World Wide Web: Whom Was It Designed to Catch?

Analysis by Tessa Lena | March 08, 2023

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

> Amid attacks on the First Amendment, Missouri v. Biden could be one of the most important civil rights lawsuit of our times

> While today's obnoxious surveillance and censorship are new, they are a feature of the Internet, not a bug

> Internet (originally ARPANET) was born out of a Pentagon surveillance and counterinsurgency project

> It was implemented by ARPA, a DoD research agency that we know as DARPA

> The effort to change the public perception of the internet from a military surveillance project to a promised utopian land of opportunity took about twenty years and a lot of work — and it worked like a charm — but the surveillance has always remained at the center of what the internet is about

Ugly Censorship

It's 2023. In the past three years, we've all experienced the creepy, ugly, surreal censorship of the "post-COVID" kind. True, "soft" censorship has been around for some time — but now it's marching proudly, in heavy military boots, and it's claiming to exist for our own good. Censorship is here to save "our democracy." Yep, thanks, makes sense.

First Amendment? Well, yes — but the state is "outsourcing" censorship to private companies, commandeering the process of censorship behind the scenes — and pretending to be uninvolved much like a kid whose homework was eaten by the dog.

At a time like this, we are also wondering about the elephant in the room — the question of how separate have the state and the corporate powers have really been pre-2020? Were they separate? Was it a delusion? We will get to that in a bit — but, philosophy aside, the First Amendment is none the less legally binding, so let us first look at the important First Amendment legal case happening right now.

Missouri v. Biden

Recently, I interviewed brave attorney Jeff Childers, who in 2021 won an important case against mask mandates in Alachua County in Florida — and whom we know and love for his Substack "Coffee & Covid." One of the things we talked about was the legal case against government censorship, Missouri v. Biden.

According to Jeff, Missouri v. Biden could be the most important civil rights lawsuit of our times. Here is a Coffee & Covid article on the subject:

> "The States of Missouri and Louisiana filed the case on May 5th, 2022. At the time, the states were represented by Solicitors General Eric Schmitt and Jeff Landry, respectively."

> "The plaintiffs argue that the government both DIRECTLY censored Americans and especially, INDIRECTLY censored them through bullying, bribing, hectoring, nagging, and setting up one-way "partnerships" with big tech companies like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube."

> "Although the list of defendants subsequently expanded — greatly expanded — here's the original much shorter list from the first complaint. All these folks were sued in their official capacities: Joe Biden, Jen Psaki, Vivek Murthy, Xavier Bacerra, the Department of HHS, Anthony Fauci, NIAID, CDC, Alejandro

Mayorkas, the Department of Homeland Security, Jen Easterly, the CISA, and Nina Jankowicz."

"For some reason, you've heard a LOT about the Twitter files, but not much about the Missouri files: the most damning evidence about how the federal government has been weaponized against Americans has fruited from the incredible efforts of the Missouri v. Biden team. The plaintiffs' investigators have unearthed evidence of government-sponsored censorship starting well before the pandemic."

"For example, we now know that since 2018 — before the pandemic — parts of the federal government regularly met with the social media platforms to control 'disinformation.'"

Down the Rabbit Hole: Mob Reality and War-Time Muzzling

Now, let's go down the rabbit hole. To me, it's funny and not funny to think about the interwoven Russian doll of state and corporate mob-like control — even under the best of political conditions — and certainly under the conditions we face today. You peel one layer of domination — and instead of the true freedom you were craving, you find another.

You painstakingly peel the next one, hoping for freedom this time, but then you discover yet another layer of domination, under a different logo. It's like when the Soviet Union finally crashed when I was a kid, and — on its ruins — the children of the communist leaders became the oligarchic leaders of the land.

And so, in our good hearts, we hope that state authorities will protect us from excessive corporate greed, and we hope that free market will protect us from the state boot — but then we look closely, and we realize that we were born into a world run by a collection of mobs — state and corporate mobs of different kinds — and that we are very lucky citizens when we are not in the crossfires of mob wars and can go about our daily lives without being stomped.

