



Why Not Just Abolish the NSA?

Notice that all the public discussion about the NSA's supersecret, massive surveillance scheme assumes that the NSA has become a permanent part of American life. The debate revolves around what restrictions, if any, should be placed on the NSA's authority to spy on people.

But the real question that Americans should be debating is, Why not simply abolish the NSA?

The NSA was brought into existence as part of the national-security state apparatus that was grafted onto our constitutional order to fight the Cold War against America's World War II partner and ally, the Soviet Union. This apparatus brought a fundamental change in our constitutional order, and it was created without even the semblance of a constitutional amendment.

But the Cold War is over. It ended more than two decades ago. Why do we need a gigantic, supersecret, Cold War-era spy agency in our midst?

NSA proponents say that despite the end of the Cold War, the NSA is still necessary to "keep us safe."

Really? Safe from what? Safe from the dangers that the two other major components of the national-security state — the military and the CIA — produce through their policies and programs overseas! At the risk of belaboring the obvious, that's quite a racket.

Recall that immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the first thing that national-security officials said was that the terrorists were motivated by hatred for America's "freedom and values."

That was palpable nonsense. The real motive was rooted in anger and hatred over the horrific things that the U.S. government had been doing to people in the Middle East, especially since the end of the Cold War, when the national-security state lost its official enemy — Communism — the enemy that had been used to justify the existence and expansion of the national-security state for some 40 years.

The anger and hatred that was inducing foreigners to join the terrorist ranks was the last thing that U.S. officials wanted Americans to focus on. If Americans figured out that it was U.S. foreign policy at the hands of the national-security state that was responsible for the constant threat of terrorism, then they might begin asking critical questions: Why not end foreign aid and foreign interventionism? Why not dismantle America's vast military empire, the military-industrial-congressional complex, and the CIA, along with the NSA? Why not limit the U.S. government to defending of the country, much like the Swiss government does for Switzerland?

The most important question that Americans need to be asking themselves is, Does the national-security state have any role in a free society?





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The Founding Fathers certainly didn't think so. Their deep antipathy to standing armies was, in fact, based on the grave threat to freedom and prosperity that standing armies present. Moreover, given their fervent opposition to meddling in the affairs of other countries, they would never have countenanced a supersecret paramilitary organization like the CIA. And given their ardent commitment to liberty and privacy, our Founding Fathers certainly would never have permitted a supersecret spy agency like the NSA to exist in our country.

Anyway, what good does the NSA do at this point? How can it honestly purport to "keep us safe" with a massive surveillance scheme that everyone concedes isn't going to catch any terrorists, given that terrorists are not going to be using emails and cell phones to organize their plans. All that the NSA is left with is a massive surveillance scheme that keeps track of the American people, but not terrorists.

When the Cold War ended, Americans had a grand opportunity to bring an end to the Cold War national-security state apparatus. Now that the United States has ended its occupation of Iraq and is ending its occupation of Afghanistan, that opportunity is once again presenting itself. What better time to seize the opportunity, in order to restore a peaceful, harmonious, free, and prosperous society to our land?

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