

Why Privacy is Essential In a Modern Democracy

In the United States, and elsewhere in the modern world, citizens' privacy is increasingly under attack. This is often done under the guise of causes such as stopping terrorism, and although these laws that violate our privacy can often be well intentioned, during this writing I hope to convince you that the price of these laws isn't just our privacy, but also our ability to resist a corrupt and evil government should one arise. Although I will be using the US as an example, the overarching ideas can apply to all democratic societies.

From the creation of the US, one of our Founding Fathers goals was to make protections against a corrupt or ill-intentioned government. We can see this through actions such as the passing of the second amendment, which states "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." As a reader can see, their intent with this amendment was aimed to protect the peoples of a state from the potential tyranny of an ill-intentioned federal government. However, this amendment is no longer good enough. At the time, an average land owning person could reasonably afford arms which would rival the military, however, as time has gone on and technology has advanced, the standard and expense for military weapons has gone up a huge amount. The average person can no longer afford to own anything even close to the level that the military has. Some examples of this are, weaponized drones, nuclear bombs, aircraft, and other insanely costly technologies that our military can afford, but not us. This gap will only get larger as we head into a future where wartime will likely become [dominated by robots and military A.I](#) which, unlike human soldiers, have no moral qualms about killing civilians. This means that even if the citizenry, with their meager weaponry did try to revolt, they would be easily thwarted by the federal government due to the huge difference in military capabilities between the two. Even if you disagree with me to this point, you probably will agree that in order to get a militia together, you need an angry populace, something that would be much harder to achieve without privacy, as you will see in the next paragraph.

The solution to continuing this second amendment-like protection in the modern day is through the dissemination of information with the hopes that the general populace of a nation, and by proxy, the army of that nation ceases to support the leaders that are imposing the injustices on them. This would allow for the overthrow of these leaders, something that wouldn't otherwise be possible with a militia of citizens. In order for a nation to have this information of what the government is doing wrong, it needs whistleblowers. In a society where there is no privacy, it becomes near impossible to become a whistleblower. If the government is constantly watching you, and knows everything that you do, then they will detain you or in some other way take away your ability to blow the whistle, before you do. Although the idea of this level of surveillance may sound Orwellian, as technology continues to develop, it is becoming increasingly possible. We have more and more technology on and near our person that is intelligent and able to recognize us in many ways, from our voice to our face. This technology can easily be used for spying, and without clear cut protections of our privacy, [has](#), and likely will continue to be. If this is what is possible today, think of what will become possible as

technology further develops. I think that this excerpt of a [Psychology Today article](#) interviewing a great thinker, and rolemodel to me - Richard M. Stallman - explains the conclusion of what needs to be done for privacy well. "The state holds secrets. To control the state, citizens need those secrets. To obtain them, we need whistleblowers. But surveillance lets the state identify and imprison whistleblowers." Thus, [Stallman] says: "Democracy depends on reducing the level of general surveillance to the point where the state cannot identify the whistleblowers." In that statement, he says, "I claim to have presented a theorem about the maximum level of surveillance that is compatible with democracy." I could not agree with what he says here more.

I hope after reading this essay, you now agree with me that privacy is a necessary right in a democratic society. Right now is a critical time in technology, these potentially democracy destroying technologies are just coming into existence, and will only continue to become more sophisticated. Our second amendment protections are no longer enough to protect us from tyranny and the decisions we make on this issue now will likely define our stance for countless years to come. Because of this, I urge you to take action and tell your democratic representatives your opinion on the matter. If you want to support this issue, I urge you to join or donate to the [EFF](#) and [ACLU](#), they are two great activist organizations that fight for this and other important rights.