the day you long ago lost the ability to do anything about it.**

Remember When You Had to Declare War?

Power studies. Power learns. Cunning minds adapt and tinker with the entire capitalist project because they earn more power and resources(money) by doing so. The game rewards any player who updates its rules and allows it to function.

We are the beta-testers for our own enhanced imprisonment.

Consider how the golden myths of WW2 were burnt down by a Korean conflict with no discernible victor and an entire generation of broken young men. Unnoticed by much of the population was President Truman's attempts to avoid Congressional approval for a new war by referring to the conflict as a "police action." No formal declaration was needed for a police action, no factories taken over or rationing enforced. No voting. The population could remain happy and the killing could go on.

This would have long ranging implications.

Vietnam was another "police action" until we fucked it up and it became a full-blown war. The crucial ability to let the war slip into the public's unconscious had been lost. With the draft every prole soon realized the patriotism they parroted in school or the local bar would be tested by punji pits rubbed in human feces, suicide missions for hills they couldn't pronounce, and firefights with cheap plastic guns notorious for jamming. Vietnam taught the American ruling class that your average person couldn't give a fuck about honor, duty, the flag, or any other horseshit when it was THEIR ass on the line.

In 1973 congress passed the "War Powers Act." Under the new law American troops couldn't stay for more than 90 days in a conflict unless Congress approved.

So the wars became hidden. We paid local militias and death squads to do it for us. It wasn't enough. We tested the waters by invading a small island that posed no threat to us, this of course only after a bitter and intense propaganda campaign to convince the American people a nation known for nutmeg somehow posed a dire threat to their livelihood. The people, after making sure they'd be able to stay in their trailers and drink bud light, made it very clear they didn't give a shit. Jesus would judge the quick and the dead and as long as we were quick we didn't care. Our indifference sealed Grenada's fate. The ruling class found a new model and updated the game. They were so happy they gave out more medals than there were soldiers actually involved.

Iraq 1 proved the rules were still good. Give the people enough highlights, make it seem like an action movie, and they won't care. Lie to their face and they wouldn't notice. Shit, you could inject some of the fodder with illegal fucking chemicals, giving them health problems we still struggle to understand, and everything was the eel's hips. The war just couldn't get in the way of shopping, fucking, and making money.

9/11. Flags everywhere. The American people were hungry for blood. So we invaded Afghanistan and immediately started heroin production. Fine. What could go wrong there? Ah but suddenly Iraq 2 loomed. The people were unsure, though of course the press cheered it on. But propaganda wasn't enough. The model was broken. Protests raged. The people figured if they'd put enough pressure on their elected leaders they'd be forced to act.

Only that power was no longer in the hands of those representatives. The game had changed. The largest protests on the planet fell on deaf ears because there was nobody to be convinced.

Everywhere And All At Once

On September 14, 2001, congress passed the *"Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists."* It authorized the president to *"use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons"* responsible for the attacks on September the 11th and any *"associated forces."*

It essentially removed the War Powers act, as well as the ability for elected representatives to decide when and where America would kill. It was a silent revolution *and by the time we noticed it was much too late.*

Every conflict since then has operated under its jurisdiction.

According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, the AUMF has been cited 37 times in connection with actions in 14 countries and many in international waters. Some of the countries pistol-whipped under this mandate included Afghanistan and Iraq, but also Cuba, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Kenya, Libya, the Philippines, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen.

Modern warfare is about as convoluted and confusing as a Baptist preacher caught at an orgy, desperately assuring you he was only trying to save souls while his asshole leaks blood. Recall that some senators were seemingly unaware the United States was killing people in Niger(that or they were simply lying) and you come to understand the "war" has grown too big. The people you elect have no idea where we fight, where our bases are, and even if they do the subject is so vast they can simply pretend they never knew anyway.

In Africa for instance the rules are very clear:

"American commandos are now only sent on missions with local forces that are determined to have significant strategic effect, like building a new base or clearing extremists from a large area. Armed drones or other protective aircraft must accompany such missions.

If those conditions are not met, the American troops will work from fortified command centers to advise African forces on intelligence, logistics, artillery and other aspects of big operations that are important — but not as flashy as front-line combat..."

Technically that's not "war," that's simply helping an ally eliminate "terrorists." A police action. Our proxies can die by the thousands but as long as those body bags ain't flowing back to Delray Beach or Jacksonville? Shiiiiieeeeeet. Let the good times roll.

The American people, that's you dear reader, have literally zero influence over these wars. Some two-bit dickwad from Tallahassee who's *"gunna make a change"* won't even be briefed on these operations, let alone be asked to review them.

