Uncle Sam is Watching You:
US Imperialism, the Global Panopticon, and Transatlantic Media Framing

By W.H. Boer
S1934589
MA North-American Studies dissertation
LAX999M20
20 ECTS
August 25, 2015
Supervisor: Dr. T. Jelfs
Words: 16563
# Table of Contents

- Introduction ............................................................................................................. 2
- Chapter 1: .................................................................................................................. 10
  The US Empire, Modern Imperialism, and Postnationalism ......................... 10
- Chapter 2: ................................................................................................................ 22
  Surveillance as an Instrument of Power .............................................................. 22
- Chapter 3: ................................................................................................................ 34
  The Post-Snowden Media Narratives ................................................................. 34
- Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 47
- Appendix 1 ............................................................................................................. 49
- Works Cited ............................................................................................................. 50
Introduction

In an article in The Guardian from November 1, 2013, journalist Jemima Kiss elaborated on UN-led debates on updating global telecommunications treaties. The US strongly opposed UN-regulated internet reforms, and according to Kiss, the “US claimed that the treaty attempted to extend its telecoms remit to 'grab control of the internet'.” However, “[i]n the wake of the revelations over the extent of international surveillance conducted by [the US's] National Security Agency [(NSA)], the aggressive US strategy around internet governance seems to have had a different agenda.” Richard Hill, a “key player at the UN's International Telecommunication Union” had claimed that “[m]any countries are not comfortable with what they perceive as the dominant role of the US” (qtd. in Kiss). Yet, the “accusation of internet imperialism is something the US fiercely defends” (Kiss).

These accusations originated from revelations on the NSA’s data-collection and surveillance practices on June 5, 2013. The British newspaper The Guardian published an article revealing information leaked by whistleblower Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor. The information revealed that the NSA had set up a global network of digital and telecommunications surveillance with the aim of collecting data to prevent terrorist attacks (Gidda). In a video on the New York Times website on June 10, 2013, Snowden stated: “I think that the public is owed an explanation of the motivation behind the people who make these disclosures that are outside of the democratic model. When you are subverting the power of government, that is a fundamentally dangerous thing to democracy” (qtd. in Mackey).

On June 6, 2013, The Guardian and The Washington Post released information about “Prism,” a program that the NSA used to collect metadata from ordinary US citizens. Metadata is “information generated as you use technology” (“A Guardian Guide to your metadata”). This data does not contain “personal or content-specific details”; instead, it contains the transactional information: who made a call, who was called, what device was used in making the call, at what time was the call made, and what was the duration of the call (“A Guardian Guide to your
The first publications on the NSA's espionage practices illustrated that the US intelligence agencies did (and continue to) not only gather metadata domestically, but also that they spy on international bodies, such as the European Union, and on countries around the globe under the pretense of preventing terrorist attacks and strengthening US national security (Gidda; Poitras, Rosenbach, Schmid, and Stark). US surveillance practices should therefore be separated into two different spheres: the gathering of information domestically, which was claimed by US President Barack Obama to be limited to metadata, and the gathering of information internationally, which is often regulated through secret international treaties with the intelligence agencies of the concerning countries, and involves far more unfiltered data (“Remarks by the President”; Nakashima and Gellman).

After the revelations of the NSA practices, some of the first reactions in the US news media were those of shock, anger and concern for the intrusion of civilian privacy (Roberts and Ackerman; MacAskill, Borger, and Greenwald). In the weeks following the initial revelations, these concerns spread to the German news media, and increased after it was revealed that Chancellor Angela Merkel had been personally spied upon (Appelbaum et al.). The German news magazine Der Spiegel, specifically the online Spiegel Online International version of the news outlet, published multiple articles in this period that criticized the US surveillance practices for breaking German laws and for intruding on German sovereignty.

Subsequently, the revelations of the US spying on leaders of allied nations sparked scholarly debates on the role of surveillance in a contemporary international setting. Historian Alfred McCoy claims that surveillance is one of the “key weapons in Washington's search for global dominion” (“Surveillance and Scandal” 70). McCoy points out that the “NSA's global panopticon [...] fulfills an ancient dream of empire. With a few computer key strokes, the agency has solved the problem that has bedeviled world powers since at least the time of Caesar Augustus” (71). This is, in McCoy's terms: “how to control unruly local leaders, who are the foundation for imperial rule, by ferreting out crucial, often scurrilous, information to make them more malleable” (71). This
information can be personal emails, telephone calls, or financial data. This form of surveillance helps the US in gaining “intelligence advantageous to […] diplomacy, trade relations, and war-making, but it also scoops up intimate information for leverage - akin to blackmail - in sensitive global dealings and negotiations of every sort” (71).

McCoy's claim that the NSA surveillance practices illuminate the workings of US imperialism seems to be in contrast with other modern political theories on contemporary global power structures, such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2000), which puts forth the argument that in the post-Cold War international political climate, there has been a great decrease in the importance of the sovereign nation-state. Instead, according to Hardt and Negri, global power structures are typified by their postnational nature, and are no longer defined by imperial powers as they were throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century (3). These seemingly contradicting notions, with the US asserting its imperial power on the one hand, and theoretical works which argue against the continuation of a (sovereign) US empire on the other, are at the foundation of ongoing scholarly debates on how to define and understand the contemporary global order and its complexities, the role of the sovereign nation-state in this conceptually postnational model of international relations, and the role the US plays in the modern global order.

Accusations that the NSA revelations reveal a form of US imperialism are at variance with what the US government has been claiming, namely that the NSA's surveillance practices are necessary for securing the US against domestic and international terrorist threats (“Remarks by the President”). President Obama, on an airing of *Charlie Rose* on June 17, 2013, stated that “if you're a US person, the NSA cannot listen to your telephone calls, and the NSA cannot target your emails.” However, the President does not explain what he means by “a US person[.]” This makes his statement somewhat ambiguous, since the word “person” does not explain whether this means a US citizen, or any other person residing within the US regardless of nationality. However, pertaining to the rhetoric of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA), this statement in all probability means: “U.S. citizens, permanent resident aliens, and U.S. corporations”. On the topic of
global surveillance and the legitimization of such an exercise of US power, Obama elaborated on
the notions of privacy and security, clarifying that there have to be clear “trade-offs” between
privacy and what is necessary for securing the US against domestic and international terrorist
threats. Sean Sullivan, journalist at The Washington Post, reported on June 18, 2013, that in order to
reinforce the validity of mass-surveillance for the purpose of safeguarding the US, intelligence
officials claimed that the “sweeping surveillance efforts have helped thwart 'potential terrorist
events' more than 50 times since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.” According to NSA Director General
Keith Alexander, these figures were illustrative of the positive effects of a strong intelligence
community (Sullivan).

Other journalistic investigations, however, indicated that the NSA surveillance practices
have little to no impact in preventing terrorism. Michael Isikoff, a reporter for NBC News,
illustrated in his coverage of the White House Review panel (a panel which was instated to review
the effectiveness, constitutionality, and functioning of the US surveillance practices) on December
20, 2013, that the evidence found suggests the opposite of what was claimed by both President
Obama and NSA Director General Alexander. In reference to the claim that fifty terror plots were
prevented due to surveillance, Isikoff notes that “in one little-noticed footnote in its report, the
White House panel said the telephone records collection program [...] had made 'only a modest
contribution to the nation's security'.” In fact, he claims, “[t]he report said that 'there has been no
instance in which NSA could say with confidence that the outcome [of a terror investigation] would
have been any different' without the program.” This claim was strengthened by an article of Ellen
analysis of 225 terrorism cases inside the United States since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks has
concluded that the bulk collection of phone records by the National Security Agency 'has had no
discernible impact on preventing acts of terrorism'."

These contradicting reports on the results of the NSA surveillance practices illustrate that
there is a certain ambiguity towards the efficiency and legitimacy of the surveillance apparatus. And
as is seen in the aforementioned articles, these reports have limited the debate on the NSA surveillance merely to the practice of domestic espionage. On October 7, 2013, Anup Shah, writer for Global Issues.org, expanded on the US debate on the legitimacy of surveillance by including an international perspective on the ongoing discussions. Shah stated that “[s]ome of the scandal in the US has been that the surveillance by NSA has included American citizens. Lost in that concern is the privacy of non-US citizens.” Shah furthermore stated that “US-based services (such as […] Google […] are [not] easily replaceable[,]” and “[b]eing global services, the idea of nation states and citizen rights have not really evolved quickly enough to cater for the changes being brought about by the internet.” That these US-centered internet services are used globally is indicative of a US-dominated cyberspace. Additionally, if reports by commissions such as the White House Review panel provide evidence that these practices prevent no tangible terrorist attacks, the US government’s surveillance practices perhaps, as McCoy suggests, fulfill more than merely the function of safeguarding the US against terrorist attacks. In light of these events, this dissertation is a contribution to ongoing scholarly debates on modern forms of US imperialism and the postnational framework in which global surveillance takes place.

