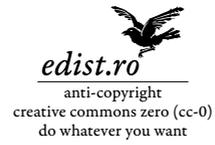


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# Warpilled

Anonymous

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Warpilled  
2022

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Anarchists are lucky: we don't need to understand the intricacies of history or follow the follies of foreign policy to deplore a war and condemn the actions of a state. War bad, states bad, borders bad, simple as. Nationalists, pro-state communists and "liberals," by contrast, have to make believe that the disgusting institution of war—a phenomenon, like slavery, specific to our species — has some serious purpose, some nobility, some validity. We under the black flag are spared telling ourselves or others such hateful and dangerous lies.

There is a pitfall, however. Understanding how utterly senseless war is can overwhelm the soul of anyone who's not fully cybernetically desensitized. It is a fallacy of positivism that the bitter flesh of hardship must contain the seed of a lesson. Alas, almost all suffering is senseless. It exists for no reason or, at most, as a necessary byproduct of the same ruthless profit and production processes that valorize it.

The senselessness of war is key to how terrible war is. After experiencing depression or another mental illness for a few years, what fresh lessons can it teach you? To the contrary, its emptiness and meaninglessness compound the pain: you suffer for nothing, to no end, and that knowledge crushes you further. Just so war, in which the lives of the world's poor are harvested wholesale for the bored pleasure of plutocrats, or over an abstract line on a map, is made worse by its manifest stupidity and avoidability.

For those of us fortunate enough to be outside the blast radius of the bombs, getting drunk and going to bed (with or without a companion) is an understandable reaction to war's insanity. To pretend the situation is reasonable is to legitimize it; the war in Ukraine, like the war in Myanmar, like the war in Tigray, succeeds in part through the spectacle of its own impossibility, if that's not too abstract a thing to say about mass murder. This demoralization is what they call shock and awe: it seems too awful to wrap one's head around. So, in watching the missiles landing in Ukraine, as with so much of the horror we consume via our perverse self-administration of the

social-media Ludovico Technique, it is important to admit there is no obligation to “pick a team,” or develop a “take,” or in general to react to war with anything but knee-jerk moral repugnance.

But let us try to dig a little beneath the awful dazzle of the bombs, the videos, the colorful flags. These massive mechanisms of death, these intercontinental systems, operate on a few principles. We can, at least, identify those. We can, at least, try to understand their consequences and, with an only slightly clearer conscience than that of the capitalist, try perhaps to identify what “opportunities” for anarchists might arise from something so incomprehensibly awful.

## **The Myth of the Madman**

Putin, like every leader who insufficiently kisses NATO’s ass or who somehow contradicts the interests of U.S. imperialism, gets labeled a madman, a tyrant and a ruthless dictator by Western media. Of course Putin really is all those things, but those are very normal things for a president or prime minister to be. These labels only get applied to disobedient dictators the West feels it can push around. So, Saddam Hussein was a madman who had to be stopped — but not Duterte. Fidel Castro was — but not Suharto. Putin — but not Mohammed bin Salman. Maduro — but not Pinochet. The list goes on and on.

The “madman” trope is used to justify regime change; it’s meant to deflect our attention away from the structures of the state and towards the state’s ephemeral figureheads. Rather than question why we have a vast hierarchical power apparatus that consistently puts terrible people in control of nukes, we are told there is simply a bad leader who must be replaced with a good leader. So, “bad” Donald Trump is replaced with “lesser evil” senescent segregationist sex-assaulter Joe Biden, and nothing really changes except the news coverage.

The demonization of Putin serves the same purpose electoral democracy does. One can and should condemn Putin's actions, but his actions wouldn't be possible without a vast network of technology, ideology and obedience. War wouldn't be possible without a civilization of subservience, without the cult of presidency itself, and without his being accordingly confident that he can order violence against others while insulated from personal repercussion.

