


FROM THE EDITORS

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Ian Campbell



Recently, the Palantír Corporation, the child of Peter Thiel, who is second only to Elon Musk in the race to become the world's worst reader of SF, took a break from making climate change worse by saddling us all with comprehensive AI-based surveillance in order to [publish a manifesto](#). They could have just kept profiting from selling their services to the current regime and externalizing the electrical and environmental costs to the public, but like all cartoon villains, they needed to tell us just how they planned to make everything worse. These are people who read *The Lord of the Rings* and took from it only that a race war would be a good thing, so they're nothing like the deep thinkers they believe themselves to be. Nevertheless, there is a meaningful extent to which science fiction is... not responsible for this, so much as perhaps has been roped into this dystopian vision. The manifesto deserves to be quoted in full:

Palantir 
@PalantirTech

Because we get asked a lot.

The Technological Republic, in brief.

- 1. Silicon Valley owes a moral debt to the country that made its rise possible.** The engineering elite of Silicon Valley has an affirmative obligation to participate in the defense of the nation.
- 2. We must rebel against the tyranny of the apps.** Is the iPhone our greatest creative if not crowning achievement as a civilization? The object has changed our lives, but it may also now be limiting and constraining our sense of the possible.
- 3. Free email is not enough.** The decadence of a culture or civilization, and indeed its ruling class, will be forgiven only if that culture is capable of delivering economic growth and security for the public.
- 4. The limits of soft power, of soaring rhetoric alone, have been exposed.** The ability of free and democratic societies to prevail requires something more than moral appeal. It requires hard power, and hard power in this century will be built on software.
- 5. The question is not whether A.I. weapons will be built; it is who will build them and for what purpose.** Our adversaries will not pause to indulge in theatrical debates about the merits of developing technologies with critical military and national security applications. They will proceed.

6. National service should be a universal duty. We should, as a society, seriously consider moving away from an all-volunteer force and only fight the next war if everyone shares in the risk and the cost.

7. If a U.S. Marine asks for a better rifle, we should build it; and the same goes for software. We should as a country be capable of continuing a debate about the appropriateness of military action abroad while remaining unflinching in our commitment to those we have asked to step into harm's way.

8. Public servants need not be our priests. Any business that compensated its employees in the way that the federal government compensates public servants would struggle to survive.

9. We should show far more grace towards those who have subjected themselves to public life. The eradication of any space for forgiveness—a jettisoning of any tolerance for the complexities and contradictions of the human psyche—may leave us with a cast of characters at the helm we will grow to regret.

10. The psychologization of modern politics is leading us astray. Those who look to the political arena to nourish their soul and sense of self, who rely too heavily on their internal life finding expression in people they may never meet, will be left disappointed.

11. Our society has grown too eager to hasten, and is often gleeful at, the demise of its enemies. The vanquishing of an opponent is a moment to pause, not rejoice.

12. The atomic age is ending. One age of deterrence, the atomic age, is ending, and a new era of deterrence built on A.I. is set to begin.

13. No other country in the history of the world has advanced progressive values more than this one. The United States is far from perfect. But it is easy to forget how much more opportunity exists in this country for those who are not hereditary elites than in any other nation on the planet.

14. American power has made possible an extraordinarily long peace. Too many have forgotten or perhaps take for granted that nearly a century of some version of peace has prevailed in the world without a great power military conflict. At least three generations — billions of people and their children and now grandchildren — have never known a world war.

15. The postwar neutering of Germany and Japan must be undone. The defanging of Germany was an overcorrection for which Europe is now paying a heavy price. A similar and highly theatrical commitment to Japanese pacifism will, if maintained, also threaten to shift the balance of power in Asia.

16. We should applaud those who attempt to build where the market has failed to act. The culture almost snickers at Musk’s interest in grand narrative, as if billionaires ought to simply stay in their lane of enriching themselves . . . Any curiosity or genuine interest in the value of what he has created is essentially dismissed, or perhaps lurks from beneath a thinly veiled scorn.

17. Silicon Valley must play a role in addressing violent crime. Many politicians across the United States have essentially shrugged when it comes to violent crime, abandoning any serious efforts to address the problem or take on any risk with their constituencies or donors in coming up with solutions and experiments in what should be a desperate bid to save lives.

18. The ruthless exposure of the private lives of public figures drives far too much talent away from government service. The public arena—and the shallow and petty assaults against those who dare to do something other than enrich themselves—has become so unforgiving that the republic is left with a significant roster of ineffectual, empty vessels whose ambition one would forgive if there were any genuine belief structure lurking within.

19. The caution in public life that we unwittingly encourage is corrosive. Those who say nothing wrong often say nothing much at all.

20. The pervasive intolerance of religious belief in certain circles must be resisted. The elite’s intolerance of religious belief is perhaps one of the most telling signs that its political project constitutes a less open intellectual movement than many within it would claim.

21. Some cultures have produced vital advances; others remain dysfunctional and regressive. All cultures are now equal. Criticism and value judgments are forbidden. Yet this new dogma glosses over the fact that certain cultures and indeed subcultures . . . have produced wonders. Others have proven middling, and worse, regressive and harmful.

22. We must resist the shallow temptation of a vacant and hollow pluralism. We, in America and more broadly the West, have for the past half century resisted defining national cultures in the name of inclusivity. But inclusion into what?

You're all professional readers: you can see the violent herrenvolk “democracy” this is intended to institute. Corporate power unaccountable to the public (1, 2, 5, 16, 17), white supremacy (3, 6, 13, 17, 21, 22), endless resource wars (4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 15), led by leaders who must not be held accountable for raping children (8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18, 19), with the ordinary people kept in line by technology, propaganda and Bronze Age patriarchy (3, 5, 6, 7, 13, 16, 20, 21, 22).

Just like with Project 2025, our oligarchy has laid out precisely what they intend to do: welcome to Russia 2.0. The reason I draw this to your attention, in case you'd not seen it before, is because of its science fictionality. These are the people who read about the Torment Nexus and took from the text not the desire to prevent it, but rather the desire to build it.

My question to us all—and this is intended to provoke a conversation, not to provide nor promote my own answer to it, in part because I haven't an answer—is how can science fiction respond to this? We've all seen the deep decline in readership of SF compared to fantasy in recent years, coupled with the dominance of fantasy over SF in SFF awards. I believe that this is at least in part because what Palantír is giving us here is the unevenly-distributed science fiction future, and next to nobody likes it. There are writers who have addressed this, and there are undoubtedly writers trying to confront this right now: how do we uplift them? How do we, as scholars, confront this, subvert it, deconstruct it? Do we write our own manifesto? If SF is about using real or imaginary science and technology to estrange or critique our world, how do we create or uplift stories that critique a world where real science and technology are being used to oppress us? What is our collective responsibility, here? I should note that this column represents my own personal thoughts and opinions, and not those of the SFRA nor its leadership. Write me with your own thoughts and opinions at icampbell@gsu.edu.

Enjoy this very short issue of the *SFRA Review*: its publication date's being at the end of the academic year makes long-form content a challenge.