

Economic Terror and India's Surveillance State

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When two planes flew into the World Trade Organisation buildings in New York in 2001, the impact was twofold. First, there was shock and outrage. Second, there was a collective sentiment, at least in the US, that something must be done to prevent such a thing happening again and some form of retributive justice meted out.

Governments the world over wasted no time in conveniently forcing through legislation that eroded personal and collective freedoms, under the guise of preventing terror, at a time of increasing social and economic inequalities due to a strident and exploitative economic neo-liberalist agenda.

If 9/11 served at least one purpose, apart from fuelling Western military imperialism according to the tenets of the neo-con Project for a New American Century, it was to provide any or every government on the planet with a reason for clamping down on its own population, stripping away civil liberties and making people acquiesce to the needs of global capital. Edward Snowden's revelations about the US and British surveillance agencies and programmes have exposed just how far governments are prepared to go in order to snoop on virtually every activity that ordinary members of the public engage in. Politicians on both sides of the Atlantic try to justify this illegal snooping on the basis of it being carried out for people's own good on the back of self-proclaimed 'security alerts'.

But history shows that widespread surveillance by governments on their own populations has mostly been about attempting to monitor and quell dissent and genuine opposition to its policies (1). The US and British states have long been involved in illegal, duplicitous monitoring and subversion of perfectly legitimate democratic groups on their own soils. Western intelligence agencies have been used to crush democracy at home in order to serve the interests of elite state-corporate players. From Martin Luther King and the Occupy Movement to Veterans for Peace, the US state has used the full panoply of resources to infiltrate, monitor or subvert. Today, democratic movements that seek to legitimately question and challenge the influence of Wall Street, US military policy abroad and a range of other policies that have served elite interests are spied on and 'neutralised'. The conclusion is that mass surveillance occurs because legitimate political dissent that poses a direct challenge to the one percent will not be tolerated.

Should people in India be worried about the rolling out of the Indian's government own plans for mass monitoring, the Centralised Monitoring System? They should, given the genuine concerns being raised about the lack of Parliamentary oversight and transparency surrounding the system, as well as the scope and depth and the violation of privacy safeguards, which could be as far reaching, secretive and unconstitutional/illegal as the West's PRISM system (2,3,4).

And they should be concerned because the agenda is the same. Social and economic trends in India have been mirroring those in the West since neo-liberal economic policies were embraced by leading politicians here. The gap between rich and poor has widened, wealth is being concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of families and billionaires, often courtesy of politicians who 'facilitate' the handing out of contracts and chunks of public money.

The growing chasm in both India and the West between rich and poor has not been lost on policy makers who fear a backlash from ordinary folk. Such concerns were recently voiced at the World Economic Forum. It's for good reason then that 'homeland security' has been beefed up in the US and drones are to be used to spy on its own citizens. It's for good reason that the NSA and its British equivalent are paranoid about their populations' political views, allegiances and activities. Mass surveillance of ordinary people is not about preventing terror; it's about stopping ordinary folk seeking to stop a further shift in the balance of power towards elite interests.

And it's also for good reason that the Indian government is investing massively in military equipment and surveillance at a time when the rich are looting the economy and protests and uprisings are occurring across the nation in order to protect their lands, forests and communities from this assault.

India's top ten billionaires account for over 12 percent of the country's GDP, while 7,850 High Net Worth individuals account for US\$935 billion, half of India's GDP. As in the West, India's military-corporate-state complex is working hand in glove to shove economic neo-liberalism and its impact down the throats of the people. This is the type of extremism and economic terror that is seldom discussed.

In 2013 the Indian defence budget formed over ten percent of total government expenditure. India has been for many years the world's largest market for imported arms. In 2000 India spent an estimated US\$ 911 million on arms imports by 2013 this had risen to US\$4.6 billion. As both violent and peaceful public opposition to government policies rise, India now has the world's largest paramilitary force, which in size is almost the same as the entire Indian army (5).

Apart from ongoing violent conflicts in the 'tribal belt' and elsewhere, there is the continuing all pervasive structural violence of crony capitalism, corruption, 'globalisation' and neo-liberalism, which has, among other atrocities, resulted in up to 300,000 farmer suicides and India having over one-third of the poorest people in the world and the world's largest number of children suffering from malnutrition (6).

There are people who want to do us harm. We need to be protected. There are extremists and wrong doers who want to bend the system for their own narrow agendas against the interests of the many. There always has been. Unfortunately, they have hijacked the machinery of state(s) and are increasingly to be found in positions of authority implementing surveillance and economic terrorism 'for our own good'.

Notes

1)

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/500-years-of-history-shows-that-mass-spying-is-always-aimed-at-crushing-dissent/5364462>

2)

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indias-surveillance-project-may-be-as-lethal-as-prism/article4834619.ece>

3)

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/govt-violates-privacy-safeguards-to-secretly-monitor-internet-traffic/article5107682.ece?ref=relatedNews>

4)

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/government-buying-deep-surveillance-monitoring-equipment/article5026465.ece?ref=relatedNews>

5)

<http://www.countercurrents.org/sagar030214.htm>

6)

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/mass-poverty-and-social-inequality-indias-independence-for-whom-and-from-what/5344165>

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