

# Undergraduate Dissertation

## Trabajo Fin de Grado

### Government Surveillance: The Role of Fear in the USA since 9/11

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2018

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## 1. COMMUNICATIONS IN A GLOBAL WORLD

In today's media-dominated world, very few are not in tune with the technological innovations and the varied offer of electronic devices providing services that make life easier in many respects. However, it seems we all have consented to the fact that, in exchange for contracting many of these services, we are granting the access of our personal information to private enterprises such as digital marketing companies and internet service providers (ISP), among others.

As a consequence, it is possible for these companies to know what the people are looking for, which content they follow, and even the consumers' tastes and personal relations. This issue becomes especially controversial due to the increasing number of declarations pointing out to the fact that there are commercial interests behind the purposes of these companies and providers to collect, share and use our data. It seems that, as long as people are increasingly using more digital devices that track location, tastes or consuming habits, they are exposed to be tracked in the web for the commercial benefit of corporations.

In this respect, the activities of digital marketing companies become essential. In view of some researches, these organizations are in charge of offering free content to the consumers in exchange for private data, with the purpose of providing them with additional advertising aimed at altering their behavior. (“Anuncios hasta” 00:07:26-00:08:05)

Of course, this situation raises several questions: Which is the final destination for all the personal data collected? Who ultimately benefits from the massive amount of powerful information? The outcome of a new raising awareness in the last few years materialized in the 2018 EU Cookie law. According to Clare Hopping, this digital law, which broadens its effects to the US consumer of European Internet Services, requires

organizations to obtain the visitors' consent so as to collect their information on an electronic device, and occasionally allows consumers to opt out of having cookies installed in order to protect their right to privacy.

Nevertheless, although it may seem that the law promises protection for the users' privacy, in most of the cases it merely informs about the privacy conditions of the services to contract. The misleading situation creates an unfair situation to the consumer, who forcibly has to choose between either refusing access to the service, or accepting it by likewise handing in their private personal and consumer data for the commercial interest. This lack of seriousness undoubtedly gives the green light for these companies to conduct their activities without restrictions, and therefore, without any ethical commitment to its consumers.

Conversely, it is worth noting that in some cases, these private companies do not operate alone but their activities are linked to the Government as the main recipient of the data collection. In 2015, *The Guardian* published an article about a new research in which they unveiled the existence of controversial aircraft that was equipped with mass electronic data collection technology under fictitious companies' credentials tied to some FBI counterterrorist missions. The FBI aircraft was shielded from public knowledge so as to, according to the governmental institution, prevent a possible boycott of the counterterrorist purpose of the aircraft fleet and, therefore, further burdening taxpayers. At this point, the report suggests how, like the private companies, the Government also seems to focus its efforts on mastering the use, collection and storing of electronic information on a massive scale.

Nevertheless, the controversial implication that this piece of news has for a proper understanding of the US civil liberties reflected in the Constitution is evidenced in the use of the terrorist threat as a means to justify the secrecy of a mission that might

infringe the privacy of many innocent people. In using the promise of security in exchange for infringing the privacy of the individuals, the Government recalls the old spot liberty vs. security, and opens the door to a powerful violation of basic human rights. Also, the computer programmer and Central Intelligence Agency worker Edward Snowden, in his disclosing of top-secret government documents, called the attention to the dilemma between the necessity to be protected and the risk of losing our liberties.

This political use of the counterterrorism discourse has been analyzed by Zygmunt Bauman, who provides important observations on the relationship existing between the emphasis on security by the Government and the interests of the global market system. Bauman notes that “to focus locally on the ‘safe environment’ and everything it may genuinely or putatively entail, is exactly what ‘market forces’ [...] want the nation-state governments to do” (119). Likewise, he comments on the extent to which governments are focused on accomplishing this mission, instead of more intricate questions, since it has been observed that a governmental focus on security seems to stimulate investors’ confidence in the nation, which conducts to economic prosperity (119). Accordingly, there is a necessity for using the discourse of fear to obtain the favors of the business community, which at the same time recalls the increasing preeminence of global market interests over the influence of nation-state powers. In this respect, Bauman argues that “supranational” forces that are the outcome of the global financial system are nowadays in charge of managing the world’s resources and displacing the power of the nation-states, which are not expected to seek “military, economic and cultural self-sufficiency” but to administer affairs on their behalf, by policing for their interest (56, 63).

