**WIKILEAKS: WRONG OR RIGHT?**

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to critically discuss various ethical issues using the wikileaks point of view. An argument about how Wikileaks organization has addressed the ethical issues has been given and a criticism of various factors such as social contract issues has been analysed as well.

Introduction

Wikileaks is a multi-national media organization and associated library (Wikileaks, 2015). “WikiLeaks specializes in the analysis and publication of large datasets of censored or otherwise restricted official materials involving war, spying and corruption. It has so far published more than 10 million documents and associated analyses.

“WikiLeaks is a giant library of the world’s most persecuted documents. We give asylum to these documents, we analyze them, we promote them and we obtain more.” - Julian Assange.

WikiLeaks has contractual relationships and secure communications paths to more than 100 major media organizations from around the world. This gives WikiLeaks sources negotiating power, impact and technical protections that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to achieve.

Although no organization can hope to have a perfect record forever, thus far WikiLeaks has a perfect in document authentication and resistance to all censorship attempts.”(Wikileaks, 2015).

Wikileaks was founded in 2006 by Australian computer programmer and journalist Julian Assange. Since its formation, it has been publishing classified and censored information such as the “collateral murder” shot from a US helicopter firing and killing civillians in Iraq(wikileaks,2010).

Assange has since been on the run from the US and its Western powers allies. He currently stays at the Ecuador embassy in London where he sought and was granted asylum. Wikileaks continues to publish classified and censored material from various governments and corporations around the world, with the latest being a detailed leaked document about how the CIA is tapping into macbook air computers across the globe(wikileaks,2017)

Temptation as an ethical issue is an element that solicits divergent views and opinions from the world on Julian Assange’s person and character. Put simply, the moments of truth during which he is forced to make a decision give a projection about the philosophy behind Wikileaks’ judgement on what is morally right and what is morally wrong. Assange has a background in computer programming and has hacked NASA, the US department defence and Pentagon during his career as a computer programmer. Although the Australian Police did not press any charges against these actions against him, it can duly be noted that other countries such as the US would have prosecuted him for him. Therefore, there is a marked difference between what some societies consider right and wrong. This kind of dilemma has exhibited itself in how various government view Wikileaks. For example, Russia’s Vladimir Putin is supporting Wikileaks while the US is not. Any temptation as a result of choices made by Wikileaks is received differently and the organization needs to evaluate what is the best trajectory of decision is best for different scenarios. There is need for a global social contract incorporating provisions for dealing with the effects of information disseminated by Wikileaks on individuals, organizations, various countries’ national securities and society as a whole. This will ensure a balance is struck between sharing information throughout the whole fabric of society and the kind of information the people it pertains want to be shared.

Criticism: Wikileaks has been faced with situations whereby it has to constantly evaluate situations, judge their ethical merits and faults and take an appropriate action to address these situations. Questions such as the kind of laws that need to be in existent to the ensure protections of various individuals’ privacy and how confidential information reaches the affected people are issues that Wikileaks has found itself grappling with most of the time. However, Wikileaks claims that it maintains total confidentiality of the sources from which it gets its information (Wikileaks, 2010). It is evidently adequate that the only real criticism that Wikileaks is receiving is from governments. The people in government present less than one percent of the total population. Therefore, as long as Wikileaks does not disseminate information that may lead to national security breach, it should ignore government critics and go on to publish the censored material.

Professional self-regulation: Every person in an information society is also responsible for his colleague’s behavior, pruning ‘bad apples’ and even policing his colleagues where necessary. To many governments in the West, Assange has been the ‘bad apple’ that need to be pruned (Apple,2009). Wikileaks has been exposing major weaknesses in big tech corporations and they are not happy since they this is making them lose market share. However, it is very beneficial to the end user and this is very welcome.

Tensions: Wikileaks has experienced a multitude tension in the information society world. There is tension concerning IP rights. Who owns and controls the information that Wikileaks gathers around the world? Various governments and societies lay claim on ownership of the information and claim they have all rights of controlling the information. However, most of these information is obtained form users on the ground and the various governments’ citizens. This has successfully pitted the various governments and their citizens in regard to the ownership and control of the information. If, however, Wikileaks gives one government information from another government, the former is likely to welcome this. Therefore, ownership is subjective is right as conditions may prevail (Daily,2010)

Privacy-Wikileaks has struggled to strike a balance between the broad sharing of information to all members of the global society on one hand and honoring the dignity and autonomy of the various governments and organizations to share the information that they choose to share and in a manner of their own discretion. Wikileaks claims that it fully understands and protects the privacy of its informants on one hand and that it does not care about the privacy of the target governments. Wikileaks is acting on the interests of the majority public on this issue.

Accuracy-Wikileaks has to make a critical choice between the quality of information produced vs the scarcity and expenses of the resources and competencies necessary to avoid error and hence the case of tolerating inaccuracy. So far, Wikileaks is known to provide very accurate information and this has never been disputed.

Information justice-One argument is that all members of society should have universal access to information while the other line thinking is that only those with economic power to pay for this information or are legitimate should have access to it. On this particular issue, Wikileaks has made all information under its control free and available to the general society.In addition, one part of society is in the line of thinking that individuals with the capability of producing information should freely do so while the other side of the coin thinks that people should be compensated for contributing information to society. Wikileaks does not charge anything for contributing any information to society, which is a good thing.

On the subject of gatekeeping, one line of thinking is that information should just be left to flow and find its own level; without having to block or withhold anything. The other line of thinking is that information that is considered dangerous or in ‘bad taste’ should be withheld and censored. Wikileaks does not censor anything, everything is available for everyone to access at his/her convenience. This kind of freedom is hurting to the governments and corporations which have been exposed but good to the who are being hurt by the institutions in question. A believe in human freedom is the basis of democracy. Democracy has proved to be the best political practice in society and as such, the actions of wikileaks are welcome in as much as gate keeping is concerned.

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