In this dissertation, I investigate the relationship between, on the one hand, US imperialism, surveillance and postnationalism and, on the other, the way in which news outlets, particularly Der Spiegel, have represented these phenomena to its readers. I want to show, first, that the disclosures of US domestic and foreign surveillance practices do indeed unveil what McCoy has suggested: a US-controlled global digital panopticon which functions as an instrument for the perpetuation and control of power within an informal modern-day US empire. From there, I want to use a corpus of eighteen articles from Spiegel Online International, the English online edition of the news magazine Der Spiegel (which I will refer to as Der Spiegel throughout this dissertation), ranging from June, 2013 up to May 15, 2015, to propose that one notable feature of the post-Snowden news media representations of surveillance practices has been the way such representations partly illuminate, but also partly conceal the functioning of this global panopticon as a form of modern US
imperialism. In the context of an ongoing conceptual debate that focuses on the diminishing role of the sovereign nation-state on the one hand and a strong sovereign US empire on the other, I propose that what the recent surveillance controversies demonstrate is that these two ideas are not, in fact, mutually exclusive and that an informal modern-day US empire can exist within the framework of the postnational global power structure that is seen in Hardt and Negri's work. However, I also want to show by means of a media discourse and framing analysis how news media can assist in concealing the imperialistic nature of the US-controlled global panopticon by perpetuating reductive narratives that obscure the nature of surveillance as instrumental for the perpetuation of power and control within the US empire. As my case study will demonstrate, although the disclosures of surveillance practices were (and still are) discussed at length in the news media, and although these publications, at times, touch upon the notion of modern (perhaps informal) imperialism through surveillance, they largely evade or conceal the functioning of the modern US empire. This, I believe, ultimately reflects the complex nature of contemporary global power relations and the difficulties that news media have with identifying the role of the US on the world stage, as well as the roles of concepts such as the sovereign nation-state and imperialism.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. Chapter one, “The US Empire, Modern Imperialism and Postnationalism,” examines historical and modern notions of US imperialism and contrast these with theories on postnationalism. Although stating that there is such a thing as the US empire seems to be controversial at times, I will elaborate on the conceptualization of the US as an empire, and clarify that the term should not be constricted to an archaic definition, but rather that it should be expanded to include - but not conflate with - the concept of hegemony. Furthermore, I will touch upon a key word within the framework of empire and imperialism, namely power, and I will elaborate on the conceptualization of power by means of theories by Michel Foucault, a foundational theorist of the relationship between surveillance and power. Lastly, I will expand on the idea that the contemporary global order has seen a shift in power from the sovereign nation-state into a postnational model as a consequence of globalization and the end of inter-imperial rivalries in
the post-Cold War period.

In chapter two, “Surveillance as an Instrument of Power,” I will elaborate by means of contemporary research within the field of surveillance studies on the role that surveillance has in the perpetuation of power for the US empire. First, I will provide a brief overview of the role surveillance has had within the United States, as well as its relevance to US imperialism in as early as the nineteenth century. Secondly, I explore the role of surveillance in relation to theories on postnationalism, modern imperialism, and the perpetuation of power, in order to illustrate how surveillance on a global scale should be put into the context of the US empire. Finally, I will zoom in on the relationship between surveillance and militarism on the one hand, and the role Germany has within the informal US empire on the other, particularly pertaining to a post-Cold War period and leading up to 9/11.

The final chapter, “The Post-Snowden Media Narratives,” covers the framing of the narratives of US and German news media with regard to the NSA revelations. Next to addressing various sources from US news media, I refer to a selection of articles from Der Spiegel, ranging from June 2013, to November 2013, in order to illustrate how this German news magazine framed the narrative of US spying on Germany as a rupture in the bilateral relationship between two allied nations in the first few months of the scandal. In this period, the greatest uncertainty and confusion existed over the methods through which the NSA operated and over the extent to which the US was spying on Germany, with or without the German government’s knowledge and/or involvement. Furthermore, I will draw periodically from Der Spiegel in the period of November 2013 to May 2015, to illustrate how this rupture in the relationship between the US and Germany, and a reductive national approach to the surveillance practices prevailed throughout the period in which it was revealed that the German intelligence community had been collaborating with the US intelligence community in spying on German citizens. Ultimately, the aim of the final chapter is to demonstrate how the framing of both US and German news media narratives of the revelations largely conceal the functioning of the US-controlled surveillance panopticon by supplanting the question of why the
US government perpetuates rigorous surveillance practices with reductive narratives.
Chapter 1:

The US Empire, Modern Imperialism, and Postnationalism

Claims made by, for example, Alfred McCoy, that the US is practicing a modern form of imperialism, tie in with Kiss's article on the US-domination of the internet and Conor Friedersdorf's article in *The Atlantic*, which proposed that US surveillance constitutes “information imperialism” (“Information Imperialism”). However, Friedersdorf did not put his claim of imperialism in a contemporary context, but compared this form of imperialism to historical British, German and Japanese imperialism. Global power paradigms have changed drastically since the period of active inter-imperial rivalries in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and to contextualize contemporary surveillance practices by means of imperial practices of a century ago seems to undermine changes in the nature and exercise of imperialism in the post-Cold War period. Moreover, scholarly works such as *Empire*, which suggests a decreasing power of the sovereign nation-state and subsequently a decrease of imperial practices in what Hardt and Negri denote as a postnational global political climate, seem to prompt a reexamination of the notions of US empire, imperialism, and sovereignty in a period of postnationalism, and how these pertain to US-led global surveillance practices. In this chapter, I will elaborate on ideas on US empire, imperialism and postnationalism by means of scholarly debates on the question of what constitutes contemporary global power structures. Finally, I propose that the notions of imperialism on the one hand and postnationalism on the other are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and that imperialism can be exercised within a postnational global power structure.

Whether or not the United States constitutes an empire has been a debate almost since its founding. According to McCoy, the idea of the US empire became a reality in the wake of the first colonial exploits of the US in the latter half of the nineteenth century, particularly when the US established its rule over the Philippines (“America's Empire” 60). Although the Spanish-American War is often hailed as the starting point of US imperialism (2), Thomas Jefferson already referred to
the US as an “empire for liberty” during the American Revolution and the years following the founding of the republic (“Jefferson to James Madison”). The Jeffersonian approach to the acquisition of land through northern and westward expansion, as well as the Louisiana Purchase at the start of the nineteenth century appear indicative of the nature of the US as an empire (Sheehan 346-9). The apparent paradox here is that the US was not founded as an empire, but was designed as a democratic republic (Hardt and Negri 160). However, as Hardt and Negri explain, this “new principle of sovereignty” relies on a continuous process of expansion of the democratic principles on which the republic was founded (169). As they phrase it: “The frontier is a frontier of liberty” (169). The US, with the drive to expand from its very conception, is imperialistic in the assumption that it establishes an empire of liberty; that the frontier is a frontier of liberty; that the rest of the continent is destined to be incorporated into the US, while, as Hardt and Negri point out, this could truly only be imagined by “willfully ignoring the existence of the Native Americans” (169).

In an interesting book written for a popular readership midway through the Bush presidency, *Are We Rome?* (2007), John Cullen Murphy, editor of *The Atlantic*, compared the United States to the ancient Roman Empire. He states that “Rome as a point of reference is not exactly new. Americans have been casting eyes back to ancient Rome since before the Revolution” (6). Murphy drew similarities between the Roman Empire and its imperial conquests and the US and its ongoing military interventions and war efforts abroad, stating that “America's difficulties in Iraq (and in Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon, North Korea, and elsewhere) are seen as a bump or a challenge – the inevitable price of global leadership – not as a dead end” (7). Undeniably, the US, with its military might, global political influence, and its pervasive cultural dominance can be seen as nothing short of a global superpower, that, with the exception of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, has not seen any other significant rival for the title of leading world power in the period following World War II and leading up to the twenty-first century (Freeman ix).

However, US politicians shy away from calling the US an empire in public discourse (O'Meara 10-11). Rather than identifying the nation with the term, US politicians seem to have
denoted the term to contain an inherent sense of that which the US has, historically, been fighting against. While the refutation of the rule of the British Empire ushered in the founding of the US, the US's victory over the Empire of Japan at the end of World War II ushered in a period in which the US would assume its role in global hegemonic leadership (O'Meara 10; 19-20). Historian Joshua Freeman explains that US politicians during the Cold War would rarely speak of terms such as empire or imperialism, “especially in relation to their own society[,]” because these terms were remnants of an older world, in which colonial empires were the dictating forces and contestants over international power (ix; x-xi). The idea of empire revolved around “achieving control over foreign lands, [which] by the mid-twentieth century […] had come to be seen as archaic and irrelevant to a world of decolonization and cold war” (ix). When the term empire was used, as for example by former US President Ronald Reagan, it was to emblematically signify the inherent evil of the Soviet Union (“Reagan 1983”). In practice, the Cold War dichotomization of the political concept of imperialism, with an “evil empire” on the one hand, and the West” on the other, appeared to perhaps be more a part of US political rhetoric than that it truly signified differences between the ambitions of both camps. Similarly, in the post-Cold War period, empire remained an unpopular term, as can be seen in former president George W. Bush's statement that “America is not an empire[,]” and his secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld's claim: “we're not imperialistic” (Ferguson). This apparent division in the acceptance of the term exemplifies what Rowe considers the “contradictory self-conceptions” of Americans, which are shaped by the “Americans' interpretations of themselves as a people […] shaped by a powerful imperial desire and a profound anti-colonial temper” (3).

“Empire” contains in its historical connotations, with its roots in the conquests of land and the exploitation of its native inhabitants, a rather disconcerting opposition to the freedoms that Franklin Delano Roosevelt propagated in his famous 1941 State of the Union address. However, as Freeman argues, the nature of the US's national and international policies changed along with the prolonged economic growth that followed World War II (xii). He states that “[t]he United States
fought World War II, as it has fought most of its wars, in the name of democracy. But Democracy had a very different meaning at that time than it would when the century ended” (xii). Freeman typified the last three decades of the twentieth century as one in which “power began moving out of the public realm and into private ones, especially the corporate world” (xii); a transformation which came to represent much of what presently is considered US imperialism.

The recent revelation of a US-controlled global digital panopticon, in McCoy’s view, is indicative of the nature of the US empire (“Surveillance and Scandal” 71-2), but there are several difficulties in understanding surveillance as a tool for US imperialism. The first perceptual issue is conceptualizing imperialism and the idea of empire in a contemporary global frame, which sees its difficulties in how the notions of imperialism and empire are historically perceived, and how this (almost archaic) mode of contemporary power relations seemingly persists in the post-Cold War period. Secondly, there is the apparent paradox of the coexistence of the idea of a diminishing importance of the nation-state together with the idea that the US constitutes a global empire, which would indicate that there is in fact a great amount of power located within the nation-state.

