

Government Surveillance - Good or Bad?

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1- Introduction

"We are rapidly entering the age of no privacy, where everyone is open to surveillance at all times; where there are no secrets from government".

- William O. Douglas

An American Supreme court Justice stated this ^{more than} 50 years ago.

As George Orwell once warned;

"Big Brother is watching you"

In our rapidly evolving digital age, this cautionary tale is closer to reality than ever before. Surveillance is becoming a more intensive and normal instrument of modern government. It can be defined as, "A government collection of information by ongoing observations of individuals or groups. It is not only a visual process but a wide range of ways involving a

variety of technologies including, closed-circuit televisions (CCTV), wiretapping, covert activities by human agents, heat seeking, eavesdropping, sensing devices, body scans, technology for tracking movements and many others." The ultimate goal of government surveillance is to protect human rights while effectively and appropriately pursuing legitimate law enforcement, public-safety and national security. But the concern rises here is, "what about the violation of human right to privacy?" - Which is also stated in Article 14 of constitution of Pakistan and in other ^{national} constitutions of the world. On the other hand The Federal Investigation Agency of Pakistan (FIA) Act 1974 empowers the Federal Investigation Agency

for prevention and detection of wide variety of crimes. The electronic surveillance and interception is permissible when it comes to transparency of investigation and necessary surveillance required against a suspect involved in antistate or terrorist activity.

The surveillance conducted by the government, aimed at providing services and ensuring the protection of its citizens is crucial and highly beneficial.

In digitalized world of today, the average person uses 9 apps per day and 30 apps per month. The amount of data collected and stored by these apps is unimaginable. Google, with its mammoth 3.2 billion users, has been claimed to eavesdrop on users' conversations and track their activities for various reasons.

By agreeing to terms and policies and entrusting our personal information to an international company, we have apparently relinquished our 'right to privacy' in exchange for some benefits and services that Google or any other app offers. In the same way government surveillance is conducted for several reasons that includes potential services like "Crime Prevention through Government Surveillance", "5th Generation warfare and Government surveillance", "Government surveillance for counter terrorism" and "Government surveillance for Good Governance".

In present era of digital age when surveillance is unavoidable and inevitable, the point of concern is not

the goodness or badness of government surveillance or corporate surveillance by any company or organization. The main concern is how responsibly and lawfully it is being conducted. And how a government can protect their citizen's data to be theft and manipulated by their adversaries.

2. Body Paragraphs.

a) Crimes Prevention through Government Surveillance.

The role of surveillance is crucial for maintaining law and order in a country. Surveillance is an important tool for protecting national security and public safety when used responsibly and in a manner consistent with applicable rules and laws.

The sense of being monitored

by the government departments responsible for public security, discourages the criminals to perform crimes and other unlawful acts. The deterrence prevents street crimes and robberies at great extent. Studies have shown that the installation of CCTV cameras in public has led to notable decrease in crime rates. The areas with CCTV surveillance experienced a 47.4% reduction in robberies and thefts as compared to areas without CCTV. The suspicious activities and conversations among people before executing the crime can help police and security agencies to stop the criminal and the crime. This proactive approach is beneficial and proved to be a great approach

towards prevention of crimes.

b. 5th Generation warfare and Government surveillance.

5th generation warfare involves non-kinetic military actions like social engineering, misinformation, and cyberattacks. Its implications for society and security are profound, requiring several strategies including government surveillance for tackling cyberattacks and propaganda techniques that have deeper impacts on social and public security.

Data is becoming a new artillery that world organizations have been using for various purposes, against each other.

Along with rapidly digitalizing world, nations are becoming prone to propaganda and disinformation. Islamophobia

is a prominent example of

disinformation on media platforms - Developed countries and nations acquiring more advance technologies and surveilling other nations.

Countries are often accused of being involved in extensive intelligence operations over other nations. Propaganda and disinformation within a nation is also a great threat. The recent incident in Lahore, Pakistan, where a renowned college was driven under allegations of rape of a student. The city faced severe protest and lockdown as students all over the city protested for justice. The FIA cybercrime wing was launched. This extensive investigative and CCTV footage revealed no such incidence was occurred.

and it was a disinformation campaign that manipulated innocent students. The information was spread through social media platforms. The FIA launched a probe against those involved in spreading the false news.

Several students and civil-property was attacked in the unpeaceful protest. The surveillance footage played a crucial role in exposing the truth behind all this propoganda. This is one incident, but several other incidents happens everyday in different corners. The government surveillance is of great importance in sensitive situations like this.

~~de~~ C-Government Surveillance for Good Governance Counter-Terrorism.

Counter-terrorism programs

by the government are the need of time. The non-state agents and illegal organizations sprawling all over the countries are a great threat to the world's peace as well as to the internal security of a country.

Counter-terrorism techniques include satellite surveillance, wiretapping, covert human agents and secret agencies etc. - Government apply all these techniques to monitor any kind of terrorist activities, in the territory of a country or sometimes in other countries.

Najibullah Zazi Plot (2009) was a terrorist attack but the NSA's surveillance program helped thwart a plot to bomb the New York City subway system.

Surveillance detected communications between Zazi and Al-Qaeda operatives, leading to his arrest. Another incident in India when government surveillance thwarted several potential terrorist attacks, including the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

New form of terrorism called cyber-terrorism involves the use of technology to conduct terrorist activities such as hacking, spreading malwar or launching cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure.

These current threats and activities demands high level of government surveillance to protect the country and its citizens from any kind of damage and loss.