

Empire and Cyber Imperialism: The Logic behind the Global Spy Structure

By [Prof. James Petras](#)

Global Research, January 23, 2018

Global Research 16 November 2013

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Intelligence](#),
[Police State & Civil Rights](#), [US NATO War](#)
[Agenda](#)

First published by Global Research on November 16, 2013

Revelations about the long-term global, intrusive spying by the US National Security Agency (NSA) and other allied intelligence apparatuses have provoked widespread protests and indignation and threatened ties between erstwhile imperial allies.

Allied regimes have uniformly condemned NSA espionage as a violation of trust and sovereignty, a threat to their national and economic security and to their citizens' privacy.

In contrast, Washington has responded in a contradictory manner: on the one hand, US officials and intelligence chiefs have acknowledged 'some excesses and mistakes', on the other hand, they defend the entire surveillance program as necessary for US national security.

Interpretations vary about the US global spy apparatus - how it was built and why it was launched against hundreds of millions of people. 'Subjective' and 'objective' explanations abound, evoking psychological, social, economic, strategic and political considerations.

A multi-factorial explanation is required.

The Integrated Hypothesis of the Global Police State

One of the essential components of a police state is an all-pervasive spy apparatus operating independently of any legal or constitutional constraints. Spy operations include: 1) massive surveillance over text, video and audio communications and 2) the capacity to secretly record, store and use information secretly collected. This information strengthens political and economic leaders who, in turn, appoint and direct the spy chiefs. The political and economic rulers control the spy-lords by setting the goals, means and targets of the surveillance state. The US global spy apparatus is neither 'self-starting nor self-perpetuating'. It did not arise in a vacuum and it has virtually no strategic autonomy. While there may be intra-bureaucratic conflicts and rivalries, the institutions and groups function within the overall 'paradigm' established and directed by the political and economic elite.

The Global Spy Structure

The growth and expansion of the US spy apparatus has deep roots in its history and is related to the colonial need to control subjugated native and enslaved peoples. However, the global operations emerged after the Second World War when the US replaced Europe as

the center of world imperialism. The US assumed the principal role in preventing the spread of revolutionary and anti-colonial movements from the Soviet Union, China , Korea , Vietnam and Cuba to war and crisis-burdened countries of Europe, North and Southeast Asia and Latin America . When the collectivist states fell apart in the 1990's the US became the sole superpower and a unipolar world emerged.

For the United States, 'unipolarity' meant (1) an impetus toward total global domination; (2) a world-wide network of military bases; (3) the subordination of capitalist competitors in other industrial countries, (4) the destruction of nationalist adversaries and (6) the unfettered pillage of resources from the former collectivist regimes as they became vassal states. The last condition meant the complete dismantling of the collectivist state and its public institutions – education, health care and worker rights.

The opportunities for immense profits and supreme control over this vast new empire were boundless while the risks seemed puny, at least during the 'golden period', defined by the years immediately after (1) the capitalist takeover of the ex-Soviet bloc, (2) the Chinese transition to capitalism and (3) the conversion of many former African and Asian nationalist regimes, parties and movements to 'free-market' capitalism.

Dazzled by their vision of a 'new world to conquer' the United States set up an international state apparatus in order to exploit this world-historical opportunity. Most top political leaders, intelligence strategists, military officials and business elites quickly realized that these easy initial conquests and the complicity of pliable and kleptocratic post-Communist vassal rulers would not last. The societies would eventually react and the lucrative plunder of resources was not sustainable. Nationalist adversaries were bound to arise and demand their own spheres of influence. The White House feared their own capitalist allies would take on the role of imperialist competitors seeking to grab 'their share' of the booty, taking over and exploiting resources, public enterprises and cheap labor.

The new 'unipolar world' meant the shredding of the fabric of social and political life. In the 'transition' to free market capitalism, stable employment, access to health care, security, education and civilized living standards disappeared. In the place of once complex, advanced social systems, local tribal and ethnic wars erupted. It would be 'divide and conquer' in an orgy of pillage for the empire. But the vast majority of the people of the world suffered from chaos and regression when the multi-polar world of collectivist, nationalist, and imperialist regimes gave way to the unipolar empire.

For US imperialist strategists and their academic apologists the transition to a unipolar imperial world was exhilarating and they dubbed their unchallenged domination the ' New World Order' (NWO). The US imperial state then had the right and duty to maintain and police its 'New World Order' – by any means. Francis Fukiyama, among other academic apologists celebrated the 'end of history' in a paroxysm of imperial fever. Liberal-imperial academics, like Immanuel Wallerstein, sensed the emerging challenges to the US Empire and advanced the view of a Manichean world of 'unipolarity' (meaning 'order') versus 'multipolar chaos'– as if the hundreds of millions of lives in scores of countries devastated by the rise of the post-collectivist US empire did not have a stake in liberating themselves from the yoke of a unipolar world.