To me, this realistic observation was a moment of great humility and existential clarity. This is how this world is right now. It doesn't have to be this way — but this is how it has been for centuries on end, and I need to do my job and be effective and honest in the world just how it is.

That said, as we've all felt viscerally, the past three years have been particularly obscene. The "freedom" branding is seemingly no longer important to the ones in high chairs. They are no longer afraid to be viewed as dictatorial freaks. I think it is fair to say that those in high chairs tend to seek maximum control at all times — but prior to COVID, they had to at least pretend to respect our right to free speech — and now we are being treated to "war time" muzzling (the pun is intended, yep).

And since the Internet is the place where a lot of speech is censored, it is instructive to look at where the cyber beast came from. Is the censorship of today a bug — or a feature, perhaps?

The Birth of the Internet

Personally, I am a big fan of Yasha Levine's book, "Surveillance Valley," even though later on, our views on COVID did not coincide. Yasha's book describes the counterinsurgency and surveillance underbelly of the internet really well.

The Internet came out of a 1960s Pentagon project called ARPANET. ARPANET was a counterinsurgency, communications, and surveillance project developed by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) and based on the idea of "Great Intergalactic Network," a futuristic-sounding term coined by J. C. R. Licklider, nicknamed "Lick." Lick was an American psychologist and computer scientist and one of the "founding fathers" of interactive computing.

How It All Started

We all know ARPA as DARPA, the creepy DoD agency behind the Operation Warp Speed. ARPA was originally formed in response to the shock of being "beaten" by the USSR in

space after the USSR launched its Sputnik in 1957.

The agency was intended to protect the United States from the Soviet nuclear threat from space. It was designed as a lean Pentagon agency that would be almost like a management company, overseeing advanced military research projects but contracting a lot of their work out to private companies.

In the words of Ray Alderman, "in February 1958, reacting to the Russian lead in space technology, Eisenhower created the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) inside the Department of Defense (DoD). The original mission was to stay ahead of our enemies and prevent future technological surprises like Sputnik.

ARPA's initial focus was on missiles. Later in 1958, the money for missiles and space programs was transferred to another new agency, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). ARPA then changed their mission to long-range advanced military problems like the Defender missile defense program, early warning radar, and satellite detection of nuclear tests by the Russians."

"ARPA was part of the Pentagon, a bureaucratic rats nest of inter-service rivalries and politics. The Air Force was broken-off from the Army and the CIA were created in September 1947, NSA was created in November 1952, and NASA was created in 1958. ARPA worked on projects for all these groups but was stuck inside the Pentagon.

In 1972, it was renamed DARPA, changed back to ARPA in 1993, and then back to DARPA again in 1996 ... The director of DARPA reports to the Secretary of Defense just like the military services."

Some Trivia

ARPA was formed under the Defense Secretary Neil McElroy, who was thrust into his important government role straight out of his prior role of the President of Proctor & Gamble, a role in which he pioneered the format of "soap operas," melodramatic television series designed with the primary goal of selling household products to housewives.

Here are two Time Magazine covers: One is of **Neil McElroy of Proctor & Gamble**, and the other one is of **Neil McElroy**, the Defense Secretary.

So here's that. Soap operas and (D)ARPA were born under the auspices of the same man! "After leaving the Pentagon [in 1959], McElroy returned to Procter & Gamble and became **chairman** of the board." Oh, and according to **Wikipedia**, when ARPA was just founded, it was "headed by Roy Johnson, a vice-president of General Electric."

Siri, forgive me my politically incorrect question but can you please remind me … what is the definition of fascism? And, Siri, when positions of corporate and state powers are routinely held by the same folks, should we call it "fascism," "mob," or simply "a standard, time-proven policy of revolving doors"? Help me out, Siri! Remember that George Carlin joke where he said that there was a big club that we were not members of. Siri, should I laugh?

Back to (D)ARPA

In the words of Yasha Levine, "McElroy was a businessman who believed in the power of business to save the day." In November 1957, he pitched ARPA to Congress as an organization that would cut through government red tape and create a public-private

vehicle of pure military science to push the frontiers of military technology and develop "vast weapon systems of the future."

