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### Liberty versus Security

In recent years, the growing tension between citizens' individual liberties and the infringement upon those liberties in the name of national security has become an increasingly heated argument. This may have stemmed from issues happening across the world, such as terrorist attacks, government scandals, and increased security measures in certain countries. No matter what, liberty should always be available to everyone, regardless of what era we are living in. That being said, it is obvious that there must be some balance between liberty and security in our country. The question of where to draw the line is a much more debatable issue.

Here in the United States, there are those who believe that protection against our enemies should be our number one priority, even if it is achieved at the expense of some of our freedoms. They make numerous claims in order to support this belief. One such claim is that the government's primary role is to protect its citizens. The sacrifice of a few rights in order for the government to "act independently in this protective role", is a small price to pay in their eyes (Amy 1). Others claim that the government will not abuse the power of security for its own gain. They say that "once the threat of terror has been dealt with, liberty can be given greater emphasis and security measures relaxed once again" (Debatepedia 1). Adding to these stances that value security over individual liberties is the argument that in a government, liberty cannot exist without security. Viet Dinh, an architect of the patriot act, stated "I think security exists for liberty to flourish and liberty cannot exist without order and security"(Keslowitz 1). In his viewpoint, security is what guarantees that anyone can even have rights in the first place, so it must be upheld at all costs. Although these claims have some merit to them, each one has a different set of flaws.

The first claim, (as stated above) was that the government's primary role is to protect its citizens. It stated that making a country safe for citizens to reside in makes it possible for them to enjoy their rights in the first place. Therefore, giving up rights in order to sustain security is the patriotic thing to do. This is a somewhat valid point, considering that most of the laws that establish security measures must go through democratic systems in order to be put in place. However, the government exists to protect the rights of the people, not the other way around. Articles one, three, and four of the constitution illustrate this perfectly, stating that "the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized" (U.S. Const. amend.IV). Human liberty should not be given or taken whenever it suits the needs of the government. The United States, along with other nations across the world, has a long history of using fear mongering to justify taking away rights and adding more "war powers" to its repertoire. Liberty is essential for making sure that a democracy does not become "a justifying myth for liars and charlatans" (Monbiot 1).

Adding to the first claim, the second claim (as stated above) was that the government will not abuse the power of security for its own gain. According to this claim, it is illogical to expect that no one will abuse any new security measures, since the majority of them are put in place to safeguard our liberty. Not only that, they use the United States' reputation as "the land of the free" as an attempt to justify the belief that the government will not step out of line. This is an unreasonable expectation to place on the government. Many tragedies in history "started with good intentions and few cases of injustice" (Debatepedia 1). Justifying even minimal abuses in power only leads to arrogant beliefs and a corrupt system. Giving away the liberty of the citizens paves the way for the use of discrimination as a security method. In World War two, Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps because the government feared that they would give secrets away to the enemy. History has a habit of repeating itself. If we allow

our liberty to be taken away, the same events could happen in today's society to Muslims or Arab-Americans. Power corrupts even the best of us, and the government is no exception.

Compared to the previous two claims, the third claim happens to have the most merit of the three. It states that liberty cannot exist without security in a government. This claim is not exactly incorrect, just misguided. Security and liberty are closely linked together, but not in the way this claim describes. The two concepts cannot be balanced, because "Liberty is the essence of our natural state. Liberty cannot possibly be equal to a good we have instructed the government to obtain"(Napolitano 1). The reason security is important is because we need it in order to defend our rights. If anything, security has no purpose in our society without the rights that all citizens freely enjoy. Claiming that every citizen must give up their liberty in order to beef up security is not a fair option. It should be up to each and every citizen to decide for themselves if they can tolerate violations of their rights. If anyone "truly believes that by silencing him or monitoring him or taxing him the government keeps him safe, and that those are the least restrictive means by which to do so, let that person surrender his own speech and privacy and wealth. The rest of us will retain ours and provide for our own safety" (Napolitano 1). The choice of whether or not to give up liberty is a part of liberty as whole. At no point in time should liberty be treated as something that must be sacrificed for the greater good.

Countering the previous three claims is the idea of liberty and what it represents. When our country was formed, liberty was one of the most important values that our forefathers wanted to protect. Thomas Jefferson "recognized this when he wrote in the Declaration of Independence that our rights are inalienable -- they cannot be separated from us"(Napolitano 1). This is written in one of our oldest documents that we constantly refer to in times of crisis. And yet, there are those who would argue that our rights as citizens can and should be given up when the government calls for it. Granted, the liberties of a citizen are not (and should never be) unlimited. We have freedom of speech, but we cannot yell "I have a bomb" in an airplane. We have the right to privacy, but police officers can still search our homes if they have a

warrant. However, these restrictions were put in place to prevent citizens from using their rights to harm themselves or others. The liberty of a law abiding citizen should never be placed into jeopardy, especially for something that was bought with liberty, such as national security.

Liberty is not only fundamental; it serves as a form of protection for those who cannot protect themselves. In the United States, liberty is given out equally to all races, nationalities, and religious groups. No group is given more or less freedom than another, regardless of how many citizens each group has. Basically, “Just as I cannot authorize the government to take away your freedom any more than you can authorize it to take away mine, a majority of all but one cannot authorize the government in a free society to take freedom from that one individual”(Napolitano 1). There is no person in the entire country who could take ownership of one’s natural born rights. This is where the government plays a role. We as citizens have chosen our form of government in expectation that it will protect our liberty when we cannot. The government and its citizens are partners working together to benefit both sides. One is not chained to the other. If we choose to give in to fear and uncertainty, “None of our freedoms can exist if we are subservient to the government in the name of safety or anything else”(Napolitano 1). Liberty puts all citizens on equal terms, so without it, our unity with one another will crumble.

Adding to the previous statements, one of the most important aspects of liberty is the sense of a stable society that it brings. Liberty gives people the right to complain about the path the country is taking and burn the flag if they feel like it. Not only that, they can go to the government at any time to express their concerns and make progress towards fixing it. Because of this, citizens feel like their opinions actually have merit and matter in the grand scheme of things. Due to citizens’ liberty “the society as a whole is more stable because people and dissenting groups don’t feel so disaffected, marginalized, or suppressed that their only option in bringing about change is through violent revolution or regime change brought about by military means.”(liberty and justice 1). However, if our rights were taken for the sake of security, citizens would no longer have a safe outlet from which to vent their concerns. Soon, they would start to

believe that the only way to enact change is through violence or military actions. Liberty gives citizens what everyone secretly wants: the feeling that their opinions and choices actually matter and can change the world around them. Without liberty, there is no safety, whether inside or outside our borders.

As the world continues to change, discussions on how liberty and security should be balanced will continue to flare up. Different countries have different beliefs, and it is up to them how they choose to defend both their country and themselves. As for the United States, we pride ourselves on being the land of the free, since our citizens have many rights given to them. However, we must not forget what our country was founded upon. Moving forward, we must acknowledge that any country without liberty is not a country worth living in.

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U.S. Const. amend.IV