By the end of its first decade, the unipolar empire exhibited cracks and fissures. It had to confront adversarial nationalist regimes in resource-rich countries, including Muammar Gaddafi in Libya , Bashar Assad in Syria , Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Khamenei in Iran .

They challenged US supremacy in North Africa and the Middle East . The Taliban in Afghanistan and nationalist Islamist movements questioned US influence over the vassal rulers of Muslim countries - especially the puppet monarchs in the Persian Gulf .

On the other side of the imperial coin, the domestic economic foundations of the 'New World Order' were weakened by a series of speculative crises undermining the support of the US public as well as sectors of the elite. Meanwhile European and Japanese allies, as well as emerging Chinese capitalists, were beginning to compete for markets.

Within the US an ultra-militarist group of political ideologues, public officials and policy advisers, embracing a doctrine combining a domestic police state with foreign military intervention, took power in Washington . 'Conservatives' in the Bush, Sr. regime, 'liberals' in the Clinton administration and 'neo-conservatives' in the Bush, Jr. administration all sought and secured the power to launch wars in the Persian Gulf and the Balkans, to expand and consolidate the unipolar empire.

Maintaining and expanding the unipolar empire became the trigger for the White House's global police state apparatus. As new regimes were added to Washington 's orbit, more and more surveillance was needed to make sure they did not drift into a competitor's sphere of influence.

The year 2000 was critical for the global police state. First there was the dot-com crash in the financial sector. The speculative collapse caused massive but unorganized disaffection among the domestic population. Arab resistance re-emerged in the Middle East . The cosmically corrupt Boris Yeltsin vassal state fell and a nationalist, Russian President Vladimir Putin took power. The willing accomplices to the disintegration of the former USSR had taken their billions and fled to New York , London and Israel . Russia was on the road to recovery as a unified nuclear-armed nation state with regional ambitions. The period of unchallenged unipolar imperial expansion had ended.

The election of President Bush Jr., opened the executive branch to police state ideologues and civilian warlords, many linked to the state of Israel , who were determined to destroy secular Arab nationalist and Muslim adversaries in the Middle East . The steady growth of the global police state had been 'too slow' for them. The newly ascendant warlords and the proponents of the global police state wanted to take advantage of their golden opportunity to make US/Israeli supremacy in the Middle East irreversible and unquestioned via the application of overwhelming force ('shock and awe').

Their primary political problem in expanding global military power was the lack of a fully dominant domestic police state capable of demobilizing American public opinion largely opposed to any new wars. 'Disaster ideologues' like Phillip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice understood the need for a new ' Pearl Harbor ' to occur and threaten domestic security and thereby terrify the public into war. They lamented the fact that no credible regimes were left in the Middle East to cast as the 'armed aggressor' and as a threat to US national security. Such an enemy was vital to the launching of new wars. And new wars were necessary to justify the scale and scope of the new global spy apparatus and emergency police state edicts the warlords and neoconservatives had in mind. Absent a credible 'state-based adversary', the militarists settled for an act of terror (or the appearance of one) to 'shock and awe' the US public into accepting its project for imperial wars, the imposition of a domestic police state and the establishment of a vast global spy apparatus.

The September 11, 2001 explosions at the World Trade Center in New York City and the plane crash into a wing (mostly vacant for repairs) of the Pentagon in Washington , DC were the triggers for a vast political and bureaucratic transformation of the US imperial state. The entire state apparatus became a police state operation. All constitutional guarantees were suspended. The neo-conservatives seized power, the civilian warlords ruled. A huge body of police state legislation suddenly appeared, as if from nowhere, the 'Patriot Act'. The Zionists in office set the objectives and influenced military policies to focus on Israel 's regional interests and the destruction of Israel 's Arab adversaries who had opposed its annexation of Palestine . War was declared against Afghanistan without any evidence that the ruling Taliban was involved or aware of the September 11 attack of the US . Despite massive civilian and even some military dissent, the civilian warlords and Zionist officials blatantly fabricated a series of pretexts to justify an unprovoked war against the secular nationalist regime in Iraq , the most advanced of all Arab countries. Europe was divided over the war. Countries in Asia and Latin America joined Germany and France in refusing to support the invasion. The United Kingdom , under a 'Labor' government, eagerly joined forces with the US hoping to regain some of its former colonial holdings in the Gulf.

At home, hundreds of billions of tax dollars were diverted from social programs to fund a vast army of police state operatives. The ideologues of war and the legal eagles for torture and the police state shifted into high gear. Those who opposed the wars were identified, monitored and the details of their lives were 'filed away' in a vast database. Soon millions came to be labeled as 'persons of interest' if they were connected in any way to anyone who was 'suspect', i.e. opposed to the 'Global War on Terror'. Eventually even more tenuous links were made to everyone...family members, classmates and employers.

Over 1.5 million 'security cleared' monitors were contracted by the government to spy on hundreds of millions of citizens. The spy state spread domestically and internationally. For a global empire, based on a unipolar state, the best defense was judged to be a massive global surveillance apparatus operating independently of any other government - including the closest allies.