A contrast of historical imperialism and modern imperialism is highlighted by Alex Callinicos (“Imperialism”). He explains the historical Marxist theory of imperialism as “distinctive in that it does not treat empire simply as a transhistorical form of political domination […] but rather sets modern imperialism in the context of the historical development of the capitalist mode of production.” The problem seen in this appropriation of imperialism is that it emphasizes two processes: “(1) economic competition between capitals; (2) geopolitical competition between states.” The apparent paradox seen in the link between the notion of modern imperialism and the notion of decreased power within the sovereign nation-state is resolved by Callinicos, who states that “the relationship between the logics of territorial and capitalist power [is] a dialectical one in which the two potentially contradict one another.” He elaborates by stating: “I conceptualise imperialism as the intersection of economic and geopolitical competition in part […] to avoid the suggestion that the latter is an epiphenomenon of the former.” Why the US asserts itself imperially
in what Hardt and Negri call the postnational setting is also explained by Callinicos. He claims that “the fact that the US-dominated space did not fragment does not mean that serious tensions do not exist within it, or that maintaining it intact does not require continuing and contested effort on the part of the American state.” According to Callinicos these kinds of tensions are particularly apparent in the divisions seen in international support for the Iraq War, where there was a clear rift between the US and its Anglo-Saxon allies on the one hand and other European allied nations, such as France and Germany, who did not support the US in engaging in a war in the Middle East, on the other.

In contemporary studies on the concepts of empire and imperialism, it is evident that the conceptualization of these notions, the (often abstract and theoretical) illustrations of their functioning, and their role within the geopolitical realm is by no means uniform, and, in fact, often leads to divisive discussions on what constitutes these concepts (Callinicos; Gindin and Panitch). Raymond Williams recognizes two different trends in the development and usage of the term imperialism: one in which imperialism refers to a political system, and one in which it refers to an economic system (qtd. in Tomlinson 4). The ambiguity in the term’s definition can be found in this difference in emphasis, “the first growing out of nineteenth-century English usage in reference to colonial rule, the second having its roots in early twentieth-century Marxist analysis of the stages of development of modern capitalism” (Tomlinson 4). In the latter definition, the US expansion of the capitalist system can be contextualized as imperialism, either through principle or by means of economic policies shaped in the form of post-World War II economic aide treaties (Tomlinson 5-6).

Conceptualizing the US empire as being either a purely political, economic, or cultural system is impossible considering how greatly these three dimensions are embedded into one another. Modern US imperialism consists of a tremendously complex and dynamic collaboration of political, economic, and cultural systems that together shape the conditions in which the US became the empire of the twenty-first century. This indicates that in order to view the US as an empire, its political, economic, social, cultural, and military influence cannot truly be separated, since the
significances of these different dimensions are realized in relation to each other. This idea is elaborated upon by Hardt and Negri, who, when speaking of the “imperial sovereignty” of the US, recognize that aside from its constant productive needs and its tendency to expand, the US empire relies simultaneously on another, almost contradictory, fundamental idea, namely that it is a democratic republic, and not an empire (161-8). Through a political and ideological hegemony, in combination with a booming industry and constant processes of territorialization, in particular in the wake of World War II, the US started its greatest imperial project (Hardt and Negri 177). The political, military and economic spheres of influences are, as Hardt and Negri point out, greatly interlinked and almost inseparable in the context of US imperialism. An example they give for this is US interventionism during the Cold War, where political and ideological conflicts (for example in Latin America) legitimized economic exploitation and military conquest; subsequently, a (globalized) cultural hegemony followed (178-9).

Taking into consideration global developments and the shift in geopolitical power structures after the fall of the Soviet Union, US imperialism has extended beyond the realm of the Marxist interpretation of the expansion of capitalism (Hardt and Negri 222-223). It, too, has extended beyond the more historical interpretation of imperialism as the acquisition of land, as it appears redundant to have direct political territorial control when capitalism's hegemony can already be viewed as globally omnipresent. John Tomlinson's interpretation of these political and economic manifestations of imperialism as having been replaced by the concept of modern globalization leaves a constant renegotiation and spreading of a culture that is shaped by the two former leading motives for imperialism (173). What remains is the tendency of the US empire to govern its political, economic and cultural dimensions through the rhetorical devices of the ideological concepts of democracy and liberty - concepts which by themselves appear contradictory in relation to the existence of the empire which pursues these. The immanence of the ideological rhetoric of democracy and liberty are at the foundation of the US empire, both in its infancy as well as in its reassertion in the post 9/11 environment. This shapes what Hardt and Negri denote as the “social
institutions that constitute disciplinary society” (329). What is essential to these institutions is that the exercise in discipline is in itself ideological, and simultaneously constructs the reality in which any actions within civil society are rationalized and realized.

Hardt and Negri state that “[t]he institutions that are the conditions of possibility and that define spatially the zones of effectivity of the exercise of discipline […] maintain a certain separation from the social forces produced and organized” (329). The ideological constructs of democracy and liberty, however contradictory they may appear in the process of imperialism, define, in large part, the exercise of discipline within any social space they inhabit. Simultaneously, in discourses concerning these ideological constructs, both the possibilities and limits of such discourse in its productive sense, revolve around these ideological constructs. Thus, when George W. Bush declared the War on Terror in 2001, his rhetoric was centered around the protection of the concepts of democracy and liberty, by emphasizing that the terrorists and the Taliban regime were “enemies of freedom” and did not adhere to the political or social democratic standards that are quintessential to the US empire (“Declaration of War on Terror”). Similarly, Snowden justifies the disclosures on the surveillance practices of US intelligence agencies, governed by the US government, in light of the concepts of democracy and liberty (Mackey). The irony, of course, comes from the fact that increased surveillance after the 9/11 terrorist attacks was considered by the US government and people to be a necessary measure within the disciplinary contours of the ideology of democracy and liberty (Sakellaropoulos and Panagiotis 222-4). By means of these ideological constructs, US imperialism, often under the guise of humanitarian interventionism, displays how the discourses of democracy and liberty shape the exercise of power while also legitimizing it (Sakellaropoulos and Panagiotis 220).

While defining the US empire is still subject to discussion (Callinicos; Panitch and Gindin; O'Meara), according to Richard Saull, the functioning of the US empire can be seen in the way in which the US became the global superpower after World War II, and consequently in the US-centered domination of the global multidimensional discursive domains (314-5). However, this
raises the question of whether a global superpower is the same as an empire. The question among
scholars often concerns the distinction between empire on the one hand, and hegemony on the other
(O'Meara 11). The concept of hegemony is rooted firmly within cultural and political studies, and
often poses a conceptual alternative to empire, in the way that empire includes a sense of
international domination through force and conquest, and hegemony as a form of “leadership”
(Ferguson). In international relations and political sciences, a hegemonic power is “a state […] able
to impose its set of rules on the interstate system, and thereby create temporarily a new political
order” (Ferguson). The juxtaposition of terms such as empire and hegemony seems to indicate that
these are mutually exclusive, but, as Ferguson and O'Meara indicate, the acceptance of the one does
not necessarily exclude the other. O'Meara's argues that the distinction between what is called the
US hegemony and what is called a modern (informal) US empire is often conflated, mostly because
he sees the two concepts as coexisting, rather than separate “ontological realities,” which means that
the way in which modern US imperialism is often studied carries the notion that the modern
“informal” US empire governs by means of hegemonic leadership in the discursive domains of the
contemporary global order (28). In other words, the modern US empire is not (always) governed by
means of direct rule, but often channeled through hegemonic leadership or supervision. In this line
of reasoning, this dissertation upholds that the concepts of a US hegemony and a US informal
empire are virtually identical.

The US constitutes a modern and informal empire that asserts itself through commercial,
cultural and military imperialism (the latter often under the guise of humanitarian interventionism).
The keyword in analyzing this empire is “power.” Rather than a presupposed position of power in a
superstructure of a social formation, as is the onset for Marxist conceptualizations of social
formations, Michel Foucault argues that power comes from the discourse on the most individual
basis (“History of Sexuality” 164-165). Through a continuous series of interactions between those
influenced by all forms of power-creating institutions, such as education, family, and the media,
comes a continually changing and dynamic structure of power (165-166). Foucault's refutation of a
presupposed power in the superstructure of societies is helpful in understanding modern US imperialism. As Hardt and Negri point out, Foucault's approach to the production and controlling of power within a society is not a static process, but rather a constantly changing process; in effect, power is an ongoing process (22-3). In order to control power, society sees in its inner-workings an ongoing disciplinary process of regulating customs, habits, ideologies, and so on, aimed at controlling power and the productive processes of power. This implies that power within the US empire is not a given; it is an ongoing process, and the perpetuation of power within this empire can only be successful by means of a disciplinary society of control. This conceptualization of imperial power as fluid and as an ongoing process opens doors to a greater understanding of the reproduction of power within the US empire; a reproduction enabled through a constant discourse on the constituents of its power. Foucault states that “[d]iscourses are not […] subservient to power or raised up against it. […] Discourse transmits and produces power” (168). Most importantly, it produces knowledge. The inherent power found in knowledge produces societal realities: the renegotiation of surveillance, not as an intrusion upon ordinary people's private lives, but as quintessential to the safeguarding of life and liberty on not only a national but planetary scale, legitimizes, at first glance, the exaltation of power of the US government over its citizens and over those under its influence, residing within the contours of its empire. Furthermore, if power is a productive force, then those in the strategic position to make greatly impacting decisions on the practices of others are naturally in a position of power (167-168). One of the ways in which those in power can reproduce and circulate their power is through coercive exercise of disciplinary powers (“Discipline and Punish” 200-1). Foucault's conceptualization of the potential measures for exercising disciplinary powers has led to the conception of the metaphorical panopticon that dominates surveillance studies still today (which will be elaborated upon in chapter 2).

An apparent paradoxical contradiction in the debates on US imperialism comes from the idea that this manifestation of modern US imperialism (and subsequently, the existence of power and imperial rule within the political confines of a strong nation-state) is at variance with theories
and ideas on contemporary global power structures and their supposedly postnational nature. This is most apparent in Hardt and Negri's assumption that centralized power has been flowing out of the sovereign nation-state and into a postnational realm of global politics. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, scholars have often considered the increasing globalization of the economic, cultural, and political dimensions in life as underlying causes for the decline of the importance of the nation-state (Rowe 2-3). As Rowe explains, postnationalism constitutes a “negotiation among local, national, and global frames of analysis that seeks its justification neither in objective and progressive historical processes of globalization nor in implicit celebrations of the obliteration of the local and the national” (8). In essence, what Rowe argues (and this is in part supported by Hardt and Negri) is that the nation-state as a model for the exercise of power in international relations is not necessarily something that has been overridden entirely by a postnational framework for international relations, but that certainly the importance of postnational frames of exercise and organization of power have been increasingly important in the post-Cold War period.

