



IT'S NOT A WAR, IT'S A RESCUE MISSION



MIKBY



EVENTS DISCUSSED WITHIN WERE TRUE AT THE TIME OF WRITING, BUT MAY ALREADY BE OUT OF DATE.
THINGS MOVE PRETTY FAST WHEN YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A SINGULARITY.

The Eternal Battle Between Chaos and Control

Cat Vincent wrote this piece a while ago, **The Tribe of the Strange**¹, and it perfectly describes how I've always self-identified. These past few months I've spent a lot of time examining and re-examining the Toolkits left by past members; those grand attempts made by individuals to express their philosophy, most often in a work of fiction, and documentaries on, or thinly disguised fictional re-tellings of, revolutions, attempts at revolution and so on. Trying to understand competing versions of how the world might be; how those attempts to affect this have succeeded and failed in the past.

The work that resonates the strongest with me is still Grant Morrison's **The Invisibles**, the key message from which I've titled this piece. Other philosophical fictional works I've studied include UK TV show **The Prisoner**, Alan Moore's **V For Vendetta** comic, the films **If....**, **The Battle of Algiers**, Costa Gavras's **Z**, **The Baader Meinhof Complex** and **The Weather Underground** documentary, combining all that with the more philosophical parts of **Sons of Anarchy** and *Cayce Pollard's* journey in William Gibson's latest trilogy.

Trying to absorb it all, have it feed upon each other and basically see what happened. To know why and how people have rebelled, and against what; why they conform, how they cooperate, how they're repressed and how they're controlled. An attempt to gain through other's attempts at understanding and representing the world, how it has functioned.

Now, I've had rather random interests over the years; when I was living in London in the late 90s and travelling around Europe it was political theories that held my interest. Having closely observed western capitalism for many years, I countered this by reading Marx, Lenin, Proudhon and Kropotkin. I left that period having decided that Anarchist theories held the answers to how the world could be a better place, but understanding that no magical, overnight transition or revolution could make that immediately possible. For that reason I have since referred to myself as a Utopian Anarchist and frequently wonder how it might be possible to instigate a guided evolution that might bring about that condition.

It is through all this as a lens that I have viewed recent events and believe that this moment is now at hand.

I firmly believe that at each fundamental shift in human society's evolution, that combination of technological and social change, as we've seen in the past, with the beginnings of agriculture, the formation of cities, the industrial revolution and now entering the post-industrial age, that we have a unique opportunity to correct old wrongs. That true equality might exist and a genuine Golden of Age of Humanity could begin. That together we could fulfill **our mission as Gaia's agents**² and take life with us out into the stars. There's no reason we shouldn't, other than in each period so far we have failed to get our shit together.

I firmly believe that this possibility has never been so near, so close to our grasp. That thanks to the Internet more and more people are so closely connected and we understand that, in the words of **David Forbes**³ that I have often repeated, "There Is No They." As Anonymous said in their **Open Letter to the World**⁴, 'We have begun telling each other our own stories'. It's for this reason that @Glinner has called Twitter "**The Conversation**"⁵.



The need to bridge hierarchies and networks

Ben Hammersley⁶ has this year made an important point, that, for want of a better word, *the Ruling Class* fundamentally can not grasp this new reality. Where we see networks, they still see and think in hierarchies; competing hierarchies. That it is the mission of that generation that has grown up experiencing this change to explain this new world to the older residents that have largely known only the world of the 20th Century *and are basing all their decisions based on experience gained within it*. We must ease this transition, because they populate the existing orders of control; our governments, our institutions, our corporations and our families. They are an impediment to this change, but they can be made to understand if we can just manage the task of **explaining it to them in their own terms**.

Surely this cannot be an impossible task. It is too important not to be fixable, for it's the best way to avoid the very bloodshed we're witnessing in Libya, Bahrain and elsewhere, as this change sweeps the world. And it will sweep the world, because the world is connected in one big network now.

