**Unit 7-9 discussion forum: initial post**

What is the impact of technologies on basic liberties?

In their paper, Brownsword (2017) defines the basic liberty as a fundamental right for a human to express themselves and grow as independent persons. The ability to practice any religion, right to life, right to express your views, a liberty to have children: these are just some examples of the basic liberties.

More recently, however, the right to privacy has come under scrutiny. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention of Human rights, the European Charter of Fundamental rights (EDPS, 2022) and the UK Human Rights Act 1998 (legislation.gov.uk, 1998) are just some of the laws which recognise the privacy as a fundamental human right.

The paper touches upon the threat to the said privacy due to the new surveillance, monitoring, recognition, detection and tracking technology introduction to our lives and more importantly, how do we strike the balance between the necessity to protect the nation and everyone’s right to privacy.

The technological impact is not limited to the basic right to privacy either. The ‘smart motorways’ in the UK, by forcing the people to follow ever changing speed limits and opening up the hard shoulders for routine traffic have been shown to endanger people’s lives and thus violate the human right to life (Excell, 2022). Freedom of expression and autonomy is threatened when countries decide to regulate what its citizens should be able to access online, such as Turkey blocking an entire domain of Google’s sites because they believed it to be offensive to its leader (Council of Europe, 2017) or China’s strategic censorship programme (Han & Shao, 2022) shown to have changed an entire generation’s perception of the world by controlling the narrative (Wang, 2020).

Technology can be a great ally, it can greatly improve our lives and we have many things to look forward to, however, the balance is important. Afterall, we do not want to the famous George Orwell’s novel, 1984, to become a reality.

References  
Brownsword, R. (2017) Law, Liberty, and technology in: Brownsword, R., Scotford, E. & Yeung, K. (eds) The Oxford Handbook of the Law and Regulation of Technology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
Council of Europe (2017) PROTECTING THE RIGHTTO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION UNDER THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. Available from: https://rm.coe.int/handbook-freedom-of-expression-eng/1680732814 [Accessed 29 October 2022].  
EDPS (2022) Data Protection. Available from: https://edps.europa.eu/data-protection/data-protection\_en#:~:text=Privacy%20%E2%80%93%20a%20fundamental%20right&text=The%20right%20to%20privacy%20or,Fundamental%20Rights%20(Article%207). [Accessed 29 October 2022].  
Excell, J. (2022) Poll results: UK to pause smart motorway rollout. Available from: https://www.theengineer.co.uk/content/news/poll-uk-to-pause-smart-motorway-rollout [Accessed 29 October 2022].  
Han, R. & Shao, L. (2022). Scaling Authoritarian Information Control: How China Adjusts the Level of Online Censorship. Political Research Quarterly, p.106591292110645.  
Legislation.gov.uk (1998) Human Rights Act 1998. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents [Accessed 29 October 2022].  
Wang, Y. (2020) In China, the ‘Great Firewall’ Is Changing a Generation. Available from: https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/01/china-great-firewall-changing-generation [Accessed on 29 October 2022].