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What is More Important: Our Privacy or National Security?

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What is More Important: Our Privacy or National Security?

The debate in comparing the importance of national security and privacy is quite complex owing to the changing lifestyles of a human brought about by technological dynamism. It is not any black and white issue but rather requires a critical exploration of the large gray area that exists between the concepts of national security and privacy. With the increase in the use of technology and technological devices in our daily lives, there is a significant increase in threats such as terrorism. According to a research conducted by Pew Research Center in the year 2015, the idea of collecting private information such as telephone numbers as well as internet information as a strategy to prevent terrorism was opposed by approximately 54% of the Americans with only 42% accepting the government's move (Rainie, 2015). This is indicative of how most citizens are privy of sharing their personal information to with the government precisely for security reasons. It is quite simple in this perspective to generalize and conclude that most citizens are not certain whether the government will really protect their interests in as far as issues of their security are concerned.

The decision on the importance of national security or privacy depends on the willingness of the government to provide adequate security to its citizens. For example, national security proves imperative relative to privacy in circumstances where the government provides protection to its citizens. This should, however, be done with limits in the sense that the government should not use excessive measures during protection to invade the privacy of the citizens (Petitt, 2017). The collection of personal information such as the mobile telephone numbers, for example, is an invasion of personal privacy of the citizens. It should only be allowed to happen to those who have been suspected to have facilitated or participated in a particular crime. From a critical perspective, there is no clear distinction between what is permissible and what is not when it comes to the issue of protecting individual rights to privacy and the protection of national security. Under any circumstance, different people will have their perspective in looking into this issue and therefore both could be equally important based on the perspective from which an individual approaches the issue.

Privacy is arguably a story of the past. With the introduction of technology and mobile telecommunication devices. Human privacy has always been infringed by collecting several piece information every time the user is online. This, therefore, implies that privacy is no longer an

important factor but rather a norm. National security is quite important in this case. When terrorists attack a country for example, who will save the country? Is it the internet or national security? In fact, the national security will use the private information obtained from the devices we use to help in tracking the terrorist and secure the lives that would have been at risk of being lost. When the terrorist holds the innocent citizens' hostage, it is only the national security that can save and not the private information saved on the internet and the telecommunication devices we have. It is therefore evident in this sense that national security is more important than privacy. The eligibility of this assertion can, however, be negated by exploring the intention of the government to invade the privacy of a citizen. For example, the government will only invade someone's privacy if there is a suspicion that the person is involved in some unlawful activity. If a citizen is not doing anything wrong nevertheless, they have no business to be followed by national security agencies. Therefore, national security is still paramount.

Privacy is not certain in the absence of national security. For a significant period, the role of the National Security Agency has been to secure the country from incidences such as terror and crimes. When people cannot be protected from their business threats, there would be more danger than can be imagined today (Gonchar, 2013). By collecting private information from the citizens, it is evident that the government is only trying to take measures to understand the national demographics and know what to do exactly in the event of terrorism. This is important in helping the government to plan adequately in terms of resource allocations and understanding what parameters needs to be put in place to secure the country. It does not really mean that the government is invading the privacy of the citizens for one reason or the other. Therefore, national security is still more important than individual privacy. Usually, terrorist have a comprehensive plan for attacking innocent citizens of a country. The national security, however, by collecting the private information from the citizens through technology, has been able to recognize the existence of such plans and thwart them before they are actually executed. This means that many lives are saved and the value of national security cannot be compared to individual privacy in such circumstances.

In conclusion, the weighing of the importance of national security and privacy of citizens depends on the individual evaluation of what privacy and national security mean to them. However, the thin line between privacy and national security is the collection of private data from

the telecommunication devices by government agencies like the National Security Agency. It cannot be entirely dismissed that privacy is not important. Rather, it should be understood that its invasion is sometimes important when there is a need to get accurate information about a security issue within the country. Through national security, every citizen feels secure in his or her homes, business, and their workplaces. This creates a common goal in the realization of a country's development agenda. When such privileges are thwarted by lack of national security, then there can be peace and even individual citizen privacy will not and can never be achieved. An insecure citizen cannot enjoy their privacy. However, a secure citizen who conforms to the law can enjoy their privacy as required. Therefore, national security supersedes privacy.

References

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