Snowden vs. NSA

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## Key Players

***NSA*:** The National Security Agency (NSA) is a U.S. government agency responsible for electronic intelligence and cyber security, (Vanity Fair, 2014).

***Edward Snowden*:** A former NSA employee who leaked classified information about the agency's surveillance programs to the media in 2013, (Vanity Fair, 2014).

***Prism*:** An intrusive surveillance scheme run by the NSA that collected data from major internet companies such as Google, Facebook, and Yahoo, (CBC News: The National, 2014).

***The Guardian*:** A British tabloid that was among the first to publish Snowden's leaked information, (CBC News: The National, 2014).

***Patriot Act***: In the wake of 9/11, this law expanded the surveillance powers of the government, (CBC News: The National, 2014).

***FISA*:** The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) is a U.S. law that governs the surveillance of foreign intelligence, (CBC News: The National, 2014).

**NSA Whistle Blower Edward Snowden**

***Why Snowden Leaked***

Snowden explains that he leaked information about the NSA's surveillance programs because he believed that the public had a right to know about the government's activities and that the programs were unconstitutional. At the end of the day, “Snowden didn’t want to live in a society that does those sort of things,” (The Guardian, 2013).

***Snowden’s Defense***

While his actions may have compromised national security to some extent, Snowden argues that he did not betray the U.S. government to help our enemies. Rather, he exposed the government's abuse of power, a move that he believed was in the public's best interest, (The Guardian, 2013).

**Edward Snowden: If I End Up in Guantanamo, I Can Live with That**

***Why is Snowden NOT a Russian Spy?***

Snowden denies that he is working for the Russian government. He states that if the government had the slightest indication or shred of evidence that he was working for the Russian government, “it would be on the front page of the New York Times by lunchtime,” (The Guardian, 2014).

***Snowden on Surveillance Abuse***

Snowden believes that the public had a right to know about the government's activities, as the secret programs were unconstitutional. As well as exposing government abuse of power, he maintained that he wanted to protect citizens' privacy and civil liberties, (The Guardian, 2014).

**Edward Snowden's Treason**

***Strongest Argument***

Professor McCrea’s strongest point is that journalists may not be able to filter the information properly to protect national security, due to the different levels of clearance and access to information that Snowden has. It is extremely important that classified information be protected from misuse and mishandling, which is a valid concern, (Sluiter, 2020).

***Weakest Argument***

According to Professor McCrea, journalists don't care about protecting national security as much as they do about increasing circulation, becoming more important, and generating income for their news agencies, (Sluiter, 2020). As there are many journalists dedicated to accurate and responsible reporting, as well as the right to be informed, this argument is not his strongest. A journalist's actions are not fair to generalize based on the actions of a few, especially when media outlets are also subject to codes of ethics and legal guidelines.

**Snowden Debate**

***Who are the Debaters?***

***Daniel Ellsberg*:** a former U.S. military analyst and the Pentagon Papers whistleblower, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014).

***Ben Wizner*:** an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the director of the ACLU's Speech, Privacy, and Technology Project, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014).

***James Woolsey*:** Chairman of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a former director of the CIA, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014).

***Andrew McCarthy*:** a former Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, a senior fellow at the National Review Institute, and a contributing editor of the National Review, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014).

***What are the Main Arguments?***

***Daniel Ellsberg*:** Edward Snowden was fully justified in his actions, as he served the public interest. There was no other realistic way for that information to get out. Daniel also draws a similarity to his own release of the Pentagon Papers, which he also believes was justified, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014).

***Ben Wizner*:** The reaction to Snowden's revelations shows that something was wrong. The whistleblower system itself is broken and needs to be fixed. Snowden didn't set out to spy and betray us to our enemies, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014).

***James Woolsey*:** As a result of Snowden's actions, classified information was leaked to terrorist groups. He also ignored some duties and did not fulfill his obligations as a whole. There have been five cases that have come to light from Snowden’s materials, which are all a direct consequence of his unjustified actions, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014).

***Andrew McCarthy*:** Snowden's actions were not justified, as he stripped public officials of their accountability and transferred it to the courts. The system of checks and balances in place was working just fine, but now Snowden's actions have subverted even the presidency. Edward Snowden, who violated his oath, became the judge, jury, and lawgiver, and that is wrong, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014).

**Reflection**

As a result of the arguments made by the team supporting Edward Snowden's actions, I have definitely come to support his actions, especially the point that the reaction to Snowden's revelations demonstrated that something had been overlooked and needed to be addressed, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014). Additionally, the assertion that the internal whistleblower system was broken and that there was no other way for Snowden to reveal the information makes me sympathize with his cause. They also argued that Snowden's actions were in line with the principles of the Constitution and that he was a whistleblower in the public interest, (IntelligenceSquared Debates, 2014). Overall, I find it difficult to sympathize with my own government being exposed for violating people's privacy rights.

**Christian Worldview**

| **Statement** | **How closely do they match the article?** |
| --- | --- |
| Statement 1: The Bible tells Christians to obey authority, even when the leadership is evil. | Closely resembles what the article says. |
| Statement 2: There are examples in the Bible of believers who disobeyed their government when a higher law was cited. | Closely resembles what the article says. |
| Statement 3: Believers may suffer consequences when they disobey for matters of conscience sake. | Closely resembles what the article says. |

***Conflicting Statements***

In the first and second statements, there appears to be a conflict between two opposing perspectives on how Christians should behave when confronted by an authority that is acting unjustly. First, the statement emphasizes obedience to authority, while second, it highlights examples where Christians disobeyed their government when a higher law was presented, (GotQuestions.org, 2023). One must consider the specific circumstances and nuance of the situation in addition to the unjust actions that are being taken by the authority in order to determine which course of action to take.

***Christian Snowden Timeline***

If Snowden were applying the view of Christian relationships to the government, he may have sought guidance from religious leaders and considered the implications of his actions in prayer. By arguing that his actions were morally right and that protecting citizens' rights and freedoms was more important than obeying the government's unjust actions, he could justify his choice, (GotQuestions.org, 2023).

**References**

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