Today, we think of "public private partnerships between stakeholders" as a signature talking point of the **CIA-originated World Economic Forum**. But it's a strategy that's been implemented before.

Due to internal competition and the fear that other military agencies felt over having their budget cut, ARPA was almost defunded just a couple of years after it was founded. But then it was "reborn" as an agency focusing on counterinsurgency efforts. According to **NPR** (back at the time when they were occasionally telling the truth):

> "There was a bureaucratic war in the Pentagon. And the military services - the Army, Navy and Air Force - got their programs back. So you suddenly had, you know, it's 1959, this agency isn't even two years old and it's left without its main mission and sort of adrift at sea."

> "What DARPA had at the time was a man who eventually rose to be deputy director. And his name was William Godel. He was actually not a scientist or a scientific manager. He was an intelligence operative who'd been put at DARPA in the early days to represent the interests of the spy community, of the intelligence community.

> And so he looked at this young agency that now didn't really have a mission. And he thought, well, maybe we can mold this agency around the strategic threats that I see. And he looked out at the world."

> "And for him, the space race was mostly a psychological game. You know, it was public relations. The threat of nuclear Armageddon, no matter how big a threat, was not a likely scenario.

> He had had a lot of experience in Asia, particularly Southeast Asia. And he looked at countries like the Philippines and particularly the Vietnam. And he thought the most likely way the United States would confront the Soviet Union

would be through the sort of proxy wars, where the United States would have - would back regimes fighting Communist insurgencies. And he thought we could take DARPA to Vietnam."

Counterinsurgency and War

ARPA became heavily involved in the military action in Vietnam even before the "official" Vietnam war began. ARPA tried to solve a number of military challenges related to guerilla and psychological warfare. For example, it was very actively involved in the development of deforestation chemicals. The list of toxic chemical included the infamous Agent Orange and a number of other substances: Agent White, Agent Pink, Agent Purple, Agent Blue.

In the words of Yasha, "the chemicals, produced by American companies like Dow and Monsanto, turned whole swaths of lush jungle into barren moonscapes, causing death and horrible suffering for hundreds of thousands."

ARPA was also involved in the strategic effort of placing cutting-edge sensors in the area, under Project Igloo White. The sensors were shot from above and designed to detect sound, vibration, and urine. "Igloo White was like a giant wireless alarm system that spanned hundreds of miles of jungle." In Yasha's opinion, the sensors were far less effective in real life than they were in theory as the guerilla Vietnamese found ways to work around them or set off "false alarms."

> *"The Pentagon started throwing money at social and behavioral scientists, hiring them to make sure America's "counterinsurgency weapon" always hit its target, regardless of the culture in which it was being fired. Under William Godel, ARPA became one of the main pipelines for these programs, helping to weaponize anthropology, psychology, and sociology and putting them in the service of American counterinsurgency."*

> *"ARPA doled out millions to studies of Vietnamese peasants, captured North Vietnamese fighters, and rebellious hill tribes of northern Thailand. Swarms of*

> *ARPA contractors — anthropologists, political scientists, linguists, and sociologists — passed through poor villages, putting people under a microscope, measuring, gathering data, interviewing, studying, assessing, and reporting.*

> *The idea was to understand the enemy, to know their hopes, their fears, their dreams, their social networks, and their relationships to power."*

Most of that work was done by the RAND Corporation, under an ARPA contract.

> *"In one major effort, RAND scientists studied the effectiveness of the Strategic Hamlet initiative, a pacification effort that had been developed and pushed by Godel and Project Agile and that involved the forced resettlement of South Vietnamese peasants from their traditional villages into new areas that were walled off and made "safe" from rebel infiltration."*

> *"Another study in Thailand, carried out for ARPA by the CIA-connected American Institutes for Research (AIR), aimed at gauging the effectiveness of applied counterinsurgency techniques against rebellious hill tribes — practices such as assassinating tribal leaders, forcibly relocating villages, and using artificially induced famine to pacify rebellious populations."*

Going back to Godel, according to the New York Times, Sharon Weinberger, the author of "Imagineers of War" who had access to his unpublished memoir courtesy of his daughter, "paints him as not only the driving force in this story — 'more than any other ARPA official,' she writes, he 'shaped the agency's future' — but also a colorful character.

