

Fourth of July 2014: The Erosion of Civil Liberties in America

Gallup Poll: Satisfaction With Their Freedoms Has Record Drop Among Americans

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We have long discussed the erosion of civil liberties in the United States, including the attacks on privacy and other rights by the Obama Administration. It appears that we are not alone in those concerns. A new Gallup poll shows a record drop in the satisfaction of Americans over their freedoms. The massive drop is matched in such countries as Egypt, Pakistan, and Venezuela.

Seventy-nine percent of US residents are satisfied with their level of freedom. That is down from 91 percent in 2006 — a 12 point drop. We were once the highest country in the world



on such polls. We have now dropped to 36th place.

That mirrors other studies showing the United States dropping to the same low levels on [press freedoms](#), Internet speech, and other rights.

The White House has been adept in deflecting such criticism with a host of commentators and bloggers who deflect criticism with references to Republicans and the “red menace” or “things could be worse” spin or simply change the subject. However, the expansion of the internal security network in the United States and police powers is obviously having an impact on how Americans now view their rights. Years ago, I wrote a column entitled [“10 Reasons Why The United States Is No Longer The Land of The Free.”](#) Things have only grown worse since that column ran. The Obama Administration’s [recent effort to strip citizens of privacy protections over their cellphones and records](#) illustrates the extremism of some of these positions. That argument failed to secure a single vote on the Supreme Court for the Administration’s effort to blow a hole in American privacy protections.

The poll on the eve of the Fourth of July captures the dire condition of American civil liberties today. As I wrote years ago, Obama has been a [disaster for the American civil liberties movement](#) and the damage done under his tenure will be felt for decades. What is most distressing is that citizens see the decline but feel virtually powerless to do anything about it

due to the duopoly of power in this country. Even with universal calls for change, the two parties are again recycling many of the same figures and same policies as prior years. Polls of this kind show a deep sense of dissatisfaction among Americans but also a complete lack of expression of those views through political channels. That is a dangerous situation for any political system when such widespread feelings are left unexpressed and unvented in politics. The political system seems to be operating in an increasingly unconnected and unresponsive fashion vis-a-vis the public at large. There is a sense among many that I speak to that there is a ruling elite and a vast body of the ruled — a modern equivalent to the helot class of ancient Sparta.

I am still amazed that we have come to this point of rapidly declining feelings of freedom and widespread dissociation with our political system. It is not the failure of our constitutional system and only partially the failure of our leaders. It is largely a failure in ourselves that we have become such grumbling drones — powerless, passive, and frankly a bit pathetic. Our government is openly trying to strip away core privacy protections and increase police powers at every level. Yet, we have fallen victim to the “blue state” and “red state” mentality — allowing politicians to constantly deflect criticism by referring to the other side as the greater evil. The result is predictable and, as with this poll, incredibly depressing. See csmonitor

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