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Privacy and Security

Over the last decades, mass surveillance has been a controversial topic between two kinds of voices. One claims that mass surveillance helps to fight terrorism, prevent crime and social unrest, and thus to protect national security. The opposite voice criticizes mass surveillance for violating the privacies of citizens. From my perspective, there is a tradeoff between privacy and security. Privacy is not a concern if people have nothing to hide. Releasing some kinds of privacy to reliable organizations, such as the government, allows people to get more security in return.

China monitors its citizens through the Internet and cameras. As of 2019, it is estimated that 200 million monitoring CCTV cameras of the "Skynet" system have been put to use in mainland China, four times the number of surveillance cameras in the United States. As of 2020, IHS Markit's latest report suggests that 54 percent of the world's 770 million surveillance cameras are situated in China, meaning there are approximately 415.8 million located in the country.

According to Statista Research Department, because of the mass surveillance, the latest data shows that China has violent crime cases of around 0.5 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2018.

Meanwhile, the data also indicates that the violent crime rate in the United States was 383.4 cases per 100,000 of the population in 2018 and 398.5 cases per 100,000 of the population in 2020. As of 2020, China has about 415.8 million while the United States has about 80 million. In 2020, around 54.4 percent of violent crimes have been solved by investigators in United State

while 99.8 percent of violent crimes have been solved by police in China. To summarize the data, China has about five times as many cameras as the United States, the murder rate in the United States is 770 times higher, and the criminal case detection rate in China is twice that in the United States.

I would use an example to illustrate how efficient the mass surveillance system is to help solve crimes. In 2019, Xieyu Wu, suspected of matricide at Peking University, was arrested at Chongqing Jiangbei Airport. The airport police detected him through the "Skynet" system, and it took only 10 minutes from the security check to arrest him. Details of the arrest were revealed in the Mainland media report. At about 4 o'clock on the morning of April 21, Wu Entered the second terminal of Chongqing Jiangbei Airport. When he entered the explosion-proof security inspection area at gate no. 3, waiting for inspection, Wu was captured by the monitoring equipment for 4 times, and each time the similarity ratio was greater than or equal to 98%, therefore system alert airport polices to get Wu arrested.

China also uses mass surveillance on the information of people's daily health and of geographical location to against COVID-19. For example, when people enter any building, they have to open a web application, released by the government, to validate their identity by scanning their face at the beginning. After facial recognition, people shall scan the QR code of the building for letting the "Skynet" system record their location and check their body temperature for tracking purposes. If a person goes to a restaurant in a mall, then the person shall do such checking process when he enters the mall and when he enters the restaurant in the mall. Therefore, when the person is detected positive COVID-19, the "Skynet" system will retrieve the

information of who has contact with the patient in the same location they have been. As of August 2021, there are only 98,901 cases of positive COVID-19 and only 4,636 Deaths in total. At this point, it is obvious to see people sacrifice privacy to enhance security.

Internet surveillance is also popular within China. By cybersecurity law, all sim cards purchases require real-name registration, all wifi hotspots throughout the country require SMS verification through a phone number that is incidentally linked to a user's resident ID card and all instant messaging and internet service providers including but not limited to ISP's, internet cafes and gaming service providers are required to verify the real identity of users through either a foreign passport or national ID card prior to the provision of a service. Due to this law, Internet fraud and phone fraud are easy to be detected. The terrorists could be detected if they plan a terrorist attack through instant messages or the Internet. Although it feels naked when you realize someone might be watching on you, we also shall remember we were all born naked and innocent.

All in all, I agree with the argument that privacy is not a concern if people have nothing to hide. In a society, releasing some privacy to organizations like the government allows people to get more security. When you place a security camera in your apartment, you may not consider that as an invasion of privacy. What difference does it make when your government puts more security cameras in your homeland to keep citizens safe.

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