According to Hardt and Negri's theories on postnationalism and the strengthening of supranational legislative and economic bodies, contemporary global power structures have no absolute imperial power that determines modern geopolitics. Although some nation-states have more power than others, there is no nation-state that can truly exert imperial power and govern the modern world as in the period of the nineteenth and early twentieth century of inter-imperial rivalries. Instead, Hardt and Negri argue that these imperial forces have been replaced by “a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly postcolonial and postimperialist” (9). This change in the dynamics of global power structures can be seen largely in how the globalization of capitalism (or capitalism's hegemony) restructured the classical notion of imperial powers. By having economic power siphoned from nation-state regulation and organization into a global system, power has been structurally redirected from the public realm of nation-state governments into the private realm of corporations. This change was followed by increasing power in supranational legislative and
economic bodies (e.g. the UN, IMF and the World Bank), which saw an aggrandizement of power to, in a sense, regulate the globalized economy, and by extension to regulate international treaties, diplomacy, humanitarian issues, and politics. Hardt and Negri claim that this shift in power, from the nation-state into the postnational realm, limits the exercise of power from even the most powerful nation-state: the US (10-13).

The increasingly postnational nature of the global power structures, however, does not necessarily imply that the exercise of imperialism cannot exist within it. Most notably, within this dissertation, is, of course, the argument of US surveillance practices as a form of modern imperialism. This form of imperialism, as is suggested by Kiss's article as well as McCoy's essay, is global in its exercise, and by means of the US lobbying its way through UN-led debates on internet reforms, which could legally curtail the chances of imperialist exploitation of information, it is clearly demonstrated that one sovereign nation-state can oppose the will of many others - even within a postnational setting - and simultaneously exercise this form of modern imperialism. Chalmers Johnson took this idea even further, and suggested that the model of capitalist globalization and the subsequent supranational legislative and economic bodies were, in fact, part of a grand-strategy of the US empire. He claimed that in the early 1980s, the US introduced a new strategy “under the cover of globalization” to structurally “weaken the sovereignty of the Third World nations” and subsequently make a large portion of the world economically and politically dependent on the US and US allied nations (261). The instruments for this new strategy of US imperialism, according to Johnson, were the IMF and the World Bank (262). By incorporating the rest of the world into an intricate globalized market system, regulated by means of supranational bodies within a postnational realm, the US could assume its role as an informal empire. In this framework, US allied nations are not under direct rule of the US government; however, the larger political, economic, and cultural contexts in which these countries participate on the world stage are greatly dominated and steered by the US, putting these nations at least to a certain extent under the umbrella of influence and rule of the US (Hardt and Negri 183-195). Ultimately, however, the
perpetuation of the power of the US empire requires certain institutional measures, organized from within, and this is where surveillance has its role as the instrument for the perpetuation and containing of power within the US empire.
Chapter 2:

Surveillance as an Instrument of Power

This chapter will focus on the surveillance practices and how these fit within the context of the US empire. I argue that contemporary surveillance practices function as an instrument for the perpetuation of power and control within the modern US empire. I will set out by briefly contextualizing surveillance by means of surveillance studies theories, in order to provide an overview of the research done within the relatively new academic field. Furthermore, I will elaborate on the role surveillance has had historically in the US by means of examples of surveillance in the late nineteenth century up to the second half of the twentieth century, in order to demonstrate that surveillance is not a new concept through which the US government exerts power and control, but in fact one that has been central in the aggrandizement of power of the US from the early days of US imperialism. Lastly, I will analyze the role contemporary global surveillance has within the US empire, in relation to the theories employed in chapter one, in order to illustrate how surveillance functions as an instrument for the perpetuation of power and control.

Surveillance comes in many forms. It could be as simple as setting up home surveillance cameras, or it could be as extensive as observing and obtaining detailed personal profiles and information on hundreds of millions of people by means of gathering internet and telecommunications data, as the NSA does. According to Thomas Allmer, who specializes in communication studies and social sciences, “surveillance has notably increased in the last decades of modern society,” and this has led “surveillance studies scholars like David Lyon (1994), or Clive Norris and Gary Armstrong (1999) [to] stress that we live in a surveillance society” (Allmer 11). This notion of the surveillance society is not limited to government surveillance; in fact, surveillance has become increasingly common within US corporations in order to check on the productivity of employees (12). Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, multiple internet surveillance companies came into existence because of an increasing demand from corporations to
be able to have potential future employees screened on their on- and offline behavior, criminal records, and even medical dossiers (12).

The increase in surveillance is linked to technological innovations with regard to computers, the internet, telecommunications, mobile phones, and more. Scholar James Stacey Taylor stressed that “[i]n recent years, surveillance technology has undergone a revolution. Spy satellites are now so accurate that they can be used to track the movements of individual people, and even read license plates” (227). These technological innovations seem to enable surveillance not only because intelligence agencies gain increasing control of information by being able to store and transfer great amounts of data, but also because the use of computers and mobile phones by ordinary people has led to the creation of extensive detailed personal profiles on the internet (Lyon 83-84). The omnipresence of the internet and the use of US-based computer services, such as Google, Youtube and Microsoft, in turn has created an environment of US-centered technology-dependency in countries all over the world.

In his book *Electronic Eye: The Rise of a Surveillance Society* (1994), David Lyon, a leading scholar in the field of surveillance studies, identified the technological developments as contributing to “the intensification of surveillance in the sphere of the state” (85). The sphere of the state is defined within the framework of a “modern state” which can be “best thought of as an advanced form of organization whose administrative bureaucracies are concerned above all with surveillance and maintaining social order on the one hand, and economic management on the other” (85). Lyon recognizes that through intensive surveillance, nation-states can “play a major role in manipulating the settings in which human activities occur and thus controlling their timing and spacing”; however, these states themselves are “increasingly implicated in a global system that allows some personal data to be even more remotely dispersed outside them than within them” (85-6).

When Lyon wrote his book in 1994, the technological development and personal use of computers and mobile phones was not as widespread as it is today, and the idea of a total surveillance state seemed far-fetched. Lyon addressed the potential of a total surveillance society, by
stating that “[such a] state represents, of course, the classical locus of Orwellian anxieties. […]
While there do turn out to be somewhat chilling aspects of contemporary surveillance by the state, it
should be stressed that the emerging picture is far [from] uniformly totalitarian[,]” and that “[t]o
detect totalitarian tendencies in specific practices is a far cry from declaring that the 'total
surveillance society' has finally arrived” (87). Yet, Lyon does recognize the need for caution:
“[s]cepticism about high tech paranoia is one thing; realism about authoritarian potentials resulting
from information technology within democratic societies is another. Such […] potential […] is
especially likely to be realized in relation to political dissidents, minorities, and the poor” (88). In
light of the NSA revelations that demonstrate that the US government perpetuates surveillance
domestically, which was legalized by means of the Patriot Act of 2001, and internationally,
legalized by FISA, the concept of a total surveillance society seems to become an imminent reality,
especially because of the extent to which technology and the internet became an integral part of the
functioning of contemporary societies worldwide.

According to Allmer, the notion of total or complete surveillance finds its roots within
Foucault's concept of the panopticon. Foucault was “a foundational thinker and his work on the
development on the modern subject […] remains a touchstone for this nascent transdisciplinary
field” (17). Foucault introduced the concept of the panopticon\(^1\) to exemplify “the shift in
mechanisms of social control” (Caluya 622). The panopticon was designed in such a way that
“surveillance is permanent in its effect” (“Discipline and Punish” 201). This metaphor for a perfect
state of surveillance quickly became the leading model within surveillance studies (Allmer 18;
Caluya 622-3). The popularity of the metaphor lies partially with Lyon's conceptualization of a
modern surveillance state as one in which both efficient surveillance and economic practicality play
an important role. The panopticon, from a practical perspective, is efficient both in maintaining a
perfect state of surveillance and in being relatively cost-efficient. In a similar vein, McCoy argues
that the technological developments of the twenty-first century provide the US government with a
\(^{1}\) The panopticon initially was a design for an observation tower within prisons, proposed by Jeremy Bentham in the 19th century.
“seductive bargain when it comes to projecting power and keeping subordinate allies in line” (“Surveillance and Scandal” 70). According to McCoy, “[t]his new technology is both omniscient and omnipresent beyond anything those lacking top-secret clearance could have imagined before the Edward Snowden revelations began” (71). The technological developments in the period of the 1980s into the 2010s enabled the US government to attain this sense of omniscience through surveillance, by employing a cost-efficient method involving the digital world which slowly but surely became inescapable in everyday life through the increased use of computers.

The motive for this large-scale surveillance, in the wake of the NSA revelations, was often declared to be national security, by, for example, President Obama (“Remarks by the President’’). However, surveillance is not a new concept for the US; in fact, it can be traced back to what is hailed by McCoy as the official start of US imperialism: the Spanish-American War and the takeover of the Philippines in 1898 (McCoy “America's Empire” 2). McCoy argues that in attempts at pacification in the Philippines after the US took over the imperial rule of the island archipelago from Spain, the “colonial security agencies” combined “data management” and “foreign policy techniques” to establish a “powerful intelligence apparatus that first contained and then crushed Filipino resistance” (8). Filipino resistance was broken because “colonial police subjected Filipino nationalists to constant surveillance” and “subverted religious reform, harassed the emerging labor movement, and reinforced entitled elites” (8). The success of the surveillance apparatus in the Philippines, subsequently, provided the US government with a blueprint for surveillance to perpetuate imperialism, via covert measures to both contain and destroy resistance, as well as a blueprint for the successful management of surveillance within the US itself (16-7). McCoy elaborates on this notion of the internalization of surveillance as a driving instrument for imperial ruling by claiming that “[n]ot only did colonial policing influence Philippine state formation, but it also helped transform the [US] federal government” (17). Whereas the US “at the eve of empire in 1898” had a limited surveillance system, the US's growing economic and political power in the beginning of the twentieth century were accompanied by an increasingly potent surveillance
In part, as McCoy describes, the US's growing interest in surveillance was not merely a byproduct of US imperialism. Instead, the increasing emphasis put on surveillance was seen as necessary in light of geopolitical rivalries: “[a]s fear of enemy espionage grew in the first months of [World War I], empire provided Washington with the requisites for greatly expanded state security operations” (38). And continuous political and military tensions among European nations with US involvement, from WWI and WWII to the Cold War, created a political climate which would have been virtually unmanageable for the US government and US military forces without surveillance to provide not only information as leverage in the negotiation of international treaties or information crucial to military operations, but also to enable the containing and repressing of potential resistance within US territories and, potentially, among subordinate allies (“America's Empire” 40; “Surveillance and Scandal” 72-3).

Contemporary US surveillance practices are justified as necessary means in combating the threat of terrorism. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration ordered the largest data collection operation in history, claiming its inherent constitutionality under the “Necessary and Proper Clause of Article 1, section 8, clause 18” of the “Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (FISA)” (Fein 23). Bruce Fein, a former member of the Reagan administration, argues that the aggrandizement of power within the intelligence community did not come as a surprise (23-4). According to Fein, the threat of terrorism is a conflict that summons fear. Consequently, this fear “breeds imbalanced judgments” and “[i]mbalanced judgments manufacture constitutional interpretations from trifles light as air to exploit and to placate exaggerated popular alarm” (23). Fein's argument that the threat of terrorism created enough fear to breed an environment for unwarranted surveillance can be supported by public opinion polls. Journalist Peter Beinart, in an article from June 10, 2013, on the news website The Daily Beast reports that in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, eighty-five percent of Americans thought it likely that terrorists would strike the US again. By the end of 2011, this number had dropped to thirty-eight percent. This fear of
terrorism (which was further increased in European countries, after terrorist attacks in London
(2005) and Madrid (2004)) created the circumstances for the Bush administration to increase
investments in the surveillance apparatus by, as an article in *The Guardian* suggests, more than
doubling the intelligence budget to almost 53 billion dollars (MacAskill and Watts).
Simultaneously, the threat of terrorism justified the intensification of surveillance within the US and
outside of the US.

The War on Terror created the breeding ground for the expansion of US surveillance and the
subsequent realization of a global digital panopticon. NSA specialist James Bamford states that
prior to - and immediately after 9/11, “some began questioning the [NSA's] very reason for being. In
response, the NSA has quietly been reborn[,]” this time “overflowing with tens of billions of dollars
in post-9/11 budget awards.” According to Bamford, the NSA’s importance, to a certain extent, had
diminished prior to 9/11, in part because of the post-Cold War climate in which the US lacked an
imperial rival. However, after 9/11, the NSA resurrected and has slowly but surely grown into the
“largest, most covert, and potentially most intrusive intelligence agency ever created” (Bamford).
The creation of the US digital panopticon started with establishing “listening posts throughout the
nation to collect and sift through billions of email messages and phone calls, whether they originate
within the country or overseas.” Additionally, the agency has created “supercomputers of almost
unimaginable speed to look for patterns and unscramble codes” and it has started to build massive
data centers throughout the US to store all digital information from within and outside of the US
that it could get its hands on (Bamford). At the time of the disclosures, the NSA controlled
approximately 75 per cent of all US internet and telecommunications traffic (Gorman and
Valentino-Devries).

The ostensible difficulty in contextualizing the construction of an omnipresent surveillance
apparatus as an instrument of imperialism lies within the theoretical conceptualizations of
imperialism and contemporary geopolitical global power structures, which are argued by, among
others, Hardt and Negri to be postnational constructs rather than centered (and exercised) within a
nation-state (186-188). It is, seemingly, a paradoxical contradiction to claim that on the one hand surveillance is an instrument for the perpetuation of power and control within the US empire, while on the other hand this should be put into a postnational context - one in which the sovereignty and power of a nation-state are constantly overridden by the concept of biopolitical power located within the globalized economic processes which transcends the national. This emphasizes the difficulties in contextualizing the US's military interventions in the Middle East under the banner of a War on Terror; do these actions represent a return to a more archaic model of imperialism as was seen throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century? Julian Reid elaborates on this apparent shift by observing a trend in the debates on contemporary international relations. Such trends accommodate the US perpetuation of war and surveillance as a turn-away from more recently negotiated models of postnationalism, arguing that “[f]aced by vital threats to their security, the major nation-states of the Western world are, it is argued, reasserting themselves territorially, militarily and politically” (Reid 239).

It appears that, in light of this reassertion of international military mobilization from the US (and by extension that of the US allied Western European countries), there might be a regression of the postnational model of decentralized global order to the reassertion of power within the nation-state. The processes of globalization of the capitalist system, as Hardt and Negri point out in Empire, slowly but surely engaged almost all nations of the world into one intricate economic system in the period of the 1980s up the late 1990s. However, globalization and the diminishing importance of the nation-state within this global order do not necessarily exclude the nation-state as a realm of importance. The developments of new international military, legislative and economic bodies did add to a new dimension of international political relations between nations around the world; however, within these conceptual supranational orders, the notion of the nation-state is not eviscerated. As Reid explains, there is a certain “continuity between the form of sovereignty with which nation-states still today [utilize] force in breach of law and […] enforced through law” (240-1). In light of such discussions on contemporary global constructs, it is imperative to understand the
aggrandizement of the US surveillance apparatus and the NSA practices not as either purely remaining within the postnational model nor purely within the nation-state model.

The postnational model in *Empire* relies on the transcendental nature of globalization as it pertains not only to capitalism, but also to the integral dimensions of legislation, politics, culture, and so on (160-165). Increased mobility and international regulation of economic treaties imply a decrease in the sovereignty of nation-states because the productive forces of labor and the circulation of capital are no longer necessarily regulated by sovereign states, but instead take place within a global system regulated by international bodies and corporations (Hard and Negri 8-13). The internet, similarly, crosses borders in the literal and metaphorical sense, and accelerates the process of decreasing power within the nation-state, because of the potential interaction between people from all over the world. The ease with which online communication transcends borders is tremendous, and as demonstrated by ongoing international debates on net neutrality (see introduction), many nations around the world that participate within supranational bodies attempt to keep (or perhaps make) the net a neutral common ground for business and social interaction (Kiss).

However, as US internet surveillance demonstrates, it is not a leveled playing field; in fact, US-based internet and software services such as Microsoft, Google and Facebook are among the most dominant and most widely used globally, which gives the US government and intelligence community the possibility to collect both metadata and raw data in almost unimaginable quantities. Because of surveillance programs such as Prism, the data stored and overseen by these corporations is shared with the NSA under US governmental authority (Roberts and Ackermann; Kiss). These surveillance programs are directly regulated through the US government and its collaborative partners in surveillance, most notably the Five Eyes Alliance, consisting of the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which implies that the internet, a potentially leveled playing field, is in fact constrained by legislation and exercise of power of a very select group of nations, affecting not only all other nations it can spy on, but even incriminating the integrity of supranational organizational bodies. This claim can be expanded even further by means of an elaboration on one
of Hillary Clinton's speeches on internet freedom. In Clinton's terms, the internet constitutes a public space, which should be free from regulatory control from nation-states (Powers and Jablonski 180-2). This claim ties in with the US's rejection of supranational internet regulatory treaties and debates (Kiss). However, as Powers and Jablonski point out, this conceptualization of the internet as a public space is rather untenable considering the domination of “privately owned” computer networks and services which are for the greater part provided by US-based corporations, and thus are to a large degree subjected to the NSA's surveillance programs (182-3).

The argument that surveillance is an instrument for the perpetuation of power and control within the US empire can be traced back to three works that were discussed in previous sections of this dissertation: McCoy's (2009 and 2014) publications on US imperialism and surveillance, Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, and Reid's compromise between the two oppositional views on empire as they pertain to the former works. McCoy's study of US imperialism in the Philippines puts surveillance in the context of traditional conceptualizations of imperialism and empire, and McCoy argues in a similar vein in his essay on contemporary US imperialism by means of surveillance. Hardt and Negri's theory on the decrease of the sovereign nation-state and the redistribution of different forms of power via supranational bodies implies the erosion of the US empire as a consequence of an end of continuous inter-imperial rivalries. *Empire* in that respect accounts for explaining a shift from traditional forms of inter-imperial rivalries to a decentralized exercise of power, but lacks in accounting for the apparent revival of US imperialism. Reid's interpretation of the War on Terror and the reassertion of US imperialism within a postnational context finds a compromise between the seemingly contradictory approaches to the proliferation of the US empire.

In the period following the 1990s, the disappearance of the bilateral imperial rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union did not put an end to the US empire; instead, the geopolitical environment that followed was still strongly influenced and in part led by the US. With its geopolitical rival gone, US foreign policy constructed a multilateral approach to a reassertion of power within a multitude of dimensions, even within a postnational climate that habitually assumed
the decentralization of nation-state power. The gradual growth of the US's panoptic gaze in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and manifestations of the US empire should not have come as a surprise, particularly in light of US global dominance militarily, economically, culturally and politically. As Reid explains, the growth of US surveillance should include a sense of dormancy of the US empire. The reassertion of US sovereign power realizes its manifestation of power through the same bodies and similar political contexts that “deterritorialised sovereignty during the 1990s” (Reid 244). This is particularly seen in the rhetorical justification for continued global surveillance as a necessary vanguard against the pervasive threat of terrorism.

Especially after European countries were attacked by terrorists, increased investments in surveillance and in national defense departments were from a political standpoint seemingly inevitable, both for the US and for US allies. In this process of reasserting the US empire in the War on Terror, the US has relied greatly on the enhanced international collaboration between nations within the postnational settings of the so-called “post-imperial period” (Hard and Negri 179-181; Reid 242). An article in the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* of November 23, 2013 illustrated this by means of a disclosed document of the NSA, which concerned a map of their international surveillance coverage over several different countries by means of 190 separate surveillance programs and the Five Eyes Alliance (see appendix 1) (Boon, Derix, and Modderkolk). These programs are initiated by the US government, but what this map indicates, and what has been at the heart of an ongoing debate in German politics, as seen in *Der Spiegel* (which will be discussed in detail in chapter 3), is that the US does not stand alone in this practice, but, instead, that the US's intelligence community is in covert collaboration with many of its Western allies.