The slogan, 'Global War on Terror' (GWOT) became an open-ended formula for the civilian warlords, militarists and Zionists to expand the scope and duration of overt and covert warfare and espionage. 'Homeland Security' departments, operating at both the Federal and State levels, were consolidated and expanded with massive budgets for incarceration and repression. Constitutional protections and the Writ of Habeas Corpus were 'rendered quaint vestiges of history'. The National Security Agency doubled its personnel and budget with a mandate to distrust and monitor allies and vassal states. The targets piled upon targets, far beyond traditional adversaries, sweeping up the public and private communications of all political, military and economic leaders , institutions, and citizenry.

The 'Global War on Terror' provided the ideological framework for a police state based on the totalitarian conception that 'everybody and everything is connected to each other' in a 'global system' threatening the state. This 'totalistic view' informs the logic of the expanded NSA, linking enemies, adversaries, competitors and allies. 'Enemies' were defined as anti-imperialist states or regimes with consistently critical independent foreign and domestic policies. 'Adversaries' occasionally sided with 'enemies', or tolerated policymakers who would not always conform to imperial policies. 'Competitors' supported the empire but had the capacity and opportunity to make lucrative trade deals with adversaries or enemies - Allies were states and leaders who generally supported imperial wars but might provide a forum condemning imperial war crimes (torture and drone

attacks). In addition allies could undermine US imperial market shares and accumulate favorable trade balances.

The logic of the NSA required spying on the allies to root out any links, trade, cultural or scientific relations with adversaries and enemies, which might have spillover consequences. The NSA feared that associations in one sphere might 'overlap' with adversaries operating in strategic policy areas and undermine ally loyalty to the empire.

The spy logic had a multiplier effect - who gets to 'spy on the spies?' The NSA might collaborate with overseas allied intelligence agencies and officials - but American spymasters would always question their reliability, their inclination to withhold vital information, the potential for shifting loyalties. 'Do our allies spy on us? How do we know our own spies are not colluding with allied spies who might then be colluding with adversarial spies?' This justified the establishment of a huge national vacuum cleaner to suck up all transactions and communications - justified by the notion that a wide net scooping up everything might catch that big fish!

The NSA regards all 'threats to the unipolar empire' as national security threats. No country or agency within or without the reach of the empire was excluded as a 'potential threat'.

The 'lead imperial state' requires the most efficient and overarching spy technology with the furthest and deepest reach. Overseas allies appear relatively inefficient, vulnerable to infiltration, infected with the residua of a long-standing suspect 'leftist culture' and unable to confront the threat of new dangerous adversaries. The imperial logic regards surveillance of 'allies' as 'protecting allied interests' because the allies lack the will and capacity to deal with enemy infiltration.

There is a circular logic to the surveillance state. When an allied leader starts to question how imperial espionage protects allied interest, it is time to intensify spying on the ally. Any foreign ally who questions NSA surveillance over its citizens raises deep suspicions. Washington believes that questioning imperial surveillance undermines political loyalties.

Secret Police Spying as a "Process of Accumulation"

Like capitalism, which needs to constantly expand and accumulate capital, secret police bureaucracies require more spies to discover new areas, institutions and people to monitor. Leaders, followers, citizens, immigrants, members of ethnic, religious, civic and political groups and individuals - all are subject to surveillance. This requires vast armies of data managers and analysts, operatives, programmers, software developers and supervisors - an empire of 'IT'. The ever-advancing technology needs an ever-expanding base of operation.

The spy- masters move from local to regional to global operations. Facing exposure and condemnation of its global chain of spying, the NSA calls for a new 'defensive ideology'. To formulate the ideology, a small army of academic hacks is trotted out to announce the phony alternatives of a 'unipolar police state or terror and chaos'. The public is presented with a fabricated choice of its perpetual, 'well-managed and hi-tech', imperial wars versus the fragmentation and collapse of the entire world into a global war of 'all against all'. Academic ideologues studiously avoid mentioning that small wars by small powers end more quickly and have fewer casualties.

The ever-expanding technology of spying strengthens the police state. The list of targets is endless and bizarre. Nothing and no one will be missed!

As under capitalism, the growth of the spy state triggers crisis. With the inevitable rise of opposition, whistleblowers come forward to denounce the surveillance state. At its peak, spy-state over-reach leads to exposure, public scandals and threats from allies, competitors and adversaries. The rise of cyber-imperialism raises the specter of cyber-anti-imperialism. New conceptions of inter-state relations and global configurations are debated and considered. World public opinion increasingly rejects the 'necessity' of police states. Popular disgust and reason exposes the evil logic of the spy-state based on empire and promotes a plural world of peaceful rival countries, functioning under co-operative policies – systems without empire, without spymasters and spies.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Prof. James Petras](#), Global Research, 2018

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Prof. James Petras](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca