

Privacy, security in the 21st century



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YOUR FULL YOUR The Night has a Thousand Eyes: New Surveillance

Technologies The emergence of various technologies which can be used for surveillance has brought about various reactions from society, both pro and con. Given the valid interests of public safety and protection, governmental agencies have increased their efforts at research and design to the point that their ability to use new technology to observe the actions of individuals has reached unprecedented levels. From the use of satellites which have the ability to read vehicle license numbers from space to " modern devices which give police the power to see through the walls of people's homes and detect minute amounts of contraband"

(Julie 127), the ability of authorities to know what Americans are doing at any point in time is astounding.

For many, these developments are welcome because they feel that they have nothing to hide from authorities and they implicitly trust governmental agencies to act in their safety interests. Others, however, find even the old surveillance technologies to be disturbing. The ubiquitous security surveillance camera, for example, still has the power to stir controversy; witness the post-9/11 reaction to the National Park Service's plan to put round-the clock security cameras in the national parks within the nation's capitol (DeBose 1). For those people concerned with any new-found surveillance ability, the constitutionally-guaranteed right to privacy is violated by the merest hint of " big brother" monitoring their activity.

The advance of technology, however, is not subject to public opinion; it is simply a fact that newer and better means of obtaining information are going to continue to be developed. Appropriately applied, these new methods have the ability to greatly enhance the safety and security of the general public

and there is no question that science will continue to advance these capacities. The burden of balancing privacy with technology will have to be placed upon the courts.

Liberty and Security: A Safe Perspective

The provided quotes from Benjamin Franklin and H. L. Mencken demonstrate the perspectives of two different philosophical positions in two different worlds. For Franklin, the idealist who was living in a day when airplanes didn't fly into buildings, there is no security interest that justifies the sacrifice of individual freedom. For Mencken, the pragmatist, there is no freedom issue that justifies the sacrifice of safety; and certainly Mencken would feel even more justified in his position today. The two philosophical positions provide a perfect context for the modern social debate of where is the line going to be drawn between individual freedom and social safety.

Individual rights are important. In fact, the nation was founded upon that very principle and civil libertarians are already decrying the decay of those liberties in the face of governmental efforts to provide the necessary security required by modern events. The problem, of course, is that the government is charged with the duty to provide for the welfare of the public. In discharging that duty, there has always been a trade off between freedom and public interest. The simple example is that there is a fundamental freedom of speech accorded to each individual; that freedom, however, does not include crying " fire" in a crowded building unless it is a truthful warning. Many Americans are, in fact, willing to forego certain individual freedoms for the sake of security and embrace the new surveillance technology being implemented by governmental authorities. These individuals would heartily agree with Stephen Pomper's assertion that his " first reaction to this James
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Bond-style technology is to embrace it, in the hopes that someday it will save my skin. As for the intrusion, it hardly bothers me; I figure I have nothing to hide" (48).

Between these two extremes, typically, is the reasonable answer. Given the modern technological response to the recent heinous acts of certain individuals, the government will have ample opportunity to trample individual rights; like the right to privacy. I don't believe most Americans, however, are willing to die in a fiery crash just so a criminal can claim liberty. I know I'm not.

Beyond Fear: Identification, Authentication, and Authorization

In Schneier's book, he provides a guide for understanding the nature of a security system's function by distinguishing and defining three important components: Identification, or who your are; authentication, or proof of who you are; and authorization, or what you are allowed to do (182). Seemingly straightforward, the requirement of this information is necessary to proper security; yet it is fraught with libertarian issues in the American constitutional system. What appears to be justifiable information has been decried by some as an unreasonable inquiry that violates personal privacy. In balance of the individual need for privacy and society's need for safety, I believe that the proposed scheme is entirely sensible.

By way of example, consider the case of protestors at a health clinic. These individuals have every right to express their opinions under our system of laws. They do not, however, have the right to terrorize clinic workers or destroy property; which makes the case that the principles identified by Schneier would not be a violation of their privacy rights (see Colb). A scheme of requiring any individual to provide suitable identification would ensure the

security and safety of all. Individual A, properly identified as a nurse, obtains access to the clinic and all its sectors. Individual B, a properly-identified patient of the clinic, obtains access to the facility and those areas appropriate for authorized visitors. Individual C, a properly-identified protestor, obtains access to neither and is escorted to the area across the street for which First Amendment protests are designated.

Under this sensible regimen, the disparate rights of the individuals are reasonably protected while the security of all is ensured. As with most modern security issues, the rights of individuals must be properly balanced with the safety of the group and a sensible practice is that of proper identification, authentication, and authorization.

Works Cited

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