This form of intelligence collaboration is a remainder of Cold War foreign military and intelligence policies. Johnson argues that during the Cold War the US had established what he denotes as an “empire of bases” (356). In the post-Cold War period, he claims, there seems to have been a realization within the US government and intelligence community of the immense military power of the US, and consequently of how a continuation of military and intelligence efforts abroad
would allow the US to sustain this form of militarism to strengthen the US empire in a period which saw a continuous siphoning of power from the nation-states into the postnational realm (358-9). The majority of these foreign military bases and data centers are secret, but illustrate how the US has anchored itself in different locations all over the globe, and according to Johnson these bases often function as “listening posts” for the NSA (361). One of the largest US foreign military bases is the Ramstein complex in Germany, which has been unveiled in an article in Der Spiegel on April 22, 2015, as a central hub for US-operated drone-strikes in the Middle East. It appears, then, that other nations which are generally perceived as US allies, such as Germany, are involved in collaborative surveillance and military practices with the US. Naturally, Germany is not the only nation that does so; in fact, as Johnson indicates, it appears that many of the supranational bodies (such as NATO) instated to regulate these types of international affairs, and which are generally considered to be in the realm of the postnational, are, in fact, steered by US leadership. The question of where this military and intelligence collaboration puts Germany within the context of the US empire is explained by Callinicos. He claims that, in part, the US’s imposition of its intelligence and military practices on Germany are residues of a US post-Cold War strategy in which the US “faced two potential sources of challenge [(Germany and Japan),]” that “might increasingly assert themselves geopolitically and develop into world powers threatening US hegemony” (“Grand Strategy”). Because of this potential threat, Callinicos argues that the US empire imposed a method of military and intelligence collaboration to keep Germany subordinate, while simultaneously forming a tighter diplomatic alliance with Germany to incorporate the potential rival within the contours of the US empire as an ally that could be steered by “American leadership” (“Grand Strategy”).

The close ties between surveillance and military operations reveal an inconvenient truth about the role surveillance has within the contemporary US empire and its exercise of power and control over dissident states. As McCoy explains, it solves the problem of historical empires on how to control subordinate allies (“Surveillance and Scandal” 72). Through global surveillance, the US empire regulates its power, by not only subduing potential threats to its military, political and
economic hegemony, but also by exercising immediate influence within international bodies through the coercion of other countries in necessary intelligence collaboration under the moral justification of a War on Terror, the latter being perhaps most overtly expressed in former President George W. Bush' declaration of the War on Terror: “either you're with us or you're with the terrorists.” The US empire, through the exercise of covert powers, relies heavily on surveillance practices to not only gain a certain intelligence advantage in their military pursuits, but at the same time curtails potential resistance from within nations that either directly or indirectly fall under the influence of the US empire. In doing so, surveillance fulfills an instrumental role in the perpetuation and control of power within the US empire, reinforcing that old saying: “knowledge is power.”
Chapter 3: The Post-Snowden Media Narratives

Having investigated the notions of US imperialism, postnationalism, surveillance, and the role that different scholars give these concepts in debates and theories on contemporary global power structures, this final chapter will elaborate on the debates that the Snowden revelations of June 2013 instigated in news media in the US and in Germany, and demonstrate that news media on both sides of the Atlantic seem to struggle with framing and identifying the US-controlled global panopticon in relation to the scholarly debates on contemporary global power structures and modern US imperialism. The public disclosures provoked strong reactions from across the political spectrum of American media, from liberal to conservative news media. In the weeks following the revelations, the outrage extended to Germany, when new information revealed that the US had been spying on its European ally (Traynor, Osborne, and Doward). The German news magazine Der Spiegel dedicated a great number of daily articles to how the US's intelligence agencies' spied on Germany, and tapped Chancellor Merkel's phone (Poitras, Rosenbach, Schmid, Stark, and Stock).

This chapter will analyze the discourse and framing in a number of news articles, first from US news media, and secondly from Der Spiegel. I chose the German news magazine because of its elaborate digital English and international publications on the NSA controversies and the implications of US surveillance on German sovereignty, which connect to the theories on modern imperialism, surveillance, and postnationalism that have been elaborated on in chapters one and two. Additionally, the fact that Der Spiegel has such a large English language section is indicative of its international, or perhaps postnational, orientation, and shows its attempts to address a broader international audience, making it an ideal medium of choice for this analysis. I focus specifically on how the US news media framed the narratives surrounding Snowden as a binary opposition of hero-or-villain, which is expanded on by an underlying opposition of governmental consent or dissent, and on how Der Spiegel framed the narrative of US spying on Germany. I argue that these media
representations of the NSA surveillance practices largely conceal the nature of this US-controlled global panopticon as an instrument for the controlling and perpetuation of power within the modern US empire by means of media framing. Although these narratives concern important questions on the legality of government surveillance from both a US-domestic perspective and a German perspective, the way in which they were framed provided insufficient context for understanding why the US government perpetuates the intensive surveillance programs. First, I will provide a theoretical background on the concept of framing within the media. Secondly, I will briefly examine how US news media\(^2\) framed the narratives on the NSA's domestic surveillance practices, in order to illustrate how representations of ostensible binary oppositions are prevalent within the US media narratives. Thirdly, I will analyze how Der Spiegel framed the narratives of US espionage on Germany and how the way in which these narratives were framed provides insufficient context for understanding the contemporary US surveillance practices and the seemingly disingenuous rupture in the bilateral relationship between the US and German government.

There are different approaches to understanding the influence the media has in presenting the news or specific stories (Werder 220). According to Olaf Werder, examining the target media's agenda and the way in which these media frame their stories is important in understanding the influence the media may have on their audience and in how these media themselves may be influenced (219-220). Framing, as defined by Thomas Nelson et al., “is the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy” (567). Nelson et al. argue that “[p]eople's reasoning about diverse political issues may be shaped by the mass media's depiction of the issues” (567). They elaborate by stating that “[b]y framing social and political issues in specific ways, news organizations declare the underlying causes and likely consequences of a problem and establish criteria for evaluating potential remedies for the problem” (567-8). In other words, by means of using specific frames, the media presents a story with an underlying motive to influence its audience.

\(^2\) More specifically: print, television and digital media.
Werder elaborates on two frequently employed methods of framing: “episodic framing” and “thematic framing” (222). An episodic frame represents a public issue by means of concrete examples and specific events to make a story direct and appealing. In doing so, the coverage will often leave out significant issues. A thematic frame, in contrast, presents issues with a more general or broader context, providing more background information, which arguably makes the coverage more objective; yet, it can be seen as “dull and slow” (Werder 222). What method of framing a specific media uses can depend on the issue that they report on, but also on what type of media it concerns. Sensationalist media, for example, often produce episodic frames, while media aiming at a generally well-informed audience more often produce thematic frames.

With regard to the functioning of framing, David Altheide claims that “[t]he mass media and public perceptions of issues and problems are inexorably linked” (648). The manner in which a specific medium investigates and presents its findings on a specific case can cause that medium to lead its audience into cultivating a certain perspective on the matter at hand (648-9). Altheide elaborates on the usage of certain formats that media use to frame their reports, stating that “when people interact with certain formats over a long period of time, they expect and assume that events and issues will have a certain look” (651). The idea that these formats contain specific elements which the target audience recognizes and subsequently internalizes as, for example, important news is rather salient in the process of analyzing the media narratives surrounding the NSA revelations. The reproduction of specific formats, as will be demonstrated in the following sections, is particularly evident in light of the hero-or-villain narrative in US media, as well as in Der Spiegel’s narratives of US intrusion on German sovereignty. As a result, specific framing formats in the post-Snowden media narratives partly reveal, but also partly conceal the workings of US imperialism.

One of the first discussions that arose in US news media after the disclosures concerned the role of whistleblower Edward Snowden, and whether he should be considered a hero for revealing the secret espionage practices, or whether he should be vilified for potentially jeopardizing US security efforts. According to one contributing editor of the National Journal, Stuart Taylor, when
Snowden “hit the send button on a laptop in Hong Kong, […] he became the poster boy for an acutely American conundrum: the tension between the government's constitutional commitment to the privacy of individuals and its responsibility for the safety of the nation” (4). By revealing the practices of the world's largest spying network and the extent to which the US government allowed the aggrandizement of power within the intelligence community, Snowden became an icon for liberty in the eyes of Glenn Greenwald, one of the journalists that Snowden reached out to. Taylor, in contrast, argued that Snowden's initial refuge in China, and the subsequent support of Russian Prime Minister Putin “guaranteed that he would be condemned as a traitor in the United States” (4). These two contrasting perceptions of Snowden constitute a prevalent narrative in US news media: Snowden as a hero or a traitor (Jarvis; Weber).

The division in the representation of Snowden in US media was framed into what seemed to be a form of reductive binarism of both those in favor of the revelations, based on the argument that US citizens should be aware of the intrusive practices of their government, and those opposing it, based on the argument that Snowden's actions were unlawful and pose a potential threat to US national security (Jarvis; Weber; Fisher). Snowden himself addressed this at the World Affairs Conference (2015), claiming that the media, by means of pursuing a narrative on his person, tend to ignore the larger problem at hand, namely the excessive exercise of power of the US government both domestically and internationally.

In the liberal newspaper The New Yorker, John Cassidy argued that Edward Snowden should be considered a hero, because the revelations revealed to the US (and global) public that the US government, “without obtaining any court warrants, routinely collects the phone logs of tens of millions, perhaps hundreds of millions, of Americans, who have no links to terrorism whatsoever.” Although the leaks could have been detrimental to US national security, Cassidy argued that the “main concern will be domestic spying, and the chronic lack of oversight that Snowden's leaks have highlighted.” Moreover, Cassidy argued that Snowden's choice to reveal the classified information exceeds the risks that came with the leaks. He states that “[y]ou could question his
motives, and call him a publicity seeker, or an idiot. But he doesn’t sound like an airhead; he
sounds like […] a man of conscience.” Cassidy concluded by quoting Ellsberg: “Snowden did what
he did because he recognized the NSA's surveillance programs for what they are: dangerous,
unconstitutional activity. This wholesale invasion of Americans' and foreign citizens' privacy does
not contribute to our security; it puts in danger the very liberties we're trying to protect.”