As Hammersley said, **speaking of Col. Gaddafi**⁷, "the pain isn't from the change, the pain is from the struggling against the change." In the midst of Egypt's revolution, **Hammersley spoke**⁸ of the 'confused look' on Mubarak's face. Why was he so puzzled? Because Mubarak did everything straight from the textbook on quelling dissent; use agent provocateurs and false flag attacks, control the media, cut off access to the Internet. None of it worked, because the very textbook he was reading from was out of date; **it was written to deal with competing hierarchies and useless when confronted with networks**.

The question then becomes: *how do we update the textbooks that those controlling the world are reading from?*

The existing order is not only entrenched, it's still, despite recent events, very sure of itself. After all, to their mind, it has gotten them this far, hasn't it?!

The current conflicts are occurring in regions where the disparity between what is and what could be is greatest: high unemployment, food shortages, lack of political representation, erosion of rights, sadly the list only continues to grow. But in the land of the network, there is no geography. We see struggles around the world supporting each; rumors of **Walk Like An Egyptian posters**⁹ in the **UK Uncut**¹⁰ protests.

Placards in Cairo's Tahrir Square¹¹ supporting the striking workers in Wisconsin, Egyptians **buying them pizzas even**¹². They draw strength from each other; **Wisconsin protesters reportedly have this picture above their beds to boost their morale**¹³.

To better understand this, in the spirit of Atemporality, I have resurrected the **Domino Theory**¹⁴; so popular during the Cold War, when the world was divided between two competing ideological and economic blocs. Since *the fall of Communism* in 1989 the entire planet has intertwined into a network of states with varying ideologies and economies, all linked together in complex ways. Rather than visualising this change as countries falling one by neighbouring one, a map of the world slowly turning Red (like an infection), **this video**¹⁵ helps demonstrate our more complex contemporary condition.

The dominoes represent states sharing similar conditions, as each fall they have an impact on the overall system that can inspire change in any other state. So far they are teetering in states such as Bahrain, Algiers, **Cameroon**¹⁶, **Azerbaijan**¹⁷ and **now Syria**¹⁸, whilst the regimes in others, such as Jordan, are attempting to head this off by instituting what they hope are sufficient changes and reforms to avert being toppled. Remarkably, even **China is looking rocky**¹⁹.

Also, in the case of Iraq it's worth emphasizing that had the US and it's allies not intervened, we would almost certainly be witnessing regime change there too. That the country might have been spared a bloody war.

The point here is: **we are witnessing acts of self-determination**. The people are asserting their will, rather than relying on an outside power invading to 'liberate' them, make them a client state or the subject of a proxy war. No one is saving them, they are rescuing themselves.



The World's Most Powerful Man vs a Hivemind

Before we move on to attempting to integrate the network and the hierarchy, let us more closely examination how they function independently. Let us examine the actions, during these events, of two very different *super individuals*: President of the United States of America, Barack Obama (elected with a platform promising *Change!*) and Anonymous, the hivemind of unknown people, a flag which anyone and everyone may fly, a mask that all might hide behind, united by a shared philosophy.

As the events unfolded in Egypt, as it's people fought and begged to join the Free World, it's self-appointed Leader, Pres. Obama, spoke loudly and clearly with a silence that was heard around the world. Because it was not just Mubarak that had a confused look on his face; for US Foreign Policy Mubarak was a key ally in the region, making them completely paralyzed by these events. All their carefully thought-out policies, the result of highly intelligent think-tanks and advisors had *nothing to help them deal with this eventuality*. It was, to them too, a **Black Swan**²⁰. An event they were unable to deal with, that resulted in incredible scenes such as **President Obama being interviewed on FoxNews**²¹ referring to Mubarak, a *dictator*, as "a good partner".

That was how this man at the top of the USA's hierarchy viewed the man at the top of Egypt's. Lacking any sufficiently prepared statements, all Pres. Obama had to fall back on was the raw truth.

