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11.007 Day 4 Notes: **Policy Goals—Liberty/Security**

## **POLICY GOALS: SECURITY & LIBERTY**

As was the case with equity and efficiency, we all want security, and we all want liberty.

But, as was the case with equity and efficiency, security and liberty are ambiguous concepts whose meanings are defined differently by different people.

### **Security**

What's a general definition of security?

What is concealed—or fuzzed over—by that general definition?

What do we “need” to feel secure? The following are examples of policy questions that at heart concern security:

Stone focuses our attention on the concept of “need” that underpins a yearning for security. She explains, however, that the notion of absolute needs is a political one and introduces the concept of “relative need.” What does this mean, and why is it relevant to politics and policy?

Stone also introduces the concept of “instrumental need.” What is this?

We often justify policy in terms of future need. Such policies often come in the form of protection from potential harms in the future, or protection from *risk*.

Finally, Stone points out that some policies are aimed at addressing “relational needs”—that is, our need for dignity, community, belonging, etc. Can you think of some examples of this?

The point is that these are different conceptions of need, and they lead to competing political claims about security (97). As Stone says, “In the polis, the boundary between needs and wants is unclear, unstable, and constantly contested” (97).

### **Liberty**

What is the conventional American definition of liberty?

What is fuzzed over in this definition?

Again, what's important here is that what constitutes harm, and which harms we ought to restrict individual liberty to protect against, are *political claims*.

Furthermore, every decision to limit an individual's or firm's activity to protect others from harm involves a decision about equity: Whom will we protect? Who will bear the cost of that protection?

In reality, we as a society limit individuals' liberty far more than any simple definition of liberty would suggest. We limit individuals' liberty to achieve things we think are good for society as a whole.

### **Tradeoffs**

Is there a tradeoff between security and efficiency? If so, why?

Is there a tradeoff between liberty and security? If so, why?

Is there a liberty-equity tradeoff? If so, why? Doesn't it depend on how you define liberty?