How do we balance security with civil liberties and privacy in today’s high-tech but violent world?

SECURITY TECHNOLOGY is back on the agenda in the wake of the terrorist attack on the Charlie Hebdo magazine. The public worries about security on the one hand, personal liberties and privacy on the other.

The Prime Minister warned against encryption technology that allows truly secret communications and promised legislation, which Muche’s review will, the bill that protesters dubbed “the snooper’s charter” and would make ISPs store all communications and the means to read them. Limiting encryption may be unworkable. Or, in time, opinion may swing back towards the civil liberties side. We shall see.

However, while politicians debate the limits of state surveillance, many people seem only too prepared to give up their privacy in return for just cost, convenience and, well, fun.

Take the teenager on our cover. She’s of a generation that doesn’t seem to care who sees herself. They tweet their every move, their Facebook friends tag them in pictures, and their social media accounts are connected in a way they don’t understand and don’t care about.

Is privacy dead or just redefined? Danny Bradbury discovers young people do in fact care deeply about privacy but not in the same way their parents used to (p30). It’s one reason they favour encrypted and ephemeral social media services like Snapchat. Why is her phone scanning her eyeball? Biometric security has been around for a while but its high cost limited it to areas like national security at airports or government buildings. Now it’s making its way into consumer electronics. Some countries limit the storing of such personal data but companies are finding new and legal ways to use the body for security – and it can’t be hacked or forgotten like passwords (p34).

As the platitude do you trust the evolves into the brave new Internet of Things, who will own the massive amounts of data generated? Who will be able to access that data and for what purpose?

People don’t like paying for what they are used to getting for free so they are only too willing to give up data in return for keeping services free and efficient. In the future, will they also give away the data on their movements, property or even their own bodies in return for free services? The chair of the Federal Trade Commission raised this issue at this month’s Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas (p13). It’s an issue that important players in the industry are taking very seriously, but will the talk turn into action in time? Chris Edwards looks to the future to find out what happened to the promise of the Internet of Things (p39) and why 2015 is such a pivotal year.

There are those who say you have nothing to fear if you have nothing to hide. As one speaker pointed out in a debate on big data at the Battle of Ideas in London’s Barbican Centre, we all have something to hide – our private life.

% response to the question: “Whatever the legal position, in practice how much information do intelligence services have access to on ordinary people?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% response</th>
<th>11% Don’t know</th>
<th>1% Access to hardly any personal information</th>
<th>47% Probably have access to almost everything</th>
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SOURCE: YOUGOV. SAMPLE OF 1,963 ADULTS, JULY 2014

(* Rounded figures may not add up to 100%)