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## Freedom, Order, or Equality?

The Civilizations of American  
Government

The Purposes of Government

A Conceptual Framework for  
Analyzing Government

The Concepts of Freedom, Order,  
and Equality

Two Dilemmas of Government

Ideology and the Scope of  
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American Political Ideologies and  
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"I have no greater responsibility than to protect our people, our freedom, and our way of life," declared President George W. Bush in his radio address of

December 17, 2005. Later in the address, Bush disclosed having "authorized the National Security Agency, consistent with U.S. law and the Constitution, to intercept the international communications of people with known links to Al Qaeda and related terrorist organizations."

President Bush was responding to a front-page story the previous day in the *New York Times*, which described his action differently: "Months after the Sept. 11 attacks, President Bush secretly authorized the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on Americans and others inside the United States to search for evidence of terrorist activity without the court-approved warrants ordinarily required for domestic spying."<sup>1</sup>

According to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, the government must obtain search warrants from a special court prior to eavesdropping on people suspected to be enemies of the state. Based in Washington, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court continually reviews requests for warrants and rarely turns any down. The court's annual summaries show that it received 10,617 requests from 1995 to 2004 and approved all but 4. In 2004 alone, it had 1,758 requests for warrants and "did not deny, in whole or in part, any application submitted by the government."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in an emergency the government can initiate electronic surveillance immediately and obtain a warrant up to seventy-two hours later.

President Bush's acknowledgment that he authorized electronic surveillance without warrants sparked debate about whether the presi-

dent had exceeded his authority—if in fact he broke the law. Concern came not only from Democrats but also from Republicans who favor limited government. David Keene, chair of the American Conservative Union, viewed the spy program as "presidential overreaching." Conservative columnist George Will wrote that conservatives lose their "wholesome wariness of presidential power" when their people hold the office of president. Some Republican members of the House and Senate spoke out against "big brother" electronic snooping and called for congressional hearings. More revelations about the scope of government surveillance soon followed: the major telephone providers (AT&T, Verizon) regularly cooperated on wholesale government wiretapping; the FBI after 9/11 monitored activities of activist groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and Greenpeace; and the government eavesdropped on some purely domestic phone calls, not just international calls.<sup>3</sup> Less than a week after the president's radio address, one of the eleven judges on the Surveillance Court even resigned in protest.

In his radio address, President Bush stressed that because we confront a global threat in the war on terrorism, we need "to uncover links between terrorists here at home and terrorists abroad." He defended the government surveillance program as "a vital tool in our war against the terrorists," saying, "The American people expect me to do everything in my power under our laws and Constitution to protect them and their civil liberties." Bush's critics—on the left and on the right—charged that he infringed too much on people's civil liberties in pursuing his vow to protect them from terrorism. Did he? It is not an easy question to answer. ★