His house was filled with gadgets straight out of James Bond's Q lab. He traveled the world with cash-stuffed briefcases and, in connection with that, was sentenced to five years in prison on fraud-related charges in the mid-1960s. After leaving ARPA, he ran guns to Southeast Asia. Some suspected he was a security risk."

Here we have it again. The very agency that founded the internet — and that has also been at the heart of Operation Warp Speed — was shaped by a shady character who

loved messing with people's heads and thought of himself as being above the law. A mob is a mob is a mob.

The New York Times article continues: "It was Godel who turned ARPA into a forum for ideas that were 'completely screwball,' in Weinberger's words, but got funded anyway because they were 'bold and scientifically interesting.'

These included a plan to control Vietnamese villages through mass hypnosis, an acoustic sniper-detection system (which produced 5,000 false positives in field tests), an interplanetary spaceship powered by thousands of nuclear explosions and a magnetic force-field to repel incoming Soviet warheads, among others."

By the way, do you think the crazies have abandoned their ambitions at mass hypnosis? Just a thought for 2023.

Cybernetics

Cybernetics came out of the MIT. It was developed by the MIT professor Norbert Wiener. According to Yasha Levine, Wiener was a child prodigy and a mathematical genius with poor social skills. Life is full of irony, and so Yasha notes that Wiener, who was of a Jewish German descent, got married to Margaret Engemann, a big admirer of Adolf Hitler who was making their daughters read Mein Kampf and took pride of the fact that her family in Germany was "free of Jewish blood."

Wiener published his scientific ideas on in a 1948 book called "Cybernetics: Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine."

> "In simple terms, he described cybernetics as the idea that the biological nervous system and the computer or automatic machine were basically the same thing. To Wiener, people and the entire living world could be seen as one giant interlocking information machine, everything responding to everything else in an intricate system of cause, effect, and feedback."

"He predicted that our lives would increasingly be mediated and enhanced by computers and integrated to the point that there would cease to be any difference between us and the larger cybernetic machine in which we lived … the book excited the public's imagination and became an instant best seller.

Military circles received it as a revolutionary work as well … Cybernetic concepts, backed by huge amounts of military funding, began to pervade academic disciplines: economics, engineering, psychology, political science, biology, and environmental studies."

"Ecologists began to look at the earth itself as a self-regulating computational "bio system," and cognitive psychologists and cognitive scientists approached the study of the human brain as if it were literally a complex digital computer.

Political scientists and sociologists began to dream of using cybernetics to create a controlled utopian society, a perfectly well-oiled system where computers and people were integrated into a cohesive whole, managed and controlled to ensure security and prosperity."

"This intermeshing of cybernetics and big power was what caused Norbert Wiener to turn against cybernetics almost as soon as he introduced it to the world. He saw scientists and military men taking the narrowest possible interpretation of cybernetics to create better killing machines and more efficient systems of surveillance and control and exploitation.

He saw giant corporations using his ideas to automate production and cut labor in their quest for greater wealth and economic power. He began to see that in a society mediated by computer and information systems those who controlled the infrastructure wielded ultimate power."

"After popularizing cybernetics, Wiener became a kind of labor and antiwar activist. He reached out to unions to warn them of the danger of automation and the need to take the threat seriously. He turned down offers from giant

corporations that wanted help automating their assembly lines according to his cybernetic principles, and refused to work on military research projects."

"He was against the massive peacetime arms buildup taking place after World War II and publicly lashed out at colleagues for working to help the military build bigger, more efficient tools of destruction.