Such an interpretation of the current global world is related to the processes of privatization that western powers started when the politics of globalization became

functional, approximately, in the 1970s. It was then when the liberal elites, favored by a political difficulty in managing amounts of new democratic social reforms, started defending a business perspective on the world, which in words of John R. Saul developed “around naked, commercial self-interest” (35). Among the consequences of this well-known process was that every government started legislating away the powers that make democracy possible, which favored processes of deregulation of public services

Arguably, these economic and political dynamics have enabled global capital to take political advantage, together with a considerable representation in the world’s governments. As a result, governments could have abandoned the idea of working for the public interest, thus creating a world in which public politics are dependent on the solvency of global finances. In this environment, governments would focus their activities on the economic interests of those global forces, which involves developing the necessary strategies for getting rid of the obstacles to real economic dynamism. This, in turn, would entail that committing to the values of democracy might not be their overriding objective, at least as far as the political practices are concerned.

Thus, in light of what has been said above about the interest of the US Government in serving the demands of the global market and the relationship with the use of the counterterrorism discourse to create an opinion favorable to their interests, I will examine how the threat of terrorism after 9/11 in the United States has been exploited by the Government to justify mass surveillance. I will argue that anti-terrorism legislation is being used in the benefit of a political system increasingly dependent on corporatism or, in other words, in the benefit of the US industrial, diplomatic and political interests. I will develop my thesis by dividing my analysis into three sections: Firstly, I will analyze the elaboration of a new legislation that, since

9/11, makes legal a series of activities in which the democratic right to privacy is violated. Secondly, in view of the documents disclosed by Edward Snowden in 2013, I will draw attention to the contrast existing between the purpose of the new legislation and its practical application. Then, I will comment on the extent to which the ambiguous language of these laws has been used for the implementation of invasive activities of surveillance. Finally, I will argue that the Government has been using the threat of terrorism as a political tool, in order to manipulate the public opinion and Congress and therefore institutionalize corrupted practices derived from invasive surveillance activities.

## 2. THE NEW POLICIES OF THE AFTERMATH OF 9/11

The shocking events of September 11, 2001 changed dramatically the course of US policies in security matters, and opened a public debate on civil liberties. For scholars like Paul A. Heise, the subsequent war on terror following the social trauma also impacted the economy of private and public sectors by increasing the national debt on the one hand and strengthening the interests of those industries willing to downsize the public sector on the other (7). Seemingly, in a country increasingly responsive to the interests of the global market, the new socio-political situation represented an opportunity for the great industries to obtain further congressional support.

Apparently, despite the system of check and balances and the separation of powers enshrined in the US Constitution, power, Robert Byrd observes, concentrated more and more in the White House as a way of effectively confronting further terrorist threats (21). In a parallel way, there also emerged a new type of anti-terrorism discourse, which was based on the collective fear of another terrorist attack and started to be used persistently as the prerequisite for improving the US policies on homeland

security (62).

At first, this new discourse ostensibly predisposed the public opinion to support the politics on homeland security that were proposed by the Executive, and provided the Government with an aura of initiative and compromise with the safety of the nation. However there were people who did not engage in the perseverant discourse as it entailed a rapid re-structuring of the political arrangement. Actually, one of the particularities that Byrd highlighted concerning this anti-terrorism rhetoric was that it was often used as spectral evidence for the creation of new governmental bodies such as the Department of Homeland Security (62). In his view, this department was an example of abuse of power, which was evidenced in the varied statements that made up its constitution. For example, Byrd enhanced the insistence on self-management on the grounds that congressional oversight could undermine the department's functions (108). Besides, there was an effort to provide the department with "such sums as may be necessary to respond to the terrorist attacks of the United States that occurred in September 11, 2001" (qdt. in Byrd 62). In light of these abnormal measures, Byrd warned that the department aimed at becoming "the central clearinghouse for sensitive law enforcement", which, according to him, meant an all-time high unfettered access to intelligence (111).

Not surprisingly, another fundamental aspect of developing effective national security measures involved the processing of intelligence information, which was mainly conducted by the National Security Agency (NSA). The NSA "is responsible for global monitoring, collection and processing of information and data for foreign intelligence and counterintelligence purposes" ("National Security Agency"). Apart from that, it is also in charge of securing the US communication networks whilst at the same time devising clandestine measures to accomplish their missions. However, the



activity of the NSA is not devoid of controversy. Jonathan Haggerty and Arthur Rizer affirm that although the agency only sorts out the data related to foreign information and discards the rest, “they have not invested in infrastructure that can narrow their collection” since they collect the digital communications through the internet’s backbone. Haggerty and Rizer also point out that this might be the reason why the NSA is among the agencies which use semantics to protect the integrity for their procedures, and thereby avoid the public debate on the ethical responsibility of their activities.