This is the new face of combat, undeclared and everywhere all at once. The American people are no longer involved in the process(other than the actual killing) and the majority of the population have been reduced to spectator status. Libya was the perfect example: in the name of French colonial interests we protected, trained, and funded the same people we claimed to be fighting in Afghanistan. When we decided we wanted to bomb the shit out of the largest water reservoir in North Africa, effectively sending Libya back to the dark ages, we got approval from

the UN instead of our elected representatives. Oh sure they voted against it…eventually. But the bombings had already been carried out. The game had changed again.

Just recall the words of Mitt Romney later that year:

"I can assure you if I'm president, the Iranians will have no question but that I will be willing to take military action if necessary to prevent them from becoming a nuclear threat to the world. I don't believe at this stage, therefore, ***if I'm president that we need to have a war powers approval or special authorization for military force. The president has that capacity now.****"*

Our organizing hasn't adapted to this new reality. The "people," their "representatives," are all for show. There is nothing to protest because there is no point in the machine to put pressure on any longer. We've been left behind and hilariously the Left acts as if they have a say in the fucking matter.

Of course it could be worse. **At least then we were still dealing with human beings…**

Six More Miles To The Graveyard

The evening is falling and I'm moving on to my second tall boy. My wife is in the front seat and Jimmy Buffet is singing about Miami. The volume is turned down low as my hands hit the keyboard, the tropical lyrics floating out of the windows and mixing with the brackish air:

"It's hard to believe this city started as a trading post
Home to the Seminole, pirate, and pioneer
Between the river of grass and the old mosquito coast
Before the railroad claimed the southernmost frontier…"

We've camped in places like this, weird blends of wild sea grapes and concrete fixtures. That's part of the fun. The ability to move seamlessly between urban and rural, whether at a gas station, a patch of swampland, or along an abandoned state road.

Many years ago you could live like this, scoring cheap land where you find it and starting a homestead; you might even park a trailer along the right stretch of highway for weeks and not be bothered.

Times change. Miami is no longer home to pirates and Key West cares less about your art and more about your wallet. Now zoning laws prohibit front yard gardens and you pay a service charge for rain that falls on your roof.

Take the town we'll be rolling to next: Cocoa, Florida.

Once home to a small fishing village, then to tourists looking to watch a shuttle launch, it's abandoned and shuttered buildings boast a violence rate nearly five times the national average. It rivals Chicago. Cocoa will fucking kill you. Staring out the window and onto the water I can feel the latent memories encoded onto the soil. On a cellular level I can sense the fishing vessels who once plied these waters. Honest people, making a living in paradise.

My eyes drift to the busted bottles, the dirty needles lurking in the grass around our campsite. Now Kel-Tec, a pistol manufacturer, is the big game in town.

I peel an orange liberated from land soon to be a strip mall. In 1945 there were 28,699 independent orange farmers with a grove about five acres in size across Florida. When the last federal survey of orange groves was conducted in 2002, there were only 7,072 citrus farms left.

Wars waged by human beings will soon join orange groves as part of the past.

Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work, during a National Security Forum talk, made this clear when he noted *"[American] intelligence suggests that our adversaries are already contemplating this move. We know that China is investing heavily in robotics and autonomy. The Russian Chief of the General Staff (Valery) Gerasimov recently said that the Russian military is preparing to fight on a roboticized battlefield."*

This is no exaggeration. Last summer, China's State Council issued an ambitious policy calling for the nation to become *"the world's primary AI innovation center"* by 2030, by which the country's AI industry could be worth $150 billion. Already AI is so prevalent in the "People's Republic" that Kentucky Fried Chicken(itself an American corporation who, no doubt, is somehow selling doo-doo chicken to bring about communism) can actually authorize digital payments by facial scan for hungry customers, a process powered by AI algorithms that analyze minute details of a person's face in order to pick it out from thousands or millions of potential matches. In October 2016, a White House report found that Chinese researchers now also publish more deep learning–related papers in all journals than researchers from any other country.

Not to be outdone the US is pushing forward with its own AI initiatives.

Google has partnered with the United States Department of Defense to help the agency develop artificial intelligence for analyzing drone footage in an attempt to have AI select, and decide to kill, targets. Already most military drones flying in the air do so under their own power. The only issue is the data the drones collect needs to be sorted by real people, who then decide who to turn into *"bugsplat"*–a term drone operators use to describe the mutilated remains of the people they murder.

The goal is to allow the machines to make that determination. To eliminate the human influence entirely. Afterall, it wasn't too long ago that we learned 90% of those killed by these flying death-bots are not the intended targets.

Sidenote: when I was talking about China, did you envision some monolithic police state monitoring it's citizenry and almost thank yourself you lived in America?

Just so you know we do that too. Oh…did…did you not get to vote on that?