He increasingly hinted at his insider knowledge that a "colossal state machine" was being constructed by government agencies "for the purposes of combat and domination," a computerized information system that was "sufficiently extensive to include all civilian activities during war, before war and possibly even between wars," as he described it in The Human Use of Human Beings."

"Wiener's vocal support of labor and his public opposition to corporate and military work made him a pariah among his military contractor–engineer colleagues. It also earned him a spot on J. Edgar Hoover's FBI subversive surveillance list. For years, he was suspected of having communist sympathies, his life documented in a thick FBI file that was closed upon his death in 1964."

Weiner's path reminds me of Joseph Weizenbaum, another computer scientist at MIT who created the first "chatbot," Eliza. After creating Eliza as an interesting computer science research project, he saw that his ideas were being used irresponsibly and vocally objected to it — but at that point, his objections were largely ignored. There is a documentary made about him that I highly recommend. It's called "Plug and Pray."

ARPANET

ARPANET, the computer network that eventually became the Internet, was born when the scientists figured out a way for computers of different models, all located in different places, to talk to each other.

The very first ARPANET node, powered by the IMPs ("interface message processors," a special type of computing device), went live in October 1969, linking Stanford to UCLA. By the end of 1971, more than fifteen nodes existed. And the network kept growing.

According to Yasha Levine, in 1969, "activists from Students for a Democratic Society at Harvard University got their hands on a confidential ARPA proposal written by Licklider." The long document outlined the creation of a joint Harvard-MIT ARPA program that would directly aid the agency's counterinsurgency mission. It was called the Cambridge Project.

> "Once complete, it would allow any intelligence analyst or military planner connected to the ARPANET to upload dossiers, financial transactions, opinion surveys, welfare rolls, criminal record histories, and any other kind of data and to analyze them in all sorts of sophisticated ways: sifting through reams of information to generate predictive models, mapping out social relationships, and running simulations that could predict human behavior.
>
> The project emphasized providing analysts with the power to study third-world countries and left-wing movements. Students saw Cambridge Project, and the bigger ARPANET that plugged into it, as a weapon."

Six years later, on June 2, 1975, NBC correspondent Ford Rowan "appeared on the evening news to report a stunning exposé." He told the viewers about ARPANET, the military communications network used to "spy on Americans and share surveillance data with the CIA and NSA."

> "The Army's information on thousands of American protesters has been given to the CIA, and some of it is in CIA computers now ... This network links computers at the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, more than 20 universities, and a dozen research centers, like the RAND Corporation ...
>
> The government is now using this new technology in a secret computer network that gives the White House, the CIA, and the Defense Department access to FBI and Treasury Department computer files on 5 million Americans."

Following the NBC reporting, there was an uproar, the responsible parties reluctantly promised to delete the data they had amassed — but according to Yasha, they stalled

and stalled and then most likely just kept the data anyway — and in the meanwhile, the world moved on.

"Freedom-Washing" of Surveillance Tech

The transformation of the public opinion on the ARPANET — from viewing it as a source of surveillance and control to perceiving it as a magical ticket to utopia — took almost two decades — and I think it is very logical to assume that the transformation took place with the guiding hand of the very people who sought to continue using the network for surveillance and control.

One personality who played a famous role in popularizing "personal computing," as a liberation tool was Stewart Brand.

Notably, John Markoff, author of "Whole Earth: The Many Lives of Stewart Brand" "notes that leftists who met Brand assumed he was working with the CIA, an accusation that could be rated as indirectly to literally true, depending on the circumstances (later in life Brand would work alongside the CIA doing scenario planning)."

Brand had a short-lived formal military career, then allegedly changed his mind, and, "less than a year into his two-year commitment, Brand got permission ('magically,' Markoff writes) to leave early and study art in San Francisco, where he rented a houseboat."

According to Yasha, Brand "took a lot of psychedelic drugs, partied, made art, and participated in an experimental program to test the effects of LSD that, unknown to him, was secretly being conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency as part of its MK-ULTRA program."

In the 60s, he made a name for himself for being an environmentalist of sorts. He became extremely well-known for his iconic Whole Earth Catalogue, catering to those who wanted to escape from the ills of society, form communes, and live on land. (Was he "greenwashing," too?)