Returning to the aftermath of 9/11, there was a widespread sense of urgency to look for the creation of new public policies that could guarantee the security of the nation against terrorism. Responding to the requirements of public opinion, the Government focused its efforts on developing new policies on security matters, even though the constitution of certain departments conveyed an abuse of the executive power, according to seasoned politicians like, for example, Robert Byrd. Nonetheless, more similar policies were to come. Only four weeks after the terrorist attacks, the USA Patriot Act<sup>1</sup> was passed in the Senate by an overwhelming majority. The Patriot Act was an anti-terrorism bill composed mainly of two titles: Title I, comprising domestic security against terrorism and Title II, which focused on surveillance procedures. More specifically, the latter gathered legislation on the surveillance of suspected terrorists, including those involved in computer fraud, and foreign power agents who were linked to clandestine activities. Furthermore, it required that the orders on surveillance must be granted without disclosing the reasons, and that agents protected the secrecy of the surveillance activities.

For some digital rights groups and civil rights activists however, Title II was especially controversial because it seemed to expand federal agencies’ powers of

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<sup>1</sup> All references to the USA Patriot Act from [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriot\\_Act,\\_Title\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriot_Act,_Title_II).

surveillance in regard to private electronic communications. In particular, these organizations pointed out to the fact that the bill lacked a proper system of checks and balances, which revealed anomalies that infringed upon constitutional rights and liberties. As the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) declared: “It seems clear that the vast majority of the sections involved were not carefully studied by Congress, nor was sufficient time taken to debate it or to hear testimony from experts outside of law enforcement in the fields where it makes major changes” (qtd. in “Patriot Act, Title II”). In a similar vein, the American Bar Association (ABA) asked the US Government “To conduct regular and timely oversight including public hearings [...] to ensure that government investigations [...] do not violate the First, Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the Constitution.” (qtd. in “Patriot Act, Title II”). Finally, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) also opposed the bill by particularly stressing the threat it posed to citizens’ privacy:

There are significant flaws in the Patriot Act, flaws that threaten your fundamental freedoms by giving the Government the power to access to your medical records, tax records, information about the books you buy or borrow without probable cause, and the power to break into your home and conduct secret searches without telling you for weeks, months or indefinitely. (qtd. in “Patriot Act, Title II”)

All these responses highlighting the capacity for the anti-terrorism rhetoric to result in potential abuses of power drew, among other aspects, on the Patriot Act’s amendment of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA), a federal law that established “procedures for the [...] electronic surveillance and collection of foreign intelligence information between foreign powers [and] agents of foreign powers suspected of espionage or terrorism” (qtd. in “Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act”). For the first time, the enactment of the USA Patriot Act in 2001 amended this law, which not only seemed to re-define the concept of terrorism, but also modify the criteria

for government surveillance.

In this respect, while the original law required that the subjects posing a national terrorist threat be agents of a foreign power, the new amendment's standards allowed for the exercise of surveillance over all civilians that were considered suspects of terrorist activities. Specifically, as noted in "Patriot Act, Title II" the amended FISA act changed the purpose of foreign information collection from "primary" to "significant," a term that the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) said to lead "to inconsistent determinations and potential overuse of the FISA standards." Also, the scope of targets was expanded after including the "roving surveillance" of those individuals "whose actions may have the effect of thwarting the identification of a particular person" (qtd. in "Patriot Act, Title II").

Concerning the orders on surveillance of foreign powers, there were ambiguous interpretations. While in the 1978 FISA Act, surveillance orders "were limited to the investigation of foreign threats to national security," now it was only required that the surveillance target was an "agent of a 'foreign power'" (qtd. in "Patriot Act, Title II"). According to the Electronic Privacy Information Center, the term 'foreign power' became problematic because, even if enough evidence must be collected to prove that a US citizen was a terrorist, in the case of non-citizens, as the law clearly states, the accusation of terrorism could encompass any person who was representative of any constituted foreign power.

Apart from the purposes and targets of surveillance, the Patriot Act also modified the 1978 FISA standards concerning types of records, information sharing and cooperation relations for surveillance assistance. With respect to the first, the provision required that only in those cases having to do with activities to protect against international terrorism or clandestine intelligence activities, the seizing of business

records by federal agencies would be authorized. Nevertheless, they could access the information without the need to show probable cause of their relation to terrorism to the FISA court. Definitely, the provision generated a significant contrast with the original order, which was only restricted to the seizing of travel documents.

