

Under the Global Shadow of Big Brother, Journalism Must Light Up the Political Sky

By [Norman Solomon](#)

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Every new revelation about the global reach of the National Security Agency underscores that the extremism of the surveillance state has reached gargantuan proportions. The Washington Post just [reported](#) that the NSA “is gathering nearly 5 billion records a day on the whereabouts of cellphones around the world.” Documents provided by whistleblower Edward Snowden have forced top officials in Washington to admit the indefensible while defending it. One of the main obstacles to further expansion of their Orwellian empire is real journalism.

Real journalism is “subversive” of deception that can’t stand the light of day. This is a huge problem for the Obama administration and the many surveillance-state flunkies of both parties in Congress. What they want is fake journalism, deferring to government storylines and respectful of authority even when it is illegitimate.

In motion now, on both sides of the Atlantic, are top-down efforts to quash real journalism when and how it matters most. In the two English-speaking countries that have done the most preaching to the world about “Western values” like freedom of the press, the governments led by President Obama and Prime Minister Cameron are overseeing assaults on real journalism.

They’re striving to further normalize fake journalism — largely confined to stenographic services for corporate power, war industries and surveillance agencies. A parallel goal is to harass, intimidate and destroy real journalism. The quest is to maximize the uninformed consent of the governed.

In direct contrast, those willing to fight for truly independent journalism — including whistleblowers, political activists and journalists themselves — are struggling to provide our world with vital light, fueled by comprehension that real journalism must be willing to challenge entrenched power.

From incessant war and arming the world, to climate change and coddling fossil fuel industries, to anti-democratic governance and enabling vast NSA surveillance, the U.S. power structure — with epicenters along Wall Street and Pennsylvania Avenue — continues to dominate. That power structure is a clear, present and horrendous threat to human survival, the natural world of this planet and the possibilities for authentic democracy.

Against such dire, highly institutionalized assaults on the present and the future, we desperately need a wide range of nonviolent, principled and unrelenting insurgencies. In that context, government efforts to crush real journalism can be understood as methodical

counterinsurgency.

Smashing Guardian hard drives and hauling the newspaper's editor in front of an inquisitional parliamentary committee are aspects of the British government's counterinsurgency program against real journalism. In the United States, the counterinsurgency includes numerous prosecutions of whistleblowers and wide-ranging surveillance of journalists' workaday communications. These assaults aren't episodic. They've become routine.

Journalism is at a momentous crossroads. The alternative to unrelenting independence is sheepism, and that's not journalism; it's a professionalized baseline of bowing to government and corporate pressure even before it has been overtly exerted.

For journalists, and for the rest of us, silence is not neutrality; it ends up as acceptance of autocratic rule, a present festooned with pretty-sounding names like "anti-terrorism" and "national security."

As the most powerful institutions run amok, their main functionaries are "leaders" who keep leading us farther and farther away from a world we could possibly be proud of leaving for the next generations. Pushing back against the ominous momentum will require fighting for real journalism. No one can plausibly say that reversing course will be easy or probable — only imperative.

Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." Information about the documentary based on the book is at www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org.

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