This is part of why U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham's recent calls for the assassination of Putin are fun. Graham's right—it would fix a lot of problems, including likely concluding the war in Ukraine. So, I'm not saying Putin is not a dangerous madman who should be stopped, only that when one looks at it objectively, most presidents and prime ministers are dangerous madmen, as are most C.E.O.s and most landlords. All of these power-hungry freaks cause problems, and the same simple fix would address every case as cleanly. Graham's logic can, in fact, be fairly applied to himself.

## **Government Priorities**

Putin threatening nuclear aggression over exclusion from SWIFT banking is a good capsule proof that, beyond all the narratives we are fed about what matters, what matters to those in power is the smooth function of capitalism and the flows of money and commodity. By looking at actions rather than words we can draw this lesson from almost any branch of policy. The priority is genetically embedded in the actions of politicians. The shutdowns and forced reopenings of national economies under the pandemic were all done to preserve the flows of commerce; the development and mandating of the vaccine was as well, and the bloody-minded drive to reopen schools and shops despite the vaccine's failures reflects this too.

It's also instructive that in a world wracked by deepening climate catastrophe and an ongoing pandemic, political leaders pur-

warriors against the state wherever each of us resides. Without the courage to attack, we are nothing, and we cannot expect courage without a foundation of solidarity.

May my love for my comrades match my hatred for my enemies,  
— an anarchist in the Balkans

sue war. While the homeless freeze and starve, there is an infinite budget for war. War is how the state culls its surplus workers; war is the state's purpose and how it reproduces its values. War is, above all, good for the economy, that sacred monster fed on blood, the true power behind all thrones. War is the state, and supporters of the state should at least be honest with themselves.

When we see supposed liberals panting for the war's expansion, we are seeing how deeply the logic of empire is embedded in the souls of its servants. Americans in particular long to be the protagonist, and for them to witness a war that doesn't center them invalidates their identity. Of course there are wars all the time all over the world, many far bloodier than the (awful enough) war in Ukraine, but Americans are not shown those wars.

While Russian bombing has now broadened to include more symbolic targets, it's worth noticing their early invasion efforts were focused on roads, airfields and power plants. Those whose business is power understand where power lies: in energy infrastructure, in the highways, train tracks and airfields that support the flow of commerce. It is the movement of money, goods and energy along these arteries that gives an economy life, and that includes the flows of information and digital money over telecom networks. To harm a state, harm its economy.

## **Food and Water Shortage in Your Lifetime**

Even when an economy is powerfully disrupted, however, structural inequality ensures that the elites will be insulated from the consequences of these changes. As the Russian ruble loses most of its value, the internationally-banked Russian ruling class whose assets are diversified into gold, diamonds, art and North American real estate will weather the storm just fine compared to the average Russian taxi driver or laborer. That being the case, the war in Ukraine does seem certain to disrupt the international market for

energy and food staples to a degree that will guarantee at least regional unrest.

Currency hyperinflation can itself be enough to prompt uprisings, but worse storms loom on the horizon. Russia and Ukraine together are a global breadbasket, providing 30% of all worldwide wheat trade, 30% of barley, 20% of corn. War-based disruption of the international trade in these commodities would compound existent issues—crop shortages due to climate change and extreme weather, pandemic-era “labor shortages” (pay shortages) and shipping cost increases—and send already high consumer prices for food staples even higher. On top of that, modern industrial agriculture on every continent is heavily dependent on chemical fertilizers sourced from Russia. Fertilizer prices already almost doubled between summer 2020 and the end of 2021, driven by spiking natural gas and transport costs; the fertilizer crisis will further food price hikes and inevitable shortages.

While I try not to speculate as to the specific motivations of specific warmongers — I defer to the analysis of those on the scene — I did notice the Russians almost immediately went after a dam on the North Crimean Canal that Ukraine had built following Putin’s 2014 annexation of Crimea. This dam cut off 90% of Crimea’s water, resulting in Crimean water shortages that Russia had, in the years since seizing Crimea, spent many millions of rubles trying to alleviate, though these pre-2022 efforts to make Crimea more water-independent had been stymied by extreme droughts and high temperatures. It’s my belief that the “resource wars” some have warned of are here and a part of our present day.