The new orders on information sharing also seemed to enable the government to obtain an increased control over surveillance. To this end, not only did they facilitate the nationwide spreading of information from local agencies, but also allowed third parties – such as phone companies and ISP; to share the information collected under their own criteria. Thus, it was stated that “If the provider ‘reasonably’ [...] believes that an emergency involving immediate danger of death or serious physical injury to any person is imminent, then the communications provider can now disclose this information without fear of liability” (qtd. in “Patriot Act, Title II”). Lastly, the Patriot Act would expand the influence of government surveillance through surveillance assistance orders. With a view to encourage cooperation, legal immunity was offered “to those who assist the Government in undertaking surveillance that is in accordance with a court order.” On top of that, the bill also ensured the “compensation of any person who rendered surveillance assistance to a government agency.” There is no doubt that the order for surveillance assistance had an intriguing implication. Nevertheless, the controversy would not rely on the idea of cooperation but, once more, on the use of terror as a justification for obtaining the support of private companies and particulars. What is more, even when the rest of the bill seemed to generate more questions than solutions, the creation of key cooperation relations would only increase the possibility that, at a technical level, an invasive surveillance could be undertaken.

Also noteworthy was the fact that these ambiguous sets of procedures, far from being part of an emergency measure, remained the basis for the implementation of

subsequent policies. Just before the expiration of the bill in 2006, the USA Patriot Act was reauthorized, and only two years later, in 2008, its provisions merged into the FISA Amendment Act of 2008, whose provisions were extended until December, 2017. Among the orders relevant to surveillance, the amendment authorized the “targeting of persons [...] believed to be located outside the United States but limited to targeting non-US persons [...] for periods up to one year” (“Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act). However, as noted in “Foreign Surveillance Act of 1978 Amendments of 2008,” the section was unprecise as to not to “intentionally.” In addition, the order also allowed for the authorization of foreign surveillance programs with capacity to monitor enormous amounts of electronic data. This issue, which was even more significant than the previous provision, not only evidenced the technological developments of the new millennium but probably was the final step in setting electronic surveillance programs as one of the main resources to fight terrorism. However, as mentioned above, much of these NSA programs lacked the infrastructure for filtering collected data which, together with the absence of regulations when seizing data, could lead to a problematic situation concerning the privacy of the US people.

### 3. EDWARD SNOWDEN OR THE TRUTH BEHIND THE ANTI-TERRORISM PURPOSE

Apparently, the two provisions set by the latest FISA amendment, together with the ambiguity of the USA Patriot Act orders, paved the way for invasive surveillance. At least, this seemed to be the perspective of some government workers who, being also witnesses of the abuse of power conducted by the Government, decided to make a public condemnation on controversial surveillance practices.

It was the employee of the NSA Edward Snowden, who, in the year of 2013,

revealed shocking information about the surveillance practices of the Government. With the support of *The Guardian* as the main means for publication, he leaked some of the NSA's classified information with procedures to collect large-scales of US domestic communications. The whistleblower, according to *The Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald, had also declared in a previous interview that the NSA conducted surveillance over the communications of common US citizens on the grounds of "incidental" collection, since the monitoring of every communication is permitted as long as it is exchanged with a foreign national who might be suspected of terrorism (Greenwald 127).

As it might be expected, Snowden's revelations signaled a turning point for the Government, as they contradicted the main purpose of the legislation on foreign surveillance that had been enacted since the events of September 11, 2001. This was because, as it has been previously stated, all of the FISA amendments coming from the 2001 USA Patriot Act until the 2008 FISA law were seemingly adopted to target terrorists on the grounds of protecting the nation from the terrorist threat. In this respect, despite the Government's emphasis on "foreign intelligence" surveillance, the targets were often common people. In fact, as Greenwald revealed in his book, one of the leaked documents was a FISA top secret order for domestic surveillance (93). In it, it was required that Verizon, one of the main US telecommunication companies, handed over to the government all information concerning the telephone calls from all its US customers. Needless to say, this unwarranted access to private information constitutes an abuse of power, and entails a severe violation of human rights.

Also concerning domestic surveillance, Snowden revealed a series of files that Greenwald calls "content" and "metadata", two types of information which were collected regardless of counterterrorist investigations. The former involved actual

conversations from phone calls, emails and chats, as well as the interception of whole internet browsing histories, among others. “Metadata,” on the other hand, referred to the information describing that data, such as the time and location of the targets at the moment of communication (Greenwald 132). Although collecting metadata may not seem as intrusive as recording actual content, it permits, in much the same way, the creation of profiles about the people with respect to their relations and habits. This, in turn, made possible that the Government could know, not only about the lifestyle, but also about the political affiliations of the people.