The truth of liberal democracies is that their existence has been dependent on the deprivation of citizens elsewhere in the world. That it has celebrated freedom at home while effectively supporting repression abroad. This is an *inconvenient truth* that has been carefully kept out of the mainstream 'conversation', which, when questioned at all has been deflected with the tired argument of all being for "*The Greater Good*." **The implicit statement being that some people's freedom is worth more than others.**

This is the native logic of the hierarchy, where everybody has a rank, but is absolutely abhorrent to the network, where all are peers. These hidden truths are what are kept *out of mind*, as part of the *consensual hallucination* that has been maintained in order to affect the status quo. The native logic of the network is not just equality, but also innately demands transparency, because when all are equal, nothing should be hidden.

What these events reveal about hierarchies continues the efforts of Wikileaks to show things as they really are. To explain this further, I shall quote **Kevin**²² here on this, from our correspondence on the matter:

“ Wikileaks' goal is to not only reveal the nature of the beast, but to directly link the beast's nature with the efficiency with which the beast can operate in an attempt to change its nature. A governmental organization that is threatened by the nature of transparency, due to its actions, will be a slow and lumbering beast compared to one that can embrace transparency. These things are of course tied to how badly each organization exploits others and how much shady dealings they have. If your diplomatic apparatus only functions at a basic level due to lack of oversight, human rights violations and espionage then, a world where transparency can be forced upon you is a world which you can't operate efficiently. If a transparent environment can be maintained, then in theory, any government/organization that wants to survive will have to change how it operates.

Nightmares can't abide the light of day.

”

Compared to Egypt though, Libya is a different *story*; Gaddafi has always fit into the West's narrative of 'bad guys'; not that hasn't stopped them propping up their local industrial base by selling arms to him either.

These **clips from Quantum of Solace²³** sum up the situation nicely (and are why I hold this film too in high regard). Career and trade over values and ethics; all for the Greater Good.

Meanwhile, the **legions of Anonymous²⁴** have been far more proactive, first in **helping the citizens of Tunisia be aware of and counter government monitoring of their internet communications²⁵**, and later in **helping distribute care packages to Egypt to defend themselves against repression²⁶**.

Wikileaks and Anonymous are native entities of the Internet, of the network; both with noble goals to improve the gross human condition. To shine a light on the truth and **help their fellow man²⁷**. Yet, both are opposed and condemned by the existing order. But imagine if they could be integrated, or at the very least not be opposed and condemned, but celebrated. Wide reform it would require, but truly this would be for an honest, greater good.

This reveals just some of the fault lines in the hierarchy that is failing in varying degrees worldwide. The *Global Financial Crisis* wasn't an accident, it is the direct result of a broken system. A system that both failed to regulate itself and be effectively regulated by Governments, the best defense against which is greater transparency.

Yet in seemingly every country more energy seems to be spent ignoring or deflecting or overtly distracting attention away from these problems, rather than making a concerted effort to fix them through reforms. Where they do exert energy is to prop up these broken systems; focusing valuable time and energy on trying to control the internet, for example, to placate and protect the vested interests of media companies.

These hierarchical systems *will* continue to fail in new, unusual and unforeseen ways. Just as the dictators deposed in Tunisia and Egypt had no idea what was coming. The apparatus of Western Democracy appears broken, but the politicians act as though they are completely unaware of it. The Most Powerful Man in the World, as the US President has so often been referred to, unable or unwilling, because of the nature of his own hierarchy, to affect change and support it elsewhere, even though it sits at the core of his own narrative.

Expecting it's citizens to sit idly by while the politicians patch the system by adding new policies on top of broken ones, or bickering in the same old ways, is unsustainable and perhaps ultimately, criminal. Unless they address the core concerns and make a concerted effort to fix the faults in the system further collapse is imminent. It becomes the onus of the residents of the network, who add knowledge by seeing things from a radically different vantage point, to help them.

So we return to the question: *how can we explain this to them?* How can we help them, and in doing so, rescue ourselves from a grim future? Without change it seems a certainty that we will have to endure an ever more disastrous systemic failures: be it another collapse of the financial system, loss of food security or death and destruction from inadequately preparing for the effects of changing climate.

