

Proposition de correction

Synthèse

Tableau de synthèse

<u>Document 1</u>	<u>Document 2</u>	<u>Document 3</u>
Making a mountain out of a digital molehill	What's the matter with metadata ?	
A press article (op-ed) by Charles A. Shanor	A press article, by Jane Meyer	A cartoon by Joe Heller
<i>The New York Times</i> , June 7, 2013	<i>The New Yorker</i> , June 6, 2013	published on Aug. 15 th , 2013 on hellertoon.com
<p>The author, a law professor, analyses the threat to privacy that the recent disclosure of massive data collecting by the US government's agencies may pose.</p> <p>Contrary to what the liberals and civil libertarians think – for example by likening Pdt Obama to notorious repressive dictators – recording telephone calls and collecting information on the Internet are not beyond control: the US democratic system of checks and balances is respected indeed, since the executive branch (acting under the Patriot Act), the legislative power (the Senate Intelligence Committee) and the judicial branch (federal judges upholding the 4th amendment) were informed of the practice. As the computers select the information that will lead to further scrutiny (requiring a judge's order) in some cases, privacy rights have only been minimally intruded upon. An alternative procedure consisting in full transparency would be counter-productive as undercover terrorists would know that their lines had been tapped at some point and would then alter and adapt their ways</p>	<p>This article enlarges on the control of the government's monitoring of citizens' telephone conversations and underlines the fact that no name is included in the "metadata" (only factual details about a conversation: phone numbers and location of caller and callee). A judicial body, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, composed of 11 judges, guarantees the privacy of anyone's phone calls. According to a mathematician, Susan Landau, however, metadata supplies far more information than it seems, for example the professional or personal aspect of a call, which is not so trivial in the political or economic realms. Furthermore, unlike traditional case-by-case FBI work, massive data collection by the NSA is not placed under the Attorney General's control. Although metadata proved invaluable to track and arrest the terrorist who masterminded 9/11, it is clear that "with each technological breakthrough comes a break-in to realms previously thought private" (Landau). A former NSA official resigned,</p>	<p>A patronizing Obama is explaining to an American family that eavesdropping means protection, and that they ought to think of his administration as their "BBF" ... and of course BFF (Best Friend Forever), too.</p> <p>The daughter and each of the parents are holding a smartphone, while the page on the tablet in the president's hand reads "Big Brother Forever – NSA"</p>

of action. Let's trust the government and stop the paranoia.	fearing an "Orwellian state". To him this automated data collecting process shatters the Founding Fathers' ideal.	
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Question : To what extent must we agree to compromise our freedom and privacy for security now that we know, at the dawn of the 21st century, that pervasive technology is ushering in a really different – maybe Orwellian – world ?

Suggestion de synthèse

A system of checks, balances, and wiretapping

The media disclosure in June 2013 of massive surveillance carried out by the National Security Agency is the topic of the three documents: both the New York Times' and the New Yorker's articles were issued at the beginning of June, while Joe Heller's cartoon, published on hellertoon.com, added a distinct Orwellian touch to the matter two months later. The question one may discuss here is to what extent we must agree to compromise our freedom and privacy for security and what kind of world pervasive technology is ushering in at the dawn of the 21st century.

The revelation in early June 2013 that the Obama administration had recorded countless domestic conversations for seven years and collected information from foreigners through the Internet sparked an outcry. According to a law professor writing an op-ed piece in The New York Times, there is no reason, however, to liken President Obama to repressive dictators, as liberals do. The US democratic system of checks and balances is respected indeed, since the executive branch is acting under the Patriot Act (which was adopted by Congress in the wake of the 9/11 attacks); moreover the legislative power (the Senate Intelligence Committee led by Senator Feinstein) was duly informed. Lastly the judicial branch, namely the eleven federal judges constituting the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, had authorized the intelligence collection, as Jane Mayer underlines in the New Yorker.

There should not be any cause for concern, as Heller's cartoon suggests by having Obama say: "We're eavesdropping because we want to protect you". Similarly Prof. Shanor insists on the necessary trust in the institutions by inviting us to "take [our] chances" and stop being paranoid. To him demanding more transparency in the anti-terror activities would be counterproductive as it would alert the terrorists and cause them to alter their modus operandi. Even technology is not a threat as it collects only "metadata", mere trivial details that are only relevant when corroborating each other, which can help arrest potent terrorists.

Now this is where the ambivalent aspect of technology comes into play. Although, as Prof Shanor points out, raw metadata cannot be seen by an agent and the usual FBI wiretapping procedure requires a judge's approval, metadata is huge, stored by unknown people and can reveal sensitive information not only about the caller's and callee's phone numbers but also about their location, and provide hints at the nature of their content, potentially sensitive in economic and political matters. As Heller's Obama blurts out "BBF" (Big Brother Forever) instead of "BFF", the Orwellian nature of this type of surveillance is underlined and smartphones are shown as tools of freedom and of surveillance. Technology is a double-edged sword and Jane Mayer seems right to quote mathematician Landau's words: "with each technological breakthrough comes a break-in to realms previously thought private".

While seeing their fellow-citizens constantly watched leads some NSA agents to resignation, the onus is, more than ever, on the people to exert pressure on their Congresspeople to make sure they uphold the 4th amendment, so that they remain true to the word of one of their Founding Fathers for whom a man who trades his freedom for security deserves neither.

(535 words)