Similar sentiments about Snowden's role as a hero are expressed by Jeff Jarvis from The
Guardian, who stated that “[o]fficial means of oversight of American and British spying have
failed. So we are left with the protection of last resort: the conscience of the individual who will
resist abuse of power or expose it once it is done.” Jarvis highlighted a significant complexity in
the binarism of the narrative surrounding Snowden: on the one hand, Snowden broke the law by
leaking secret documents; on the other hand, his whistleblowing can be seen as an act of
conscience and for the greater good of the US public. By framing the narrative in such a way, the
narrative of hero-or-villain is expanded to include another fundamental part of the discussion
surrounding Snowden, as well as the NSA surveillance practices in a broader sense: the legality of
Snowden's actions, and the legality of the US government's actions. The legality and
constitutionality of the surveillance practices are issues which are still discussed throughout the
first half of 2015, and one ruling, as reported on May 7, 2015, in The Guardian states that the
surveillance practices under section 215, the provision that authorized the domestic bulk-collection
of metadata are deemed unconstitutional (Roberts and Ackerman). Although this ruling may bring
about some change to the US domestic surveillance practices, foreign surveillance is still an
entirely different issue.

On the other side of this narrative, Snowden received strong criticism (Cassidy; Marshall).
Historian Sean Wilentz stated that “[b]y exposing the secrets of the government, [Snowden and the
associated journalists] claim to have revealed its systematic disregard for individual freedom and
privacy.” According to Wilentz, “[t]heirs are not the politics of left against right, […] but of the

---

3 Ellsberg fulfilled an instrumental role in disclosing the Pentagon Papers.
individual against the state. To oppose them is to side with power against liberty, surveillance against freedom, tyrannical secrecy against democratic openness.” Wilentz provided an incriminating history of several contemporary whistleblowers, and argued that their sincerity is a facade in light of their political histories and views. It is clear from Wilentz' commentary that he did not approve of the leaking of secret government documents. His conclusion sheds an interesting light on the hero-or-villain narrative: “[s]urveillan and secrecy will never be attractive features of a democratic government, but they are not inimical to it either. This the leakers will never understand.” This is interesting because it adds another dimension to the representation of Snowden, namely that siding with the whistleblower signifies an inadequate understanding of the democratic system. In addition, it rejects the notion of potentially necessary resistance and reinforces the notion of state-centralized power. In doing so, Wilentz portrays the whistleblowers as “paranoid,” and claims that their intention is not to increase public awareness of governmental abuse, but rather that they intended to “spin the meaning of the documents they have released to confirm their animating belief that the United States is an imperial power, drunk on its hegemonic ambitions.”

In combating the ostensibly reductive binarisms that he argues are put forward by whistleblowers and journalists (e.g. siding with an oppressive state or siding with the concept of liberty and democracy), he rejects the idea that the surveillance practices constitute a form of US imperialism, and claims that the motivation for whistleblowing is mostly based on the whistleblowers' hatred for the modern state. Wilentz' only rebuttal against claims of US imperialism, however, is that this is “simply not the case,” and that the NSA, US government, or intelligence community in general has not abused their powers or showed a tendency of modern US imperialism based on the President's Review Panel. However, in the introduction to this dissertation it has already been demonstrated that several investigations found that these surveillance practices in fact do not seem to prevent terrorist plots, and do at times breach US constitutional law as well as foreign laws. Moreover, although Wilentz rejects the notion of US imperialism, his claim that
surveillance is an inimical feature in a democratic society seems to mean that even though he deems it not in or by itself a malevolent feature of a democratic society, it *is* in his view still considered a matter-of-fact characteristic of a modern democratic state. This is indicative of the Foucauldian process of producing and controlling power by means of a disciplinary society of control. In other words, the claim that a democratic state requires the maintaining of a tremendous surveillance apparatus lines up more with McCoy's claim that the US needs surveillance as a tool for perpetuating its empire, rather than arguing against this.

This, as Wilentz suggested, of course does not mean that all forms of surveillance are in essence malevolent. The problem, however, is not whether or not surveillance should or should not exist within a modern state, but that the surveillance practices have, as Snowden's leaks indicated, a chronic lack of legal oversight. As Bamford (see chapter 2) illustrated, the doubling of the intelligence budget and the aggrandizement of power within the NSA after 9/11 created the circumstances in which the US surveillance apparatus could grow to almost unimaginable proportions. Because the NSA has received, in essence, a carte blanche in its operating strategies, the forms of US surveillance that Wilentz defends, in fact, constitute a great danger to the privacy and liberty of US citizens and foreign peoples alike, and aide, as Johnson suggested, in the perpetuation and strengthening of the US empire.

As Snowden suggested, the focus on his person, at times, exceeds the importance of what he leaked. In a news-panel discussion on *Fox News* from December 22, 2013, one woman stated that “we love personalities. We love to fixate on one person to tell a story.” Rather than focusing on the surveillance practices of the US government, the debate becomes episodically framed, focusing on a single person to represent a larger debate of consent or dissent with the government (Marshall). What is problematic, however, is that the narrow focus on one narrative may supplant the question of why the US government regulates such an intensive surveillance network to begin with. Theories on instances of issue framing suggest that by redirecting the initial issue into a so-called “master frame,” the leading narratives can become contained discussions, in this case the polarizing debate
on Snowden as a hero or villain, and by extension dissent for government-or consent with the government (Zavestoski et al. 260-2).

On the other side of the Atlantic, Der Spiegel concerned itself greatly with the extent to which the NSA was able to gather digital and telecommunications data in Germany (Schmitz). A cover story on July 1, 2013, stated that “[o]ne document seen by [The Guardian] lists 38 embassies and diplomatic missions as 'targets’” (Appelbaum et al.). The article in The Guardian, published on June 30, 2013, stated that “the aim of the bugging exercise against the EU embassy in central Washington is to gather inside knowledge of policy disagreements on global issues and other rifts between member states” (MacAskill and Borger). The emphasis in some of Der Spiegel's earliest cover stories suggested that the “Germans have […] become targets of US attacks” (Appelbaum et al.). Furthermore, by emphasizing that US espionage in Germany is in violation of the German constitution, and that by means of “information sovereignty” Germany should reassert a “return to self-determination and its basic right to decide itself what happens to its data” (Poitras, Rosenbach, and Stark).

A large part of Der Spiegel's coverage of the revelations in the period of June 6, 2013 up to November 1, 2013, perpetuated a narrative of US intrusion on German sovereignty, and by means of framing the surveillance practices as a US attack on Germany, the magazine seems to struggle to free itself from defaulting to the issue as a rupture in the bilateral relationship of sovereign allies, which evades the idea that the US surveillance practices are a form of modern imperialism. This narrative changed gradually throughout November 2013, up to May 2015, when a number of articles slowly but surely shifted focus from US attacks on German sovereignty to the notion of US-German covert surveillance collaboration. The apparent inability of Der Spiegel to put the revelations into a broader context of US imperialism seems indicative of the complex nature of the contemporary global power structures and subsequently of the role that Germany fulfills, as a subordinate ally, in the US's informal empire.

Der Spiegel columnist Jakob Augstein remarked on June 24, 2013, that “[i]t may be up to
the Americans and the British to decide how they handle questions of freedom and the protection of their citizens from government intrusion. But they have no right to subject the citizens of other countries to their control.” By making this remark, Augstein made the reasonable inference that the German government does not engage in similar practices. In doing so, he framed the revelations as a US imposition on German sovereignty. Augstein continued by claiming that the “totalitarianisms of the security mindset protects itself with a sentence: If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear.” Professor of Law, Daniel Solove argued that the “nothing-to-hide argument pervades discussions about privacy.” The problem with this rhetoric according to Solove is that “it is an argument that the privacy interest is generally minimal, thus making the contest with security concerns a foreordained victory for security.” From this perspective, the perpetuation of a narrative of US attacks on German sovereignty seemed justified. After all, the assertion of such rhetoric implies that on grounds of self-certification in the interest of US national security, the NSA had every right to override German constitutional laws. The problem with such rhetoric, as well as with the perpetuation of a narrative in which Germany is a victim of foreign surveillance, is that in the case of Augstein’s article, there seems to be no room for a debate on what constitutes the relation between sovereignty and (global) surveillance.

Augstein concluded by stating that the German government needs to “protect its own citizens from the grasp of foreign powers,” and this is where the complexity of defining the contemporary global order is evident. In his rhetoric, Augstein defaults to a framing format in which he relies on the concepts of nationhood and sovereignty; concepts, which according to Hardt and Negri, seem to play a diminished role in modern international politics. The covert intelligence cooperation between the US and Germany is not new: with one of the largest foreign US military bases and intelligence data-centers located in Germany the model for collaboration under the banner of an informal US empire is present and could have been taken into account in Augstein’s commentary. Naturally, German law and the privacy of its citizens is important. However, limiting the revelations to a US-attack on German sovereignty reduces the narrative to exclude any notion of
German participatory surveillance practices with the US and simultaneously upgrades the role that sovereignty has in the framework of a postnational US-controlled global panopticon. This depiction of the German government as the victim of US surveillance seems to only be strengthened by statements of US politicians in *Der Spiegel's* articles, such as Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, who claimed that the surveillance of allies “served the 'legitimate protection of nation-state interest’” (qtd. in Pitzke). This was reinforced by a statement of former NSA employee Thomas Drake, who stated that “[a]fter the attacks of September 11, 2001, Germany became intelligence target number one in Europe,'” in part because the US government did not trust Germany because some of the suicide pilots of the terrorist attacks had lived in Hamburg and in part because of Germany's “economic stability” and leading role within Europe (Appelbaum et al).

