

HEARTS AND MINDS

BY EPISKOPOS CAIN

Welcome to the modern day war zone. Right now, as I speak, a thousand battles are being waged for your submission and allegiance. Commanders and politicians have decided that the enemy is us and that we are to be bought to heel, as soon as possible.

No doubt some of you think I'm using hyperbole, or metaphor to illustrate an example of our socially fractured society and the commodification of identity. And while those certainly are problems, anyone thinking about those in relation to my rant today are wrong. Right now, you and I are quite literally at war with at least one government, namely that of the USA.

Oh to be sure there won't be running battles with light infantry. No airstrikes are going to be called in on your house, and I'm reasonably certain you won't get carted away to Guantanamo Bay, or any other black site that exists. But just because guns aren't being loaded and blood isn't being spilled doesn't mean this isn't a conflict.

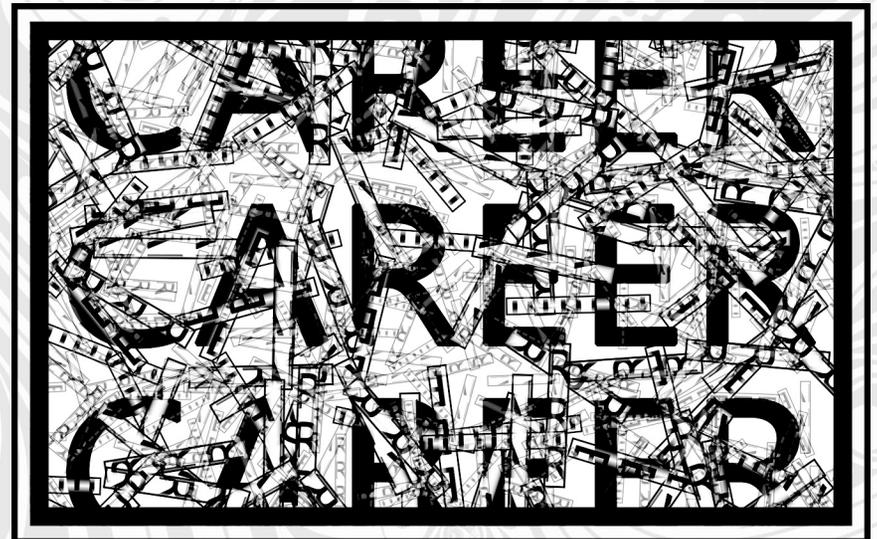
You see, war isn't about the clash of armies on the battlefield anymore. Hell, it's barely even about killing, except as an advertising hook or a final solution for people who refuse to stop being a pain in the ass. No, warfare has moved through the gentlemanly period of pitched battles and low casualties, blown apart by Napoleon and perfected in the slaughterhouse of WWI. It's not even the dirty political warfare that characterized the Cold War, marked by futile superpower conflict and strategies designed to bleed a superpower by third world proxies, and on the other end of the scale by terrorism.

No, warfare today is about fighting on the psychological and narrative level. It's about capturing the mind, and shackling it to the agenda of the day, regardless of what that agenda may be.

The thing is, you see, as warfare has become less and less about artful strategy and less bound by codes of conduct - be they religious, cultural or legal - the real issue has not been arms, logistics, intelligence and skill, but about the sheer will to fight. Whoever goes on fighting the longest, whoever is willing to do what it takes to persuade the other side to accept their interests, whoever is able to effectively frame the agenda in a certain manner, is the winner in the modern world. You can even suffer strategic setbacks if your message and will is powerful enough.

And of course, if you accept this as essentially true, broadly speaking, then logically you come to the problem being people who won't get the fuck on with the message. The enemy ceases to be those who threaten certain strategic alliances, deposits of raw materials and the lives of the citizenry. No, the enemy becomes anyone who undermines that message and so weakens that will to resolve the conflict - and that person can be anyone, even your own citizenry.

Back in the day, they used to call this PsyOps. It used to only be a wartime enterprise. Dropping leaflets over enemy cities and troop formations. Doing pirate broadcasts using exiles and friendlies from the nation you are at war with to convince them of widespread resentment towards the government. Smear and ridicule important political and military leaders in any way possible.



Like I said, it used to be only a wartime enterprise. But now, thanks to the Cold War terrorism, carried to its conclusion by the likes of Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah, the difference between peace and war only exists in a legal sense. The potentially endless war on terror means actually endless psychological operations – carried out against not just the enemy, but the civilian population at home as well. The media has to hang the enemy with words and discourses and justifications before the military can do it in fact.

Nowadays, PsyOps is only one part of a much broader school, known as Information Operations. Do you operate a blog, report on the failing and lies and crimes of your country? Then you are, according to this world-view, engaging in warfare against the state. But its not just about information per se. You have to think about this much more broadly. For example, protests. A protest is not just a protest. It never can be. Its an expression of low intensity conflict relying on moral discourses and popular expression of dissidence, aimed at bringing about a political-military confrontation.

And just where do you think something like **OPERATION MINDFUCK** fits into this system of ideas?

Since many of us tend to think of **O: MF** as a way of mentally shaking people up, getting them to question their assumptions, physically deconstructing the popular discourses of the day, stripping away the bare truth hidden beneath self-serving platitudes...well, in that case, it is nothing more than a direct challenge to state power.

That may dishearten some of you. But the simple truth is, thinking for yourself, and then communicating those thoughts to others, will always be seen that way, so long as this world-view dominates. You may as well get used to it, because unless you decide to never share your views, or have a frontal lobotomy, you will almost certainly do something that could be considered an act of war.

If you get really good at it, you may even end up in a real domestic war – as the crazy elements of the thuggish far right, security services and corporate sponsored smear teams conspire to make your life hell through intimidation, surveillance and character assassination.

To be honest, once you realize that you are in the war, a certain clarity accompanies that knowledge. You can now diagnose this uneasy feeling all of the above has been creating. You know what it is now, the nature of the Beast is discerned and laid bare. Once you know what the problem is, you can set about dealing with it. Few things are insurmountable, once you understand their purpose and context.

Unfortunately, you have little choice about this. The line has already been drawn in the sand, and you're on the wrong side. What happens next is a matter of policy, insanity, personal whim and plain old bad luck. Because you're not quite the perpetual pain in the ass that, say, Al-Qaeda is, you won't be facing the guns. You can be drowned out by voices of far-right harpies, military "experts" who 'just happen' to be taking pay cheques from the Pentagon and spineless journalists more content with attacking those who search for the truth than politicians who hide it.

There is a spectrum of responses, if you will. If you do this, the response will be that. And if you do something else, the response will differ in proportion. But like all Platonic constructs of reality, there are gaps in the conceptual definitions put forward. And it is in such gaps that the game must be played most effectively. **OPERATION MINDFUCK** works best in areas where they are no response. So go beyond blogging, or political protest, or pranks, or sabotage and mild acts of ontological guerilla warfare. Mix and match, be innovative, experiment and push the boundaries.

And remember, even though this is a war, unconventional forces always have the advantage over hierarchies.
