

The backfiring use of surveillance technology

As facial recognition is on the rise worldwide, an article from Slate published on 12 January 2021 raises awareness about the way people could be duped by some appealing uses (document 1). While an article from Berkeley High Jacket published on 26 December 2020 advocates a ban on video surveillance for the police (document 3), another article from The Washington Post on 12 December 2020 decries Huawei's use of their technology in China (document 4). This threat is also depicted in a 2020 cartoon in The Times of India (document 2) which portrays a policeman whose head is replaced with a camera. To what extent has surveillance technology like facial recognition gone from being a protecting tool to becoming a threatening weapon ?

Surveillance technology raises questions about its technical capabilities and limits. In **all three articles**, some praise the abilities of facial recognition to identify criminals. However, in **documents 1 and 4**, others are worried by some of its abilities as the possibility to recognize ethnicity, gender or purported "gay faces". However, such a use has proven to be unreliable and unfair, in particular on people of colour who are more likely to be wrongly identified and jailed, as explained in **document 3**. It is also considered a breach of privacy in **the cartoon** where all the icons on the robot show the range of accessible private information.

Nevertheless the risks highlighted in all documents are mainly ethical : whose hands will those tools be in and what for ? **Document 1** warns about the risk of getting blinded by decent uses such as the identification of neo-nazis. Documents **1, 2 and 3** concur that there is a possible bias on the part of the police, be it with facial recognition with the frightening policeman carrying several arms – including a camera – in the **cartoon** or video surveillance as people behind the cameras might be biased according to **document 3**. **Document 4** also disputes Huawei's decision to provide the Chinese police with tools to identify Uighurs to chase them. Besides, it has turned into a business opportunity and **document 1** calls it an "arms race".

In that context, some are taking a stance and calling for action. **Documents 3 and 4** suggest facial recognition should be restricted, in particular in the police. **Document 1** goes further when advocating a worldwide ban by making it a human rights violation. Some companies are also distancing themselves by refusing the use of their technology by the police or by proposing a moratorium. If terrified as in the **cartoon**, individuals can also play a role, in particular high-profile ones by speaking out as shown in document 4 or by raising awareness as **all the documents** did.

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NB : Dans l'introduction, les dates et les sources ont été comptabilisées comme un seul mot chacune