From June 2013 to November 2013, *Der Spiegel* devoted a great deal of the narrative with special focus on the NSA's spying on Chancellor Merkel (“Anglo-Saxon Spies”; Wittrock; Gude et al.; Appelbaum et al.; Pitzke). The German government and Merkel initially responded shocked, stating: “[t]he monitoring of friends – this is unacceptable. It can't be tolerated. […] We are no longer in the Cold War” (Wittrock). By refuting the Cold War paradigm, the German government asserts that in the contemporary geopolitical climate, the exercise of US power through surveillance does not fit the context of modern international relations. The issue of the NSA tapping Merkel's phone was elaborated on in an interview by *Der Spiegel* with Hillary Clinton in 2014. Clinton condemned US surveillance of the German Chancellor: “Clearly, the surveillance on Chancellor Merkel's phone was absolutely wrong.” Although Clinton's response to some extent added to *Der Spiegel's* narrative of the US's imposition on German sovereignty, the problem with these articles is that the notion of potential German participation in the surveillance practices and underlying reasons for US surveillance on Germany seem to be largely evaded. Rogers and Drake's statements in these articles illustrate that US imposition on German sovereignty is because of US national security purposes. What these articles do not seem to explain, however, is how surveillance with -
and of allied nations - as Johnson and Callinicos argue: constituents of the US informal empire - can be seen as a form of modern US imperialism, such as McCoy suggests.

Although the narrative of an apparent opposition with the US on one side and Germany on the other persisted in the period of June 2013 up to May 2015, not all of Der Spiegel's publications were limited to this frame. For instance, Philipp Wittrock doubted the sincerity of the government and chancellery's response: “there is some question as to whether Berlin's dismay about the espionage by the [NSA] is really as great as it claims. Could some of the indignation be feigned? Did the revelations really shock the chancellor? And if it did come as a surprise, has German counterintelligence failed miserably?” Merkel and the German government persisted throughout 2013 in claiming they had only very limited awareness of the NSA practices, and initially promised to take a hard national stand against US intrusion upon Germany's political landscape and the privacy of its citizens (Poitras, Rosenbach, Schmid, Stark, and Stock). Klaus Brinkbäumer, editor for Der Spiegel, in response to new information, in May 2015, commented on possible German participation in the NSA's surveillance practices and Merkel's lack of response to these accusations. He stated: “[i]t's her job to protect German companies and the public when US secret services act as though Germany is not a sovereign nation[,]” and that “the NSA's spying activities, carried out with the help of the BND […] amount to an attack on our freedom, our values and our way of life.” By means of such statements Brinkbäumer framed the US-German surveillance collaboration within the context of a sovereign nation-state intruding on another sovereign nation-state. In reality, German sovereignty was already compromised when the German Bundesnachrichtendienst cooperated with the US intelligence community in the international context of the War on Terror (Appelbaum et al.; Bartsch et al.). This implies that the initial framing of the narrative of the US's spying on Germany obscured the possibility of bilateral covert cooperation between the US and Germany.

Der Spiegel's framing of the narrative of the issue of US imposition on German sovereignty is problematic because it excludes the notion of German participation in the broader context of
global surveillance practices under the leadership and supervision of the US, thus portraying the issue as one sovereign nation intruding on another sovereign nation, rather than contextualizing modern surveillance practices as a covert postnational phenomenon. However, US surveillance practices are distinctly not limited to nation-state-specific operations (McCoy “Surveillance and Scandal”; Bamford; Johnson). Instead, the documents that Snowden stole demonstrate the intentions of the US intelligence agencies to monitor as much as possible of the world at all times (MacAskill and Borger). This narrative changed gradually when new revelations about possible German participation in the NSA's surveillance practices resumed the discussion on surveillance (Bartsch et al). An article published in Der Spiegel on May 4, 2015 stated that “Germany's latest spying scandal has created the biggest crisis yet for the country's foreign intelligence agency” (Baumgärtner et al.). The article explains that “[i]t now appears that the NSA, via its cooperation with the BND, didn't just spy on companies, but also on politicians and institutions in Europe.” Moreover, it is revealed that “the BND's willingness to cooperate [with the NSA] was even greater than previously known. In the top secret operation Monkeyshoulder, the BND also planned a partnership with Britain's GCHQ intelligence service in a program that involved the NSA's participation as well” (Bartsch et al). Some of the suspicions that were raised about the German government's awareness of the NSA's activity in Germany and other European countries, which were met with denial in 2013, are strengthened in 2015 with the unveiling of this new information. Additionally, Der Spiegel reported that “Michael Hayden, who served as the head of the NSA at the time, says he undertook an intensive effort to develop strong relations with the BND [after the 9/11 attacks].” Hayden claimed: “I didn't want to come across as an occupier, […] I wanted to increase our cooperation” (Bartsch et al). The BND's secret cooperation with the Five Eyes alliance's surveillance practices is indicative of the postnational framework of the global digital panopticon (as was argued in chapter two), and subsequently of the direct as well as indirect exercise of modern US imperialism.

Herein lies the problem in the representation of the conflict as seen in Der Spiegel. A sense
of national sovereignty seems to preside over, as Alfred McCoy suggests, the notion of surveillance as a result of US imperialism ("Surveillance and Scandal" 70). The BND’s covert collaboration with the NSA in what Callinicos called the “grand strategy of the American empire,” suggest that the representation of a supposed rupture in the alliance between Germany and the US is, in fact, disingenuous, as such a representation conceals the actual functioning of modern US imperialism by reducing the representation of the scandal to one of the US intruding on German sovereignty. Instead, what these revelations, in fact, illuminate is the workings of the US informal empire that uses surveillance as an instrument for the perpetuation of its power. By means of hegemonic leadership in a postnational realm of international relations in the post-Cold War period, the US, as Johnson, McCoy, and Callinicos have suggested, seems to have expanded on its imperial economic, political and military methods to pursue the ancient dream of empire, realized by means of informal hegemonic leadership over those who fall under the umbrella of its influence. Der Spiegel's inability to represent the narrative of US surveillance practices in Germany as one of modern US imperialism within the postnational realm seems to reflect the complexity of the contemporary global order. Naturally, by limiting the narrative to questions of legality and of a US-imposition on German sovereignty, a lot of the core issues with the US surveillance practices seem to be addressed. However, the ostensibly inadequate representation, from news media on both sides of the Atlantic, seem to also reflect the ambiguity of concepts such as the sovereign nation-state, imperialism, and postnationalism in contemporary power structures. What these structures are and what the role of concepts such as sovereignty and empire is, is not only a complex issue on the surface, but also causes theoretical divisions in scholarly debates. Germany might not be a constituent of the US empire in the historical sense of the word, but as has been suggested in this dissertation, by means of multiple scholarly works, the nation does seem to fulfill that role within the contemporary informal US empire. This idea is something Der Spiegel did not incorporate into their coverage of the spying controversies.
Conclusion

When Snowden met Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras in a hotel room in Hong Kong in May 2013, he spoke of his fear that his story would blow over in a couple of days, changing nothing to the workings of the secret surveillance empire. Two years later, the revelations continue to inspire debates in US and German media and politics on amending and curtailing the US surveillance apparatus. This must be reassuring for the, at the time, twenty-nine year old analyst who gave up a 200,000 dollar annual salary, a relationship, his family and his freedom to reveal to the world the threats of the US government's most secretive bodies. How the information he revealed would be construed and what role the US-controlled global digital panopticon has in scholarly debates on postnationalism and modern imperialism were central to this dissertation.

With the technological developments of the past three decades and the increasing use of digital methods of communication, the US intelligence community had the means to realize the creation of a global digital panopticon. The revelations of global surveillance practices, in particular when it concerned surveillance of allied nations, instigated a heated debate in Der Spiegel on the intrusion of the US government's secret practices on German sovereignty. However, the narrow focus in the framing of Der Spiegel's leading narratives may have obscured a far more fundamental issue: surveillance as a tool for the perpetuation of power and control within the US empire. Naturally, US imposition of surveillance on Germany is an important, perhaps even life-altering issue that needs to be addressed. Yet, placing it in a broader context of global power relations, with the role of the US as a modern empire that attempts to reassert its power through global surveillance, illuminates that viewing international surveillance practices as flowing from one sovereign nation-state onto another might be too black-and-white.

Instead, this dissertation has argued in favor of contextualizing the surveillance practices as an exercise of imperial power of the US, within a predominantly postnational setting. The apparent
paradoxical contradiction of imperialism being reasserted within a predominantly postnational setting stems from the notion that imperialism, in its historical definitions, is exercised from a sovereign center of power, whereas a postnational setting asserts a decrease of power within the sovereign nation-states, and an increase of power within international and supranational settings and bodies (Hardt and Negri). This problem stems, in part, from a rejection of the notion of a US empire in the post-Cold War global political climate. However, instead of having its empire decreased, the 1990s gave way for the expansion of the US's informal empire; one that exercises multilateral decentralized strategies for the perpetuation of power and dominance within the economic, cultural, legal, political and military dimensions of the global order. The reassertion of power and the legitimization of military actions and surveillance practices has often been through the postnational idealisms of humanitarian interventionism and international security against the threats of terrorism.

The post-9/11 environment in international politics brought about the opportunity of seemingly unlimited and unwarranted security practices for the US intelligence community. Potential distrust of its economically and militarily most significant European ally led to the tapping of Merkel's phone. Yet, the idea that the German government was not aware of the surveillance practices or that Merkel was as shocked as she at first claimed to be seemed disingenuous in light of recent disclosures. Perhaps the imposition of US security imperialism on its German subordinate allies was simply incontestable for the German chancellery and secret services. However, this does not mean that the seemingly free exercise of US power and surveillance will not be curtailed. In June 2015, a congressional vote for the renewal of the Patriot Act under which the US surveillance apparatus has gained its omnipresence resulted in a majority voting against the continuation of “[s]weeping US surveillance powers” (Roberts, Jacobs, and Ackerman). However, in its current state, the limiting of surveillance seems to pertain largely to domestic information gathering. What will happen to the US's international surveillance practices remains unclear.
Appendix 1


“Edward Snowden says he was 'trained as a spy'.” *CBS news.* 29 May 2014. Web. 10 Jun. 2014.


Sakellaropoulos, Spyros, and Panagiotis Sotiris. “American Foreign Policy as Modern Imperialism:


