

Now We Are Supposed to Cheer Government Surveillance?

BI brownstone.org/articles/now-we-are-supposed-to-cheer-government-surveillance/

April 24, 2024

They are wearing us down with shocking headlines and opinions. They come daily these days, with increasingly implausible claims that leave your jaw on the floor. The rest of the text is perfunctory. The headline is the takeaway, and the part designed to demoralize, deconstruct, and disorient.

A few weeks ago, the *New York Times* told us that “As It Turns Out, the Deep State Is Pretty Awesome.” These are the same people who claim that Trump is trying to get rid of democracy. The Deep State is the opposite of democracy, unelected and unaccountable in every way, impervious to elections and the will of the people. Now we have the *NYT* celebrating this.

And the latest bears notice too: “Government Surveillance Keeps Us Safe.” The authors are classic Deep Staters associated with Hillary Clinton and George W. Bush. They assure us that having an Orwellian state is good for us. You can trust them, promise. The rest of the content of the article doesn't matter much. The message is in the headline.

Amazing isn't it? You have to check your memory and your sanity. These are the people who have rightly warned about government infringements on privacy and free speech for many decades dating way back.

And now we have aggressive and open advocacy of exactly that, mainly because the Biden administration is in charge and has only months to put the final touches on the revolution in law and liberty that has come to America. They want to make it all permanent and are working furiously to make it so.

Along with routine warrantless surveillance, not only of possible bad guys but everyone, comes of course censorship. A few years ago, this seemed to be intermittent, like the biased and arbitrary actions of rogue executives. We objected and denounced but generally assumed that it was aberrant and going away over time.

Back then, we had no idea of the scale and the ambition of the censors. The more information that is coming out, the more the full goal is coming into view. The power elite want the Internet to operate like the controlled media of the 1970s. Any opinion that runs contrary to regime priorities will be blocked. Websites that distribute alternative outlooks will be lucky to survive at all.

To understand what's going on, see the White House document called Declaration on the Future of the Internet. Freedom is barely a footnote, and free speech is not part of it. Instead it is to be a "rules-based digital economy" governed "through the multistakeholder approach, whereby governments and relevant authorities partner with academics, civil society, the private sector, technical community and others."

This whole document is an Orwellian replacement of the Declaration of Internet Freedom from 2012, which was signed by Amnesty International, the ACLU, and major corporations and banks. The first principle of this Declaration was free speech: don't censor the Internet. That was 12 years ago and the principle is long forgotten. Even the original website has been dead since 2018. It is now replaced with one word: "Forbidden."

Yes, that's chilling but it is also perfectly descriptive. In all mainline Internet venues, from search to shopping to social, freedom is no longer the practice. Censorship has been normalized. And it is taking place with the direct involvement of the federal government and third-party organizations and research centers paid for by tax dollars. This is very clearly a violation of the First Amendment but the new orthodoxy in elite circles is that the First Amendment simply does not apply to the Internet.

This issue is making its way through litigation. There was a time when the decision would not be in question. No more. Several or more Supreme Court Justices do not seem to understand even the meaning of free speech.

The Prime Minister of Australia made the new view clear in his statement in defense of fining Elon Musk. He said that social media has a "social responsibility." In today's parlance, this means they must obey the government, which is the only proper interpreter of the public interest. In this view, you simply cannot allow people to post and say things that are contrary to regime priorities.

If the regime cannot manage public culture, and manipulate the public mind, what's it there for? If it cannot control the Internet, its managers believe, it will lose control of the whole of society.

The crackdown is intensifying by the day. Representative Thomas Massie shot a video after the Ukraine vote for a total foreign aid package of an astonishing \$95 billion. Vast numbers of Democrats on the House floor waved Ukrainian flags, which you might suppose smacks of treason. The Sergeant-at-Arms wrote Massey directly to tell him to take down the video or get a \$500 fine.

Instead of fining democrats for waving flags, the House Sergeant at Arms just called and said I will be fined \$500 if I don't delete this video post.

Mike Johnson really wants to memory hole this betrayal of America.

<https://t.co/5DPWoo4cLw>

— Thomas Massie (@RepThomasMassie) [April 23, 2024](#)

True, the rules say you cannot film in a way that “impairs decorum,” but he simply took out his phone. The decorum was disturbed by masses of lawmakers waving a foreign flag. So Massie refused. After all, the entire disgraceful scene was on C-SPAN but the presumption is that no one watches that but everyone reads X, which is probably true.

Clearly, GOP speaker Mike Johnson doesn't want his perfidy this well-advertised. After all, it was he who shepherded the authorization of spying on the American people using Section 702 of FISA, which 99 percent of GOP voters opposed. Just who do these people think they are there to represent?

It's actually astonishing to do a conjectural history in which Elon did not buy Twitter. The regime monopoly on social media today would be 99.5 percent. Then the handful of alternative venues could be shut down one by one, just as with Parler a few years ago. Under this scenario, closing the social end of the Internet would not be that difficult. The domains are another matter but those could be banned gradually over time.

But with X rising in a meteoric way since Elon's takeover, that is now far more difficult. He has made it his mission to remind the world of core principles. This is why he told the boycotting advertisers to jump in a lake and why he refused to comply with every dictate by the despotic head of the Brazilian Supreme Court. Daily he is showing what it means to stand up for principle in extremely hard times.

Glenn Beck puts it well: “What Elon Musk is doing in both Brazil and Australia is this: He is simply standing where the Free world used to stand. They have moved, not him. They are the radicals not him. HAVE THE COURAGE to remain standing, unmovable in the truth that can never change and you will be targeted and eventually change the world.”

Censorship is not an end unto itself. The purpose is control of the people. That is also the purpose of surveillance. It is not, rather obviously, to protect the public. It is to protect the state and its industrial partners against the people. Of course, just as in every dystopian film, they always pretend otherwise.

Somehow – call me naive – I just didn't expect the *New York Times* to be all-in on the immediate establishment of the surveillance state and universal censorship by the “awesome” Deep State. But think of this. If the *NYT* can be fully captured by this ideology, and probably captured by the money that goes with it, so can any other institution. You have

probably noticed a similar editorial line being pushed by *Wired*, *Mother Jones*, *Rolling Stone*, *Salon*, *Slate*, and other venues, including the entire suite of publications owned by Conde Nast including *Vogue* and *GQ* magazine.

“Don’t bother me with your crazed conspiracy theory, Tucker.”

I get the point. What is your explanation?

Published under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#)

For reprints, please set the canonical link back to the original [Brownstone Institute Article](#) and Author.

Author



[Jeffrey A. Tucker](#)

Jeffrey Tucker is Founder, Author, and President at Brownstone Institute. He is also Senior Economics Columnist for Epoch Times, author of 10 books, including *Life After Lockdown*, and many thousands of articles in the scholarly and popular press. He speaks widely on topics of economics, technology, social philosophy, and culture.

[View all posts](#)

Donate Today

Your financial backing of Brownstone Institute goes to support writers, lawyers, scientists, economists, and other people of courage who have been professionally purged and displaced during the upheaval of our times. You can help get the truth out through their ongoing work.

[DONATE](#)

Subscribe to Brownstone for More News

