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| Security | Privacy |
| The most important job of government is to “secure the general welfare” of its citizens. Security is a common good that is promised to all Americans, and it must outweigh any personal concerns about privacy. The word “privacy” is not found in the US Constitution so it cannot be claimed as a fundamental right. | The right to privacy lie behind the 4th Amendment to the Constitution, which bans unreasonable “search and seizure”. When the government collects and shares information about its citizens, it is conducting an electronic version of such banned searches. |
| The NSA (National Security Administration) is now allowed to collect information by electronic and other means. These vital tools for tracking the actions of terrorists when they are planning attacks. The government cannot stand by and wait until criminal acts are carried out: it must stop attacks before they happen. | Any idea that increases the power of government agencies should be rejected. In the past, government agencies (for example, the IRS tax authorities) have misused their power over citizens. More power means a greater potential for abuse. |
| Tighter security controls at airports and borders will help prevent attacks and loss of life. Such measures could include more intrusive scanning, body searches, watch lists, etc. In addition to their deterrence effect, they will enable officials to stop attacks as they are happening. | Tighter security controls can be used to target particular ethnic and religious groups in a way that is unfair and biased. This is bad in itself, but it also risks setting such groups against our society and creating more future terrorists. If Osama Bin Laden said that America is at war with Islam, picking on Muslims at airports because they have brown skin and Arabic-sounding names only plays into his hands. |
| Tighter immigration laws and tougher entry measures can be used to reduce the chances of terrorists entering America. For example, travel ers from certain countries can be made to get visa papers before their journey. Airlines flying to the USA now have to pass lists of their passengers to the authorities before they take off for America. Some passengers could be given searching interviews on arrival. | Measures aimed at travelers to the USA affect the innocent as well as the guilty. This is especially true in the case of foreign nationals. Tighter entry controls may keep out foreigners (for example, scientists, tourists, students) whose skills and money could be good for the United States. In any case, many terrorist attacks around the world have been carried out by citizens against their own country, not by foreigners. |
| Most rights are not (absolute) unlimited but have to be balanced against other rights. Any right to privacy is by no means absolute, and Americans already allow the government to control some of their private actions. For example, the government can require drivers to wear safety belts. Any intrusions on privacy for the sake of security would be minimal, and the most important rights would still be respected. | History has shown that the excuse of national security has often led to the loss of basic rights. For example, Japanese-American citizens were locked up during World War II on security grounds. We should not allow the government to take even small steps in a direction that can lead to something worse. |
| We are at war (on terror) at present and so different rules need to apply from times of peace. As Commander-in-Chief the President is allowed to take steps to make sure the country and its people are kept safe. Compared to conscripting people into the military, some loss of privacy is a small price to pay. Once the threats America is facing are over, normal rights to privacy could return. | The war on terror is not a war like World War II. The enemy is not a state and it is not clear how victory will be reached. This means any loss of privacy will be open ended and may last for many years. But even in times of war, America’s strength is in our rights and freedoms. It is American individualism and personal freedom that our enemies often hate the most. By changing our society to make us less free we are playing into their hands. A victory at the cost of the liberties that make our society great is not worth having |