However, domestic targeting was not an isolated concern. More controversy surrounding the government’s orders for surveillance emerged when the rest of the Snowden archive gave evidence that, in relation to foreign agents surveillance, information sharing and cooperation relations, there were other interests involved that transcended terrorism. Put plainly, there were economic and diplomatic interests behind the surveillance of foreign agents. As testified by Greenwald himself, “Many of the programs were aimed at the American population, but dozens of countries around the planet – including democracies typically considered US allies, such as France, Brazil, India and Germany; were also targets of indiscriminate mass surveillance.” (90). Nothing made that clearer than the so-called “Political Affairs” documents, which revealed that the agency had conducted surveillance of some political leaders from Brazil and Mexico, two of the most influential countries in the world economy given their oil resources (Greenwald 141). As Greenwald noted, the surveillance of other countries served a double purpose, since this not only facilitated information about industrial resources and trade-planning strategies, but also gave the US advantages in its negotiations with other parties (137-139).

With regard to information sharing, as mentioned above, the 2008 FISA law

prohibited access to the information by third parties unless there were casualties involved. Contrary to what was stated in the order, and according to Greenwald, the documents revealed by Snowden showed that the NSA used to get access to the servers of many Internet companies often without prior justification (109). It was *The Washington Post's* Bart Gellman, who in his investigations of PRISM, one of the electronic surveillance programs leaked by Snowden, declared that "From their workstations anywhere in the world, government employees cleared for PRISM access may 'task' the system [...] and receive results from an internet company without further interaction with the company's staff" (qtd. in Greenwald 109). Also, in view of the amounts of data that companies such as Facebook received daily, it might be deduced that, far from terrorism, government's surveillance could rather be focused on studying the lifestyle or even the ideological tendencies of the US population.

The corporate partnerships that were disclosed were also symbolic of the Government's corrupt practices. In this respect, Greenwald highlights that PRISM documents revealed the existence of secret cooperation relations between the NSA and influential corporations such as Yahoo! and Google, as well as further agreements with Microsoft to obtain access to platforms such as Outlook (108). All in all, it could be said that the NSA, being a public agency, did not devote its efforts to guarantee the security of the US population, but was rather focused on building up relations with private corporations. In the words of Tim Shorrock, who had long investigated the NSA's controversial partnerships with private companies, "70 percent of [the US] national intelligence budget is being spent on in the private sector" (qtd. in Greenwald 101).

#### 4. EXPLOITING THE AMBIGUOUS LAWS

The Snowden archive revealed the extent to which, despite the emphasis on terrorism,



the US Government was actually working to fulfil its economic, diplomatic and political agendas. Nonetheless, all of the clandestine and morally corrupt practices denounced here were actually recognized as legitimate by the 2008 FISA law, and therefore operated according to legal guidelines set up by the federal government.

All these practices were legitimated as a result of a complex legal process. Firstly, there was the fact that the 2008 FISA law continued the provisions on foreign surveillance of the USA Patriot Act because, as has been stated above, the latter was merged into the new amendment in 2008. Also, this would have meant the implementation of the former's provisions concerning the surveillance of foreign targets and types of records, as well as those orders for information sharing and cooperation relations.

As was previously analyzed, according to some analysts, many of the orders set forth by the USA Patriot Act were controversial, because they were subjected to ambiguous interpretations concerning the concept of terrorist threat. Likewise, the current law would have been subjected to the same subjectivity in interpreting the provisions supposedly based on the terrorist threat, which therefore would legitimize the controversial provisions for surveillance denounced by Snowden. Additionally, the 2008 FISA law added the two provisions commented on above, one dealing with the surveillance of foreign people and another with the authorization of electronic surveillance programs. Similarly, they would legitimize controversial surveillance practices as both were opened to ambiguous interpretations on the one hand and invasive surveillance procedures on the other.

Thus, as to the targeting of average people, the 2008 FISA law would not warrant targeting a US citizen, as mentioned above. However, as Greenwald points out the provision allowed for the surveillance of those people who were exchanging

information with targeted foreign citizens (112). This would imply that, in actuality, all US persons who were exchanging information with a foreign person who, in turn, could be accused of “probable” terrorism could be targeted.

