Transnational e-government systems: A tale of European integration and surveillance

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Abstract

The EU decision to implement a "Data compilation instrument"[1] to spy on radical causes has triggered a contentious academic and political debate on the limits of "home security", privacy and state surveillance. The plan which constitutes part of the European "war on terror" will permit states to monitor citizens activity and beliefs in order to unveil nuclears of "radical causes".[1] Anyone who may be labelled as islamist, anti-globalisation, extreme right or left, nationalist etc. will become subject to extensive monitoring and surveillance by the EU or the EU member-states. In other words, the proposed data compilation instrument will permit gathering and compilation of detail personal data (economic situation, psychological traits, type of education, work experience etc.) from various sources in order to define the ideology and political beliefs of EUs citizens. What new this instrument will bring to EU security policies is that is targeting "radicalisation" instead of terrorism. However, being radical does not imply being terrorist and there is a question on how democratic societies can operate without dissenters.

This security-informational complex[2] which will be based on transnational IT systems that facilitate surveillance and monitoring of "radical causes" puts in question the totalitarian tendencies of democratic liberal states through ICT. Can such policies move Europe towards a Total surveillance state[3] or there are ways of making it compatible with civil liberties and democratic principles? The main issues to be analysed in this paper is the 'europeanization' of surveillance and the categorization of citizens as a means of social control.

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