Back in 1972, as a journalist, Brand penned a famous Rolling Stone article, "SPACEWAR," in which he portrayed the people working at ARPA as subversive and attractive hippie types, as opposed to dangerous military men. Later on, he romanticized "hackers" and greatly contributed to the romantic notion of the internet as a land of freedom, opportunity, and all things good.

"In the early 1980s, after the commune dream collapsed, he cashed in his counterculture cred and turned the utopian ideals of the New Communalists into a marketing vehicle for the sprouting consumer computer industry," Yasha writes.

It is interesting that as life progressed, Brand became an open proponent of nuclear energy, genetic engineering and geoengineering — all the things that the WEF — the organization to which he is seemingly no stranger, also likes. Meanwhile, here's what Yasha has to say about Brand's computer evangelism:

> *"He gathered around himself a crew of journalists, marketing types, industry insiders, and other hippies-turned-entrepreneurs. Together, they replicated the marketing and aesthetics that Brand had used during his Whole Earth Catalog days and sold computers the same way he once sold communes and psychedelics: as liberation technologies and tools of personal empowerment.*

> *This group would spin this mythology through the 1980s and 1990s, helping obfuscate the military origins of computer and networking technologies by dressing them up in the language of 1960s acid-dropping counterculture. In this rebranded world, computers were the new communes: a digital frontier where the creation of a better world was still possible."*

Of course, Brand was not the only person to shape the rosy perception of the digital worlds. And of course, we'll never know for sure if he truly believed the hype — or whether he was on a mission of another sort.

In any case, the cultural transformation was "grafted" successfully. In 1984 (!!), Apple made its famous, linguistically upside down ad — and here we are today, living our lives inside what has always been a counterinsurgency and surveillance tool.

A philosophical question: is the internet none the less useful to us? Of course it is. I am typing this on the computer, after all. But the devil is always in the detail, isn't it?

The Privatization of the Internet

The man who was responsible for the privatization of the interne was Stephen Wolff, a military man who worked on ARPANET. The privatization was done through the National Science Foundation, a federal agency created by Congress in 1950.

In early 1980s, NSF ran a small network connecting computers at a few research universities to ARPANET. NSF wanted to connect a broader pool of universities to the network and to expand it beyond the military and computer science research use. Wolff's task was to oversee the building and management of the new educational network, NSFNET. The first reiteration of NSFNET was launched in 1986. Yasha writes.

> *"In early 1987, he and his team … hashed out a design for an improved and upgraded NFSNET. This new network, **a government project created with public money [emphasis mine]**, would connect universities and be designed to eventually function as a privatized telecommunications system. That was the implicit understanding everyone at NSF agreed on."*

The NSFNET was supposed become a two-tier network. The top layer was going to be a national network, a high-speed "backbone" that spanned the entire country. The second layer was going to be made up of smaller "regional networks" that would connect universities to the backbone. Instead of building and managing the network itself, the NSF decided to outsource the network to private companies.

> *"The plan was to fund and nurture these network providers until they could become self-sufficient, at which point they would be cut loose and allowed to privatize the network infrastructure they built for the NSFNET."*

> *"The most important part of the system, the backbone, was run by a new nonprofit corporation, a consortium including IBM, MCI, and the state of Michigan. The second-tier regional networks were farmed out to a dozen other*

newly created private consortiums. With names like BARRNET, MIDNET, NYSERNET, WESTNET, and CERFNET, they were run by a mix of universities, research institutions, and military contractors."

"In July 1988, the NSFNET backbone went online, connecting thirteen regional networks and over 170 different campuses across the country …

The network stretched from San Diego to Princeton — snaking through regional network exchange points in Salt Lake City, Houston, Boulder, Lincoln, Champaign, Ann Arbor, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, and Ithaca and throwing out an international transatlantic line to the European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva. The network was a huge success in the academic community."

