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Civil liberties: What, me Worry?

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With civil liberties, one size fits all. Yesterday I was on a panel at the Conference on World Affairs about civil liberties v Innocent of the libertarian Cato Institute. Most of the time I am busy criticizing the Cato Institute because I see it promote Cato claims that libertarianism is neither left nor right.

LOL.

OK, we agree to disagree.

But on the civil liberties panel Innocent and I were mostly on the same page. Why,? Because we both know that the government has the power to spy on us, and that current laws give them much too much power, and not enough oversight.

We would like to see provisions of the PATRIOT Act erased. Actually, I would like to see the entire PATRIOT Act erased since the terror attacks on 9/11. Hardline government officials frequently use fear and panic to grab more power.

This goes back all the way to the late 1700s and the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts that targeted dissent and obsession with subversion in this country ever since. There is a repressive streak throughout U.S. history, and it targets the McCarthyite political Witch Hunts of the 1950s during which communists and suspected communists (read liberals targeted suspected fascists). While some of those targeted were fascist sympathizers, the procedures and justifications

McCarthyism's targeting of the left. Leo Ribuffo has written eloquently on this topic.

We always look the other way when our enemies are targeted and it's a bad idea, because we're always next. The cur unpopular and the foreign, especially Muslims and Arabs.

Some of the premises that undergird certain surveillance strategies being used to pursue the "War on Terror" are base dissident violence on the political right in the United States. I have explored this in a collection of webpages titled "The Flawed Scholarship:

<http://www.publiceye.org/liberty/terrorism/insurgency/leaderless.html>

To summarize: The effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts by the Bush Administration is compromised by flawed and two leading experts relied on by policymakers: Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman.

The resulting programs of government surveillance and computerized data-collection are unnecessarily undermining the Arabs living in this country...as well as the rights of all Americans.

This is because different investigative techniques with different levels of government intrusiveness are justified as appropriate movement configurations of potential terrorists. Both Sageman and Hoffman have made errors in analyzing Leaderless the United States, and how domestic terror cells are organized. The government polices based on these flawed analyses

For example, under current analytical models, the government is focused on discovering underground cells that use a

The terms "Leaderless Resistance" or "Phantom Cells" have a precise meaning: spontaneous, autonomous, unconnected violence, sabotage, or terrorism against a government or occupying military force.

Yet the ultra-right and neo-Nazi activists who committed acts of violence and terrorism against the government in the 1990s: Leaderless Resistance, as scholar Simson Garfinkel has demonstrated.

<http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1040>

Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, who were convicted for their roles in the Oklahoma City bombing, in 1995 had a 100% hit rate at gun shows. This isn't underground. It's not subtle.

So the government is using the wrong analytical lens to find potential terrorists. Yet Sageman's model is used by federal Homeland Security and Government Affairs, and the New York City Police Department which has named Sageman a "Homegrown Terrorism" who co-chaired the Senate Committee that pushed Sageman's analysis, also has been promoting draconian measures

Sageman especially has been influential with his thesis in Leaderless Jihad, but the policy recommendations emerging from it do more harm than good. In some cases there are anti-terrorism policy advisors who are using a superficial reading of Leaderless Jihad of Sageman's more sensible recommendations.

Scholar Simson Garfinkel in 2003 observed that:

...the U.S. appears to be fighting Leaderless Resistance networks... with an eradication strategy: the goal is to create very high penalties for individuals who participate in direct action. The approach is that the eradication effort itself may inadvertently serve to attract new recruits by making the cause appear a just response to an unjust enemy.

The entire operation is flawed, and we're not protected, because they're not looking for the right groups of people and

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If you are interested in the high stakes poker of intellectual discussions where disagreement is encouraged while civil discourse is encouraged, please contact me at the World Affairs Conference on World Affairs:

<http://www.colorado.edu/cwa/>

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