

# We translated the Palantir spy manifesto for actual human beings

What happens when an all-seeing eye looks in the mirror?

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Palantir's summary of the book is ominous. But even the company's name is unironically ominous. The palantíri are crystal balls

in The Lord of the Rings that let Middle-earth's worst tyrants spy on the heroes of the story. It's a fun reference if you have no shame about your company's mission.

We've attempted to translate these 22 points from Alex Karp's alien words into something more reasonable, like human words from someone who might play him in the biopic. (Hello, Taika Waititi.) In so doing, we've become much more sympathetic to why Jürgen Habermas refused to supervise Karp's research.

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**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.**

Translation: Silicon Valley has an enormous opportunity to extract as much money from federal government defense contracts as possible. To do this, we will bring back a draft for engineers. We're really into bringing back the draft. Deepfaked teenagers, low-paid gig workers, and victims of the Rohingya genocide need not apply.

**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.**

Translation: We can't say "we wanted flying cars, instead we got 140 characters" anymore because Elon Musk lets you write essays on Twitter now. Though if you thought the apps were tyrannical, wait until you get a load of us.

**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.**

Translation: People are mad at tech billionaires for their obscene wealth and arrogance. Instead of winning them over by providing free access to a useful everyday service, we're gonna sell a lot of software that will let the government spy on them while demanding tax cuts.

**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.**

Translation: Words and feelings are free, which is why we want to sell weapons. Nobody got rich suing for peace.

Trust in a CEO who studied the blade:

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**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.**

Translation: "Soft power" and "ethics" are beta shit for Broadway shows and Dario Amodei. Hear that, Pete Hegseth?  
We're warriors — pay up.

But seriously. If our enemies have no oversight then why should we? The future is an AI battlefield and we need rules of engagement that let us cook. Which is to say: Forget the rules of engagement. The

government is not coming to save you — we are. The world is too dangerous for us to be governed by the law of armed conflict.

Welcome to the 21st century: safety not guaranteed.

**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.**

Translation: We're going to bring back the draft. Our vision of permanent war only works if we courageously volunteer people 40 years younger than us to die for oil.

**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.**

Translation: Sure, those wimps at Anthropic are selling an AI system they claim has spotted cybersecurity vulnerabilities in “every major operating system and web browser.” But Pete, seriously: We will kill anybody you want with our software guns.

**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.**

Translation: We care about wages – which is why we think Washington’s revolving door of lobbying and office-holding should be way more lucrative for everyone. There are mountains of cash for people who will look the other way.

And if you’re not on board? Well, all those pesky bureaucrats who do things like “investigate fraud” and “enforce safety standards” and “administer the social safety net” are holier-than-thou myrmidons who should be fed into the DOGE wood chipper.

**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.**

Translation: If you made fun of that video where our CEO looks like he's on cocaine, you're responsible for the rise of fascism. Also, we're going to be conveniently vague about what "those who have subjected themselves to public life" means, because "be nicer to multimillionaires who go on podcasts" doesn't have the same ring. Oh, and if you complain about the IT Renfields of DOGE, you're anti-American.

**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.**

Translation: Society must stop centering sensitive crybabies who want to feel personally validated by elected officials and

filter their politics through emotional reactions. Also, I feel strongly that Zohran Mamdani is a pagan who is going to Wicker Man me.

**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.**

Translation: Your quote-dunking on that video of our CEO yelling "I'm sure you're enjoying this as much as I am!" while bragging about how Palantir must "scare our enemies and, on occasion, kill them" was snide, uncalled for, and frankly crass.

**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.**

Translation: History has rendered absolutely no complex or ambivalent judgments upon the nuclear arms race, so let's go ahead and repeat it. Why spend money making sure nukes don't explode by accident when you can fund AI instead? The atomic bomb is so last century.

**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.**

Translation: We canceled our internal DEI programs but we're fully prepared to steal valor from everyone in US history who fought to make it a more perfect union.

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**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.**

Translation: Si vis pacem, para bellum, baby!  
We'll conveniently leave out all of the regional and secret wars the US has engaged in over the years or the fact that Trump recently derailed the world economy by launching a war of aggression after campaigning on a promise of no new wars. We will not elaborate on what "next war" Point Six was talking about.

**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.**

Translation: We can definitely sell software to a militarized Germany and Japan too!

**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.**

Translation: Elon Musk is our sin eater but I'll be damned if I let a fellow billionaire loser get dunked on so much for his posts on main. Also, if you raise too many doubts about his IPO, my friends and I are going to lose a lot of money.

**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.**

Translation: Federal government money is nice, but are we tapping state and local? Sure, politicians talk constantly about violent crime and it's been on a huge downswing statistically over the past decade, but that's not what we've been seeing in our local "VC lives matter" group chats. No further questions about who's doing the violent crime these days, please. Get those Ring cameras installed.

Also, we're still mad about New Orleans killing our secret pre-crime detection program back in 2018.

**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.**

Translation: The most corrupt people we've ever seen in government who stand to make us the most money ever are getting exposed for their on-the-job intoxication, shady deals, sexual harassment allegations, and outright lying. How dare you not give these ghouls grace when they keep buying our shit? Truly great men — and we do mean men — are beyond question. A random woman at a government agency 99 percent of Americans have never heard of, however, is fair game.

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

Translation: People are unfairly using the public communications platforms that we mine for mass surveillance purposes to complain about our open bloodthirstiness and crypto-fascism.

**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.**

Translation: We're sick of people saying our cofounder is weird for believing that regulating AI will spawn the antichrist, and if we mention the "War on Christmas" we'll make more money. We're undecided about whether any of this applies to tolerating the pope.

**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.**

Translation: Which cultures? Oh, you know the ones.

**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?**

Translation: Are you still with us after 21 points? Great. Welcome to the great mystery. It cost you way less to get here than joining Scientology. Here's the final thesis: Immigration? Bad. Canceling billionaires? Bad. Giving us money to fight (((globalism)))? Good. Just hit us up on cashapp.