Concerning the seizing of information, the 2008 FISA law did not permit obtaining the business records of any target, unless they might be involved in investigations designed to protect against terrorism. In practice, however, in view of one of Snowden’s leaked documents disclosing the relationship between the two federal institutions in a period of six years, the FISA court usually accepted the NSA’s requests to access business records (Greenwald 129). Snowden’s revelation would be evidence of the extent to which the question of “terrorist investigations” could be used to infringe upon people’s rights and liberties.

The subjectivity with which the concept of terrorism could be treated is also demonstrated by the provision for surveillance over foreign powers, particularly in view of a disclosed document by Snowden relating the activities of the telecommunications company *Huawei* in the US market. Greenwald, for example, highlights how, this document reveals that the governmental accusations of supposed terrorist activities against the Chinese company had one precise objective: the banishing of its activities in the US because it was seemingly thwarting the economic interests of national companies (147). In this way, since surveillance could be authorized as long as the target suspected of terrorism were an agent of a foreign power, it was justified that those foreign industrial markets whose activities were damaging the industrial interests of US corporations were barred from US markets.

With respect to information sharing, although the NSA could only access the information shared by third parties in cases of reported injuries affecting the holders of information, Greenwald notes that the agency had always had the possibility of

obtaining access to private information hold by third parties, since it could target any US citizen via investigating connections with a foreign target suspected of terrorism (112). Thus, he also comments on how internet companies such as “Yahoo! have been forced to share their collected data with the NSA, by joining surveillance programs conducted by the government.

Lastly, this free sharing of information would likewise warrant the creation of cooperation relations that would be absolutely unrelated to terrorism and which, in view of the granting of immunities and economic compensations offered, would be now conducted more than ever. This demonstrates the way in which, as long as the activity of surveillance is justified by the 2008 FISA law, the NSA’s association with ISP and Internet Companies is warranted. Needless to say, the situation makes the argument of “terrorism” a vague justification. Yet, this was used in plenty of occasions in order to make legal the corrupted activities run by the NSA, both in the name of the Government and the whole nation.

## 5. CONCLUSION: FEAR OF POLITICAL MANIPULATION

Undoubtedly, the political circumstances the United States was subjected to as a consequence of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 set unprecedented social and political changes. The collective trauma created by such an unexpected event produced a feeling of fear and uncertainty among the population in a country where, apparently, people was safe and things were ordered and regulated following meticulous democratic values. Taking advantage of the mood created by the attacks, the government took a step forward and moved towards the enactment of new policies on homeland security matters. Their new proposals would be more effective policies supposedly focused on ensuring peace and security to the US population.

Pressing to act, the Executive demonstrated a powerful initiative. Its efforts focused on enacting the necessary legislation means to protect the population. The hasty political proposals translated into an unquestionable trust in the Government, which was reflected in the Congressional support of all of them despite a legal language often based upon ambiguities and tending to open interpretations. However, their rapid and widespread acceptance demonstrated that the anti-terrorism rhetoric was a powerful political tool. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that the Government hurried to pass other new laws that rested on the same subjective and ambiguous provisions.

It was not until the leakage of government classified documents by some whistleblowers such as Edward Snowden that it was demonstrated the extent the anti-terrorism rhetoric concealed a series of anti-democratic activities that were supposed to shield the nation from further attacks. For the first time, people started to comprehend the political, economic and diplomatic interests behind all those measures supposedly devised to protect the citizens as well as the extent to which the legal language had served to make constitutional all those corrupted activities. This demonstrated the power and the effectiveness of the anti-terrorist rhetoric and of the “politics of fear”, in general to manipulate public opinion and even to coerce Congress to vote for measures that went against the general interest. Since then, fear has become one of the most efficient tools to manipulate people. This is the reason why it is vital that there exists a minimum awareness of the civil rights and liberties that society should not give up under any circumstances, and everything that is done in the name of the people should be based in constitutional values.

In a globalized world like ours, where the economic and diplomatic interests seems to lead the way of politics, it is important not to forget that the political decisions we take condition our lives. This implies that we, as citizens of supposedly democratic

countries, must be critical towards the policies and the laws that are passed in our name so that antidemocratic activities are not institutionalize and so that our lives are not subordinated to the interests of corporations and corrupted officials. Instead, we must fight for policies that take into account the rights and liberties of every individual and make sure that fear does not make us feel desperate in the face of things we cannot control, and we must fight against those who do not want our rights and freedoms to be fulfilled when they stand in the way of the economy.

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