"The privatization of the Internet — its transformation from a military network to the privatized telecommunications system we use today — is a convoluted story. Wade in deep enough and you find yourself in a swamp of three-letter federal agencies, network protocol acronyms, government initiatives, and congressional hearings filled with technical jargon and mind-numbing details.

But on a fundamental level, it was all very simple: after two decades of lavish funding and research and development inside the Pentagon system, the Internet was transformed into a consumer profit center."

"Businesses wanted a cut, and a small crew of government managers were all too happy to oblige.

To do that, with public funds the federal government created a dozen network providers out of thin air and then spun them off to the private sector, building companies that in the space of a decade would become integral parts of the media and telecommunications conglomerates we all know and use today — Verizon, Time-Warner, AT&T, Comcast."

According to Yasha, the privatization was done in a dubious if not fraudulent manner. The consortium that managed the "backbone" network (that was legally limited to educational institutions) split into two legal entities, and then the for profit legal entity started selling "internet" services to commercial entities — even though the underlying physical "internet" infrastructure was the same one used by the nonprofit educational network.

(So it's kind of like Comirnaty, in a way, a magical potion that was authorized by the FDA but was nowhere to be found.)

> "In short, the NSF directly subsidized the MCI-IBM consortium's national business expansion. The company used its privileged position to attract commercial clients, telling them that its service was better and faster because it had direct access to the national high-speed backbone."

> "NSFNET contractors began fighting for control of this untapped and growing market as soon as Stephen Wolff gave them the green light to privatize their operations — that's what the fight between providers like PSINET and ANS was all about. They were licking their chops, happy that the government bankrolled the network and even happier that it was about to get out of the business. There was a lot of money to be made."

> "Aside from interindustry wrangling, there was no real opposition to Stephen Wolff's plan to privatize the Internet — not from NFSNET insiders, not from Congress, and certainly not from the private sector. Cable and phone companies pushed for privatization, as did Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

> In 1995, the National Science Foundation officially retired the NSFNET, handing control of the Internet to a handful of private network providers that it had created less than a decade earlier. There was no vote in Congress on the issue. There was no public referendum or discussion. It happened by bureaucratic decree."

"A year later, President Bill Clinton signed the Telecommunications Act of 1996, a law that deregulated the telecommunications industry, allowing for the first time since the New Deal nearly unlimited corporate cross-ownership of the media: cable companies, radio stations, film studios, newspapers, phone companies, television broadcasters, and, of course, Internet service providers."

"A handful of powerful telecommunications companies absorbed most of the privatized NSFNET providers that had been set up with funds from the National Science Foundation a decade earlier.

San Francisco Bay Area's regional provider became part of Verizon. Southern California's, which was part-owned by the military contractor General Atomics, was absorbed by AT&T. New York's became part of Cogent Communications, one of the largest backbone companies in the world."

"The backbone went to Time-Warner. And MCI, which had run the backbone along with IBM, merged with WorldCom, combining two of the biggest Internet service providers in the world.

All these mergers represented the corporate centralization of a powerful new telecommunications system that had been created by the military and ushered into commercial life by the National Science Foundation. To put it another way, the Internet was born."

Did the Alphabet Soup Ever Leave the Room?

While the Internet was formally privatized, the surveillance aspect hung around. It hung around — through funding, through personal connections, through mentorship, through nudging, through providing a guiding hand toward the "desired" direction of research, through pressure, and of course through secret programs, some of which were later exposed. I think "some" is a key word.

For instance, Google's Larry Page's graduate advisor at Stanford (a school that was "awash in military cash") was Terry Winograd, *"a pioneer in linguistic*

artificial intelligence who had done work in the 1970s at MIT's Artificial Intelligence Lab, a part of the bigger ARPANET project.

In the 1990s, Winograd was in charge of the Stanford Digital Libraries project, one component of the multi-million-dollar Digital Library Initiative sponsored by seven civilian, military, and law enforcement federal agencies, including NASA, DARPA, the FBI, and the National Science Foundation."