We need to persuade them to proactively face the future, to actively reform everything as fast as we can to create robust and resilient systems that cope with change and prevent crisis. That have built in to them a system of fairness, justice, equality and transparency. That the choice is reform or face full collapse. That it's them, *the Ruling Class*, that have the most to lose; they can gracefully transition to a new age integrating hierarchy and network, or be forced aside and left out completely; remembered only as being part of the problem.



There is no They

The biggest card the hierarchy has always played to defend itself has been the demonization of an opposing hierarchy; in fact it's a vital part of it's continued existence. This is what drove the Cold War, the Crusades, and, well, every war really. It's what a war is: *us vs them*. Even in it's latest form, asymmetric warfare, this remains true.

The great truth of **the network**²⁸ is that we are all connected, so there fundamentally can be no Other. Contained within this then is the possibility of a future without war.

Perhaps then it is a sign of it's obsolescence that we see governments and political groups still employing the politics of the Other. The UK could appear to have taken **V For Vendetta as an instruction manual**²⁹. Or not, because this perception is being managed through a particular segment of the mainstream media, amplifying a vocal minority, rather than being genuinely and provably representative of the people's opinion.

Equally, the *much publicised* **rise of the Tea Baggers** in the US makes great use of hating the other; appearing to be racist, homophobic and anti-science.

Clearly this is not the way create a brighter future for ourselves and our children; demeaning others, after all, only demeans ourself.



Pull the threads, weave a new world

Still some might favour a complete and immediate overhaul of the hierarchy to forcibly collapse it into a series of networks. What must be repeated is that great danger lies in that; the huge risk of losing the valuable knowledge stored within that hierarchy and its members.

If instead we can identify the threads that define the problems, we can tease them out; at the same time looking for the places to bridge the hierarchy and the network. If we can argue intelligibly for the change then we can preserve all that knowledge and make best use of it to create a new, hybrid system.

As an example, an effective legal system is incredibly difficult to create from scratch; it's foolish to ignore the merits of the system in place. But equally important is to clearly identify the problems and work to construct and implement reforms and new strategies to solve them. The burdens placed on the justice system prosecuting victim-less crimes can be presented as an economic benefit.

An extremely important task is the discovery and removal of wider problems that cross multiple boundaries. The privatization of prisons is one case; it creates an incentive to prosecute and incarcerate purely to create a cheap labour force, rather than protect society and ideally reform offenders too. This is a perversion of the goals of the legal system into something based on economic terms.

This reinforces that while some systems require minor reform to be made compatible with current realities, others require a deeper examination, in light of the principles and spirit with which they were created. The foundations of these institutions must be reestablished and any perversions or corruptions of its original intent corrected.

In Public Health the onus must be on just that, the best possible health of the public. Some of the current obstacles to that appear to be the high price of medication and the failure to treat patients to full extent provided by current technology and practices. The public shouldn't suffer only to have corporations thrive. This is a great wrong that must be redressed, most especially in regions ravaged by HIV and other now manageable conditions and diseases.

The Educational System, so clearly based on the factory model, shaped by the Industrial Age, must be updated for a Networked Society. Because it is that which our newest citizens will always live in. Key areas of interest here appear to be the inclusion of gamification and definitely involve taking full advantage of the resources and communication abilities of the internet.

The nature and culture of work must be critically examined. The worst case we face will be people moving from crisis to crisis. The best case would be people engaged in preventative measures, shoring up systems to be more robust and resilient, preemptively integrating them with the network.

Most optimistically this would involve a reexamination of the working lifecycle, moving from a linear progression of *education -> career -> retirement*, to nested cycles of repeated re-education, enabling multiple careers, and ideally, mini-retirements too (or extended vacations if you like.) Crucial to this is the abandonment of the notion of 'jobs for life', already a vanishing idea; replacing the ideal of incumbency in a cultural shift to venerate true redundancy as an achievement.