"A computer program spat out a score predicting the likelihood of each committing a future crime. Borden — who is black — was rated a high risk. Prater — who is white — was rated a low risk…

Scores like this — known as risk assessments — are increasingly common in courtrooms across the nation. They are used to inform decisions about who can be set free at every stage of the criminal justice system, from assigning bond amounts — as is the case in Fort Lauderdale — to even more fundamental decisions about defendants' freedom. In Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin, the results of such assessments are given to judges during criminal sentencing…

The formula was particularly likely to falsely flag black defendants as future criminals, wrongly labeling them this way at almost twice the rate as white defendants."

Amid all this there has been no real legislative discussion. There is no law on the books, nor any on the horizon. Your elected representatives are not wondering how much power they will have over a machine deciding who and when to kill on its own, or how computers will determine who rots in prison or who goes free. The game is about to change again and people are blissfully unaware. You, yes YOU dear reader, are no longer party to the discussion over who lives and who dies in your name. That world is over.

When there are no politicians capable of challenging the decision to kill, when there are no soldiers to convince not to fire…what exactly will you be hoping to do?

The entire process, the warfare of this century, might look to us like nothing more than a sheet of paper ending up on the president's desk, or the click of a button by a "pilot" servicing entire fleets of self-aware robots who select targets and decide to fire based solely on a series of scans and equations. The humans behind them might do nothing more than flag fuck ups within the system, allowing programmers to hone the machine hives to deadlier and deadlier edges.

How long until war is simply a system running in the background, like an anti-virus program, while lawyers argue if a scrap of paper from the colonial era has jurisdiction over walking tanks?

"This is not a war," says one slamming his fist on a table, *"there are no soldiers involved! This is urban debugging to remove anti-social elements. Our drones our analyzing faces in real time, locking in on those whose Danger ID is well above the threshold for pre-crime. Nobody is being targeted who has nothing to hide."*

"Mr. Press Secretary," says one female reporter, *"how do you account for the reports of mass civilian casualties?"*

"Our friends at facebook have confirmed those stories meet the algorithmic and mathematical markers for fake news. We are in the process of deleting them and hope-"

"But the video-"

"-hope to show the American people the truth. The president wants to remind everyone this is not her preferred choice. The Urban Renewal Program logs and scores arrests, determines the likelihood of an insurgency, and sends out T-4 units to ensure our children are kept safe. The scores determine the response. That is a matter of personal responsibility, something the president campaigned on extensively. We encourage anyone with legitimate grievances or suggestions to send a message to customer service, at which point M.A.R.T.H.A will calibrate units accordingly."

Four thousand pounds of death meanwhile roll through a blood soaked concrete prison. They cannot be reasoned with, they feel no remorse. Everything is simply a matter of statistics, probability, and data. They make no sounds save for the whistle of steel climbing over rubble.

Tell me reader, how will your shrill cries stop them?

Where The Wind And The Water Are Free

I do not tell you these things, dear reader, to scare you.

Ok, yes, actually I do enjoy terrifying you and forcing you to confront the harsh realities that haunt my dreams.

But…but…I also want to make you aware that if the Left wants to be an actual force in our dystopian hellscape we have to confront and deal with the world as it actually is. The world we live in is not the one familiar to our parents. If our radicalism is built on tactics developed in the 1960's, amid algorithm-derived prison sentences and killer robots tearing ass across the sky, **we are up shit creek without a paddle.**

There are things on this peninsula that are gone forever, many on the way, and eventually the whole fucking thing will be underwater. I could wax bitter that I can't afford my own home, can't seem to find cheap land, and stay online in the safety of my own delusions. I could sit here and wallow in the fact that the past I so adore is forever out of my reach.

Or…I can choose to live the Florida of today, the reality of the present, the guns, and the blood, and the palms, and the incredible sunsets blocked by hotels we could never afford to stay in. I can adapt and turn a car built for city streets into a stealth camper, homesteading temporarily

at trail-heads and abandoned lots where nobody questions a fire. I can hunt the treasures still littering the highway, summon the dead for favors and luck. I can fight, live, and die in the world as it actually is, rather than an idealized version that maybe never was.

The law of the jungle still holds: ***thrive or be eaten alive.***

War will come. It will not stop, whether it's North Korea, Iran, or a domestic pacification campaign that turns inner cities to rubble. We need new tactics that don't rely on influencing those in power. When shit gets fully automated the only way to be "anti-war" may very well be destroying or sabotaging entire industries. Maybe even power grids.

THOSE are the conversations we should be having, rather than dusting off the ole "Hands Off (Insert Country)" signs.

As I put the final edits on this article I'm waking up to a sunrise filled with possibility; my sincere goal is that the radicals of this planet organize new strategies that freely borrow but don't belong to any other era.

Dolphins are jumping in polluted water. Strange architecture waits to be observed just beyond the Coquina Bar and Liquor Store. Somewhere out there fried gator is sitting atop a freshly made citrus waffle.

I plan on finding it. Won't you join me on the road?

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