Unsurprisingly, Larry Page's PhD first research paper published in 1998 "bore the familiar disclosure: funded by DARPA." "And just like old times," Yasha writes. "DARPA played a role. Indeed, in 1994, just one year before Page had arrived at Stanford, DARPA's funding of the Digital Library Initiative at Carnegie Mellon University produced a notable success: Lycos, a search engine named after Lycosidae, the scientific name for the wolf spider family."

And when Google itself became huge, capitalizing on their secretive practice of all-pervasive data collection that allowed them to compete successfully in the "search" field — they shamelessly waved in our faces their carefully crafted image of benevolent nerds saving the world. "Don't be evil," they said. And many believed.

I remember that time well. Just some ten years ago, as a musician, I was involved in "anti-Big Tech activism" — complaining about Google's predatory ways and transhumanism, and writing stories trying to draw attention to what was going on — and no one cared. People just liked Google. It was convenient to like Google. The media kissed up to them like they were kings, and regular citizens didn't mind being surveilled as long as the services were convenient to use.

It's very understandable. We are all focused on the everyday. And this is how long-term military planning work. Today, we can look around and say that they've done a pretty damn good job. Everything is online, the dependence is huge — and it is much harder to live the digital prison today than it was to never enter it decades ago. Can we learn from that?

And then there is PRISM — a program, revealed by Snowden, that gave the NSA (and the FBI) a back door to the servers of all major tech companies. Yasha's "Surveillance Valley" touched upon PRISM as well:

> *"PRISM resembles traditional taps that the FBI maintained throughout the domestic telecommunications system. It works like this: using a specialized interface, an NSA analyst creates a data request, request, called a "tasking," for a specific user of a partnering company.*

> *A tasking for Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, Apple and other providers is routed to equipment ['interception units'] installed at each company. This equipment, maintained by the FBI, passes the NSA request to a private company's system. The tasking creates a digital wiretap that then forwards intelligence to the NSA in real time, all without any input from the company itself."*

> *"Analysts could even opt-in for alerts for when a particular target logs in to an account. Depending on the company, a tasking may return e-mails, attachments, address books, calendars, files stored in the cloud, text or audio or video chats and 'metadata' that identify the locations, devices used and other information about a target.*

> *The program, which began in 2007 under President George W. Bush and which was expanded under President Barack Obama, became a gold mine for American spies."*

Liberating Ourselves From Mob Control

There we have it. Privacy was never meant to be. The current development with censorship and surveillance is a feature, not a bug. And the internet — as fun as it is — is a continuation of Steven Newcomb's "System of Domination," and the System of Domination is real.

It turns out — again — that the world is run by a bunch of bold mobsters playing military games with our lives. In the post-2001 world, their games, previously happening on the

background, became more visible to a regular citizen in the West.

And then in 2020, those games came straight to our backyard in the form of dictatorial COVID measures, paternalistic surveillance and moralizing, unhinged censorship, and so on. They came to our backyard in 2020 with a full boot, but the seed was planted long ago, when many were asleep.

All this is obnoxious, and tragic, and painful — but there is always a silver lining in everything that life brings. We are not helpless bystanders. Like Jeff Childers said in his interview, realistically, we may not be able to directly counter Klaus Schwab or the WEF (I believe that the higher powers will take care of them in due time). But even though there is little we can do about the WEF or the central bankers' CBDC, we are not helpless. There are things we can do.

We can refuse to be afraid. We can use these times to try to understand the world. We can refuse to betray our brothers and sisters. We can focus on our immediate surroundings, on the things that we have the power to change, and we can change the world together, little by little, over time, with courage and passion, from the ground up. "Local, local, local" is something that speaks to me a lot.

After all, the villains, in their military planning, plan far ahead — sometimes, hundreds of years ahead (like Google saying that they hope to have their really perfect AI in 300 years — that's long-term planning, I would say).

This really is an existential battle — yes, a challenge, but also chance of remembering who we are, an opportunity to part with our past delusions and to grow our souls for real, with spiritual dignity and without fear.

About the Author

To find more of Tessa Lena's work, be sure to check out her bio, Tessa Fights Robots.