Certain sects of anti-authoritarians have been for a while urging material preparation for these kinds of shortages. They advocate building skills, building networks, building capacity for autonomy within affinity groups and land projects, and advocating what might be termed degrowth approaches to small-scale agriculture. I think these are noble efforts but I’m not sure the scale of them will be enough to staunch in any significant way what is coming. The war

tury a new industrial power, the internet/telecommunication behemoth, is rising. The new master plays new tunes; the governments of the world must learn a few new steps. While these new technologies are just expansions and deepenings of the same agenda, in the adaptive friction between them and the state there may arise destructive opportunities.

Like other big industries before them, tech companies still require the power of a centralized state to build and defend their destructive carcinogenic infrastructure. In places like Myanmar, rebel forces have correctly identified the overlap between the interests of the state and of technology companies, and reacted by attacking not only the infrastructure elements themselves but in some cases the individuals implementing them.

A weakened state—a state at war, or a state preoccupied with an internal uprising—is far less able to defend the infrastructure of its corporate masters.

## In Conclusion

The above are just a few notes about what those of us outside the immediate warzone might want to watch for and a couple lines of analysis that might be useful in the months to come. I don’t pretend to any insight into the war in Ukraine; I only know what I read and see, and I struggle as much as anyone else to disentangle propaganda. In a certain way, I’m writing about everything except Ukraine. While I am in solidarity with anyone resisting state violence, and am happy for the anarchist battalions seizing an opportunity to simultaneously answer a call for aid and build their own combat skills and capacity, I think most of what’s said about Russian or Ukraine that doesn’t come FROM Russia or Ukraine is of dubious utility.

If my thoughts are useful to anyone, I’m happy. I urge all readers to prioritize material and militant solidarity with the imprisoned

little kittens while he winkingly advocates ethnic warfare against Russian-born people worldwide: apparently those who put a blue-and-yellow flag in their social media profile are expected to pull suspected Russians from their cars and beat them in every country on earth. Such incitement and propaganda is not new, but we are witnessing the speed and reach of it flying skyward like one of those pandemic death graphs, spiking exponentially from “Radio Machete” in Rwanda to Facebook encouraging the genocide of the Rohingya in Myanmar to this.

One of the things amplifying the reach of propaganda — or as troublingly, unilaterally limiting it—is the increasing power of a small number of technology companies. Privatization means that Google and Apple can punitively remote-disable the payment systems on the Moscow subway, that nobody in the EU is permitted to view the Russian state propaganda channels without a VPN, and that even a world leader as powerful as Trump can be significantly deplatformed by some Burning Man hippie CEO who finds the bummer factor of hosting a ranting, nuclear-armed fascist outweighs its profitability. Of course these big technology companies are merely concretized expressions of capitalist priorities; PayPal, which is now denying Russian accounts, has for years already been blocking accounts linked to Palestinians under Israeli siege.

The state and “law” are always just tools of our rulers and a means of enforcing private property. While a specific state is often a puppet of specific corporations, both are merely appendages of capitalism. Capitalism hollowed out most systems of government many generations ago, the same as it has most religious institutions. Government has for a long time been, transparently, no more than a vehicle for enforcing the interests of industry. From the Mpumalanga province in South Africa to the Hebei province of China to the Louisiana province of the USA, the state’s primary function has been to help facilitate profitable resource exploitation and environmental destruction and to defend the financial interests of industry’s captains from industry’s victims. Now in the 21st cen-

in Ukraine will be followed by others; wealth accumulation will remain lopsided, and if the current system is allowed to continue, many many millions will face a stark choice between literal starvation and breaking the rules of civil or lawful behavior.

High enough fuel prices are an almost certain predictor of unrest, but food shortages are a little more complicated. It remains to be seen who will starve quietly and who will take up arms, and for those who take up arms, it remains to be seen where their ire will be directed. Will they accept whatever skewed narrative their media (“social” or otherwise) provides about who’s to blame? Or will they target, at long last, the relatively small handful of wealthy families—the oligarchs, if you will—whose insatiable greed drives so much suffering? This seems a fruitful juncture for ideological intervention.

