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Response Essay Research

**Podcast** you’re responding to:

Topic: in a few words, what would you say is the topic of your response?

The various global governmental uses of facial recognition technology

Thesis: in a sentence or less, sum up what you’re planning to say. (this will likely change)

Facial recognition software is used by various governments around the world for different purposes with different regulations/emphasis placed on the technology depending on the ideology the government follows.

Search Terms: what words and/or phrases will you use to search for sources?

(add to this list as you continue to look for more sources):

* Facial recognition being used by various government.
* different ideologies behind its use
* regulations/emphasis the governments place on its use.
* Authoritarian uses of facial recognition
* “public good” uses of facial recognition

**Find 3 quality sources:** Spend time skimming and reading sources. List 3 quality sources below that you could potentially incorporate into your response. You’ll only need to include one. Take notes at the end of this worksheet as needed.

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| **Source # 1** | |
| Title:  The Era of Digital Surveillance: Authoritarianism vs. Democracy | Author: Jufang Wang, Zichen Jess Hu, Denis Galligan  Date published: 18/10/2022 |
| Website/Database/Journal:  [The era of digital surveillance: Authoritarianism vs. democracy? > Oxford Global Society](https://oxgs.org/2022/10/18/the-era-digital-surveillance-authoritarianism-vs-democracy/) | |

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| **Source # 2** | |
| Title:  Techno-Authoritarian Imaginaries and the Politics of Resistance against facial recognition technology in the US and European Union | Author: Hendrik Schopmans & Irem Tuncer Ebeturk  Date published: 11 Sep 2023 |
| Website/Database/Journal:  [Full article: Techno-authoritarian imaginaries and the politics of resistance against facial recognition technology in the US and European Union\*](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13510347.2023.2258803#d1e138) | |

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| **Source # 3** | |
| Title:  How Repressive Regimes Use Facial Recognition Technology | Author: Jasper Jackson  Date published: March 27 2024 |
| Website/Database/Journal:  [How repressive regimes use facial recognition technology | TBIJ](https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2024-03-27/how-repressive-regimes-use-facial-recognition-technology/) | |

**Take Notes Below:** As you read/skim, look for ideas that help you develop your response. You might also look for key words and terms that are used when discussing your topic.

digital surveillance: “any systematic and routine attention to personal details, whether specific or aggregate, for a defined purpose”

 The “authoritarianism vs. democracy” division is not that clear-cut when it comes to digital surveillance.

three challenges that digital surveillance brings to democracies, both theoretically and practically:

1. the power to simulate and predict citizens’ preferences risks being abused in order to manipulate public opinion to benefit the political and economic agendas of certain interest groups.
2. the tension between the protection of personal data and the technological competitiveness of nations.
3. the fundamental assumption of liberal democracy that individuals have the rights and capacity to decide what is best for themselves. Does the power of digital surveillance technologies result in the loss of individual agency?

the “democracy versus authoritarian” paradigm is harder to sustain with the epistemic advantages of democracy becoming thinner regarding individual autonomy and agency.

the capture and commodification of personal data is undermining personal autonomy and democracy.

Concerns regarding digital surveillance in democracies are not limited to private technology companies, but apply to the states as well, which often carry out massive surveillance for the purpose (or in the name) of fighting terrorism and ensuring national security.

 In liberal democracies, there exists a strong tradition of limiting the state’s power when it comes to protecting individuals’ rights including privacy.

In China, state “paternalism” is not simply a type of governance, but a moral system that “defines how Chinese societies (should) operate” and the state is often viewed as “fatherly” benevolent.[[5]](https://oxgs.org/2022/10/18/the-era-digital-surveillance-authoritarianism-vs-democracy/" \l "_edn5) This explains why many (if not most) Chinese people are relatively indifferent to state digital surveillance.

In comparison, the western public tends to be much more cautious about state surveillance.

the emphasis on individuals’ rights such as privacy (rather than the collective good, as in the case of China) in liberal democracies is an obvious reason why the public are very cautious about any state surveillance scheme

the West could misrepresent “the other” because of its Western-centric bias that ignores context-specific factors.

contrary to the general public’s perception, China’s social media is a highly contested space in which individuals can actively participate in discussion about politics even though China does not have an autonomous media system.

digital surveillance technologies bring a dilemma for nations that want to balance “public good” such as enhanced public security, convenience and efficiency, on the one hand, and intrusion of civil rights such as privacy and public participation, on the other hand.

While raising serious concerns about possible abuse of surveillance technologies regarding people’s freedom and privacy, digital surveillance does bring some “public good” to the Chinese society.

* China has used AI-related facial recognition and simulation technology in fighting child trafficking. The facial simulation growth algorithm helps generate photos of what a child looks like today based on his or her childhood photo at 99.9% accuracy.[[9]](https://oxgs.org/2022/10/18/the-era-digital-surveillance-authoritarianism-vs-democracy/" \l "_edn9)
* In Guangzhou, by employing technologies including facial recognition, the application process of commercial registration of business licences has been shortened from 3 days to 10 minutes.

On the one hand, digital surveillance technologies help governments that have access to unlimited information to gain more competitiveness, as demonstrated in the case of China. In this sense, surveillance technologies and personal data can be a resource crucial for boosting national technological competitiveness. On the other hand, if democratic countries are tempted to follow the path of China, they would sacrifice constitutional democracy for the sake of efficiency.

China and other authoritarian regimes, who have exploited the technology to establish highly automated surveillance states, loom large as extreme cases of AI-driven autocratization.

Even in consolidated democracies like the US, Germany, France, or the United Kingdom, the unregulated spread of AI systems may drastically undermine democratic processes in the future.

Democratic governments, like their authoritarian counterparts, may not be immune to the temptation of AI-powered mass surveillance enabled by facial recognition technology (FRT) or predictive policing systems.

Concerns have also mounted that a handful of corporations may exploit their monopoly over massive amounts of personal data to manipulate human behavior for profit.