There are many existing jobs whose ultimate victory condition should be that they're no longer required. That people have worked to instead create near-self-sustaining systems that require minimum maintenance; exactly how they can be done requires serious reexamination and reform of our economic systems but, from automated manufacturing, to repairing natural systems. A much less dreary existence would be possible for all humanity, instead of grinding through life waiting for death/retirement. Coupled with the implications of greater public health, and thus increased longevity, such a reexamination becomes all the more necessary.

These ideas are just the beginnings of an attempt to sketch what this better world might be. The sooner we act, the sooner we will discover what it might truly be. The sooner also that we shall reap the rewards, and ultimately, the less effort will be required, because the damage caused by prolonging these dangerous extant systems will be mitigated.

And what better test bed for this than in the newly freed states of the Middle East, North Africa, with Central Asia almost certain to join them.



The Rise of MENACA

What I'm hoping we'll see in the months and years ahead is a political "leapfrog" in the MENACA region. Where in Africa and Eastern Europe we have seen **economic and technological leapfrogging**³⁰; the feat of being able to skip the intermediate steps of development by being fortunate enough to not be burdened with difficult to maintain infrastructure, simply by having nearly none of it to begin with. It seems reasonable to posit that a similar situation could exist politically here. The 'benefit' of 20 to 40 years of rule by dictatorship being that there is no aging democratic infrastructure to upgrade.

Faced with such a blank slate, and being knowledgeable of the faults within current examples of liberal democracies, they have a unique opportunity to figure out what comes next. A Post-Democracy for the 21st Century, to match the Post-Industrial Age, could be rapidly prototyped between these states, as they each test variations on new methods of governance and have a forum to compare results. Also affording the opportunity to directly integrate the peer-to-peer communication technologies that have helped grant them their freedom into their political system. A true network state. A true network of states, perhaps too.

A lasting alliance between all the states in this region, newly free (perhaps even working together to free their neighbours, if the bloodshed seen in Libya is repeated elsewhere), sharing the same problems, resources and youthful population is reasonable to presume. Owing no loyalty or obligation to outside powers for their freedom. Feeling no compulsion to honour the debts of the old regimes (after all, it wasn't done in their name.) Not bound to copyright systems exported from America. Following the great tradition of young nations being pirate nations (**just as the USA did**³¹ **for the first century of it's existence**³²). Embracing and encouraging the production of generic medication, distribution of 3D printer technologies, building of vertical gardens, wide scale implementation of ubiquitous computing and just about every other ambitious technology we have covered here.

It doesn't hurt that the very thing that has kept these dictators in place, the vast oil wealth of the region, can give them not just independence, but fund the development of a society independent of it too.

United in change together, able to implement true Free Trade within its borders; one currency, one trading bloc and **unrestricted travel**³³ within it (a welcome relief after years of internal road blocks.)

Lots of money, a largely young, eager and highly educated population, a blank political slate and on top of all that, positioned perfectly to trade with the **rising BRICS nations**³⁴, given they border all but Brazil. Transportation issues? **China is building a railroad from Beijing to London**³⁵, just plug into that.

Such a place would be a welcome haven for the *soon-to-be-broke* Boomers, who'd just love to settle in a warm place by the sea with low-cost meds to keep The Grim Reaper at bay. Attracting not just the Gray Nomads, but the young (and young at heart), bright and adventurous folks of the world, understanding that if the resistance is too strong at home, this is the place where they can help build the future and live a greater life.

This might logically start a second, deeper wave of change through the remaining purely hierarchy states. Just as America's young democracy begat revolutions world-wide, so too this shining example of Post-Democracy will only further to make the extant systems in the West look obsolete, in urgent need of upgrading.

The unheralded, unpredicted rise of the Networked States of MENACA. It could happen, and if and when it does, it is unlikely to be the biggest surprise of this century.



Achievement Unlocked: LEVEL UP!

The chief point I seek to convey is that after years of grinding away, hoping, dreaming of a **brighter future**³⁶, we stand closer than we ever have before to truly *leveling up* our society. That this isn't a war to be fought for the future, it's a rescue mission; we can work together to save ourselves from ourselves. That we can escape the collapse of the hierarchy and a new Dark Age (The Grim Meat Hook Future Present) by building a bridge to the network and rise up to unforeseen heights in a new dawn for humanity, a true Golden Age.