Spilling the blood of the billionaires will not magically renew soil already scorched to ash by climate change and industrial pesticide, but it will at least upset the status quo, providing us non-billionaires a fighting chance, however slim, to determine some destiny besides ongoing generational capitulation and servitude.

While I have heard that what most people want is merely stability, it seems to me many have remained accepting of outrageous oppression even as their so-called stability evaporates. I think that what holds most people captive is fear of a worse outcome. At the risk of sounding naive, as the state-managed outcome gets worse and worse, more people may forcefully reject it.

## The Refugee Crisis

Already almost 1.5 million have fled Ukraine, and as many as four million or more total may do so in the coming weeks. We have seen in the managed reception of refugees from Ukraine a hideous proof of how deep the worship of “whiteness” runs in the European mindset. We have also now seen proof that the way Europe has

treated nonwhite refugees (by, at best, confining them to de facto prison camps) is not the only way Europe can handle refugees.

I have great sympathy for Ukrainians fleeing this war, so it bothers me how embittering I find it to witness them being welcomed across borders as fully human peers... to see people gathering from all over Europe to offer Ukrainians a ride and a place to stay, the Eurostar train system offering Ukrainian refugees free transport to the UK, etc. It's not that the Ukrainian refugees don't deserve this sympathetic reception, but the contrast with the treatment of refugees from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Africa could not be starker.

I don't think it's denying nonwhite racists elsewhere agency to identify Europe as present-day ground zero for imperialism and racial hierarchy. The balance of power may be gradually shifting, but the forms of racism (and specifically anti-Blackness) embedded in the European project have at this point been exported worldwide—including in the founding of the bloody and genocidal prosperity of that European project called the United States. So, while it's extremely depressing and upsetting to see people from Africa kept off of trains by everyday Ukrainians, delayed at the border by Polish soldiers, or yanked off trains by German police, it's a good reminder that while individual Europeans may claim this or that opinion, the deep-rooted evil of color prejudice is perhaps the only characteristic that can be accurately described as intrinsically European. That's what phrases like "European Values" are code for—an exclusionary racial solidarity founded on a mythical conception of whiteness and white purity.

As the Ukrainian refugee crisis swells we must highlight these contradictions, not to score points in a debate, but as weapons to batter down inhumane and racist border policies (including the murderous "pushbacks" at sea) and to denormalize refugee death-camps — the fatally squalid livestock-like conditions in which so many refugees and undocumented immigrants are warehoused. We must insist that all refugees be welcomed with the openness

shown the Ukrainians and given the opportunities Ukrainian refugees are, and as they are not, we must demand to know why not. We must tear away euphemisms — such as "European" and "civilized" — and force white supremacy to articulate its positions.

In many places, anti-authoritarians who are themselves trying to survive under capitalism have put tremendous resources towards supporting and aiding undocumented immigrants and refugees. This is worthy work and those of us who did not provide so much aid should be very respectful towards those who have, but the reality is that no quantity of selfless volunteerism is sufficient to counterbalance the scale of displacement and misery caused by capitalism and state aggression. The blows fall harder and faster than bandages can be applied; we must look to the source of the violence, which is the state and those who profit from the state's continuance. The borders themselves and the pernicious nonsense of "national identity" are what turn human migration into so-called crises, but why are people fleeing in the first place? Who are the arms profiteers, the agriculture executives behind crop monoculture and famine? Every crisis has its architects.

## The State and Technology

Many of the horrors of war are consistent over centuries, and maybe better left to poets or other creative artists; they defy prose. This does not mean that, in the gravelly words of Ron Perlman, war never changes. In the past, war entailed the world's poor slaughtering one another, sometimes hand-to-hand, but exciting advancements in technology now mean that our world leaders can auto-slaughter with unprecedented efficiency, from unprecedented distances, as comfortably as playing a video game. This is fairly new.

Also new are existential absurdities like a handsome soldier speaking into his selfie-camera from a bunker and calling us his