Module 7 Discussion

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In the US, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the main domestic intelligence and law enforcement agency responsible for political surveillance in the investigation of terrorism. The agency operates under the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Justice. The agency is also a member of the US intelligence agency and is obligated to report to both Director of National Intelligence and Attorney General (Theoharis, 1983). The main goal of the US Department of Justice is to prevent terrorism along with developing various counter-terrorism strategies, which are reflected in how the resources are allocated in the FBI employees. The agency is responsible for covering a wide range of national security issues along with multiple organized and white-collar crimes and civil-rights violations.

Although initially, the main responsibility of the FBI was to investigate organized crimes and assisting local law enforcement agencies, but owing to an increase in the cases of terrorism, the FBI is responsible for handling the issues both nationally and internationally. In the US, every citizen has the right to free will and privacy, yet the freedom of privacy is violated by the government to attain several benefits. In the US, it is reported that the FBI has constructed a secret database to monitor the activities of the citizens to track individuals who committed crimes (Theoharis, 1983). However, the database is used by the government officials to track down the people that are against their policies. Although it is the violation of the constitution and the Second Amendment, yet still, the practice of surveilling citizens is happening in the US.

Privacy is a major concern for almost every individual residing in the US. Due to these concerns and limiting the political surveillance legislation has been enacted known as the “Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act” (Croog, 1992). The law facilitates establishing procedures for both electronic and physical surveillance along with the collection of foreign intelligence information and foreign agents that are suspected of terrorism. According to the Act, electronic surveillance can only be permitted if the president authorizes it but only for one year. Also, electronic surveillance should be limited to acquire foreign intelligence information. The Act also defined foreign intelligence information as information necessary to safeguard the United States from the potential threat or an attack. Alternatively, according to the Act, government may seek court permission to permit the surveillance utilizing the approval from the FISA court. Additionally, another act was also passed named "Electronic Communications Privacy Act," according to which a warrant is required before surveillance is conducted. Also, the government has the authority to order telecommunication providers to turn over electronic communication information.

As mentioned earlier, the FBI is considered as a primary law enforcement agency responsible for protecting the state from potential threats and attacks while also investigating criminals for violating federal laws. Despite the laws of privacy, it has been observed that the FBI has engaged in widespread surveillance and infiltration of multiple political groups to disrupt them. Also, the FBI has engaged in political surveillance, thus violating citizens' right to privacy. While considering these issues, the Attorney General's guidelines were created by General Edward Levi in 1976 (Croog, 1992). The guidelines facilitate specifying that the investigations must be limited to exposing criminals rather than involve monitoring unpopular political views. These guidelines were changed by different Attorney general according to the state condition. In 2002, Attorney General Ashcroft amended the guidelines allowing FBI agents to create a private database to predict terrorist acts. The guidelines also permit FBI to indulge in monitoring the chat rooms, websites, and even bulletin boards to find the evidence of any potential attack. Additionally, FBI agents' powers were not limited to terrorism investigations, but they were permitted to investigate several other crimes such as drug crimes and white-collar crimes.

Although these guidelines were to safeguard the country from crimes and terrorism, yet the open access to the public's and political data is a direct violation of the constitution. Thus, the surveillance policies must be revised so that citizens can enjoy the freedom of privacy.

**References**

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