That we recognise that the politics of the Other is a lesson best left in our history books; we can join together as one great humanity. Not as a *New World Order*, but as a global civilisation respectful and tolerable of all.

The challenges we face ahead are vast and largely inherited from the past (most especially climate change), but humanity can do anything. We have shown we can mount vast and horrible wars, let us now begin the greatest rescue mission ever undertaken. Our greatest resource is not oil or gold, it is human intelligence, ingenuity and action. With this near anything we imagine can be accomplished.

To those that resist and say "*why? isn't this good enough?!*", I say, take a good look around. Is it? Can you not imagine any way in which it could be better? Have you tried? Take a moment and think. Because that's what the people of Egypt and Tunisia and all the other states gave themselves permission to do. So why shouldn't you?

Once we're made aware of their existence, we can change the rules of the consensual hallucination any time we like. We can *engineer* change. Once we all agree to do so, we can acknowledge that, as at the end of **The Prisoner**, our only enemy is ourselves. That, as **The Invisibles** concludes, we just have to understand that "*our sentence is up!*" It is only we that stand in our way; don't let the promise of a brighter future be stolen from you. Together, we can make this the best of all possible worlds. Who's with me?



Footnotes

- ¹ <http://www.weaponizer.co.uk/onearticle.php?category=nonfic&articleid=125>
- ² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_hypothesis#Theory
- ³ <http://thebreakingtime.typepad.com/>
- ⁴ <http://anonnews.org/?p=press&a=item&i=568>
- ⁵ <http://glinner.posterous.com/the-conversation-23>
- ⁶ <http://benhammersley.com/>
- ⁷ <http://vimeo.com/20511266>
- ⁸ <http://liftconference.com/lift11/program/talk/ben-hammersley-internet-geopolitics-and-national-security>
- ⁹ http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5097/5496745804_601bcfb25d.jpg <original source unknown>
- ¹⁰ <http://www.ukuncut.org.uk/>
- ¹¹ <http://twitpic.com/419nfm>
- ¹² http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/blogs/hottopics/detail?entry_id=83476
- ¹³ <http://www.heraldsotland.com/mobile/news/world-news/wisconsin-becomes-the-tunisia-of-us-s-union-busting-battle-1.1088814>
- ¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domino_theory
- ¹⁵ <http://vimeo.com/17150420>
- ¹⁶ <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/23/cameroon.protests/index.html>
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- ¹⁹ http://www.wired.com/beyond_the_beyond/2011/02/demands-of-the-chinese-jasmine-movement
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- ²¹ <http://video.foxnews.com/v/4526781/bill-oreilly-interviews-president-obama/>
- ²² <http://grinding.be/author/kevin/>
- ²³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-8F-Mpo4IM>
- ²⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFLaBRk9wY0>
- ²⁵ <http://www.thetechherald.com/article.php/201101/6639/Anonymous-offers-support-to-Tunisian-protestors-Update-2>
- ²⁶ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/27/egypt-protest-leaflets-mass-action>
- ²⁷ <http://www.crikey.com.au/2011/01/27/inside-the-hive-mind-watching-anonymous-at-work/>
- ²⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/22/internet-learn-to-turn-off>
- ²⁹ <http://www.bleedingcool.com/2011/02/27/could-v-for-vendetta-could-really-happen-in-britain/>
- ³⁰ <http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/001743.html>
- ³¹ <http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/003214.html>
- ³² <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/khan.copyright>
- ³³ <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/03/201134154351741689.html>
- ³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BRIC#BRICS_Term:_South_Africa.27s_Inclusion
- ³⁵ <http://futurismic.com/2010/03/16/from-kings-cross-to-beijing-by-rail/>
- ³⁶ <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/b/b7/Kellyposter1970.jpg/423px-Kellyposter1970.jpg>

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