**Final Paper: Effects of WikiLeaks on the Economy**

Today's technologically advanced society is forging ahead at a faster rate than ever before, becoming more connected and needing to remain better balanced than in years prior. The US economy is directly tied to the world economy, and the same can be said of our government. In a world where information is just the click of a mouse away, secrets are hard to keep behind closed doors, and in many cases, the prevention of "leaks" seems impossible to stop. A website called WikiLeaks has provoked much trouble during the past several years, and has erupted in a fireball of controversy recently. With turmoil in the government and our economy already in shambles, one might wonder what the future holds.

Since its founding in 2006, Julian Assange , the owner and operator of said website, has released over 1.2 million classified documents (Masnick). These articles have caused much controversy, and in turn, the site to be taken down several times throughout its four years of existence. The sources and the inner workings are mostly unknown aside from a handful of affiliates who make public appearances at events. It can be argued that there is a lot of money being wasted trying to convict the people working with the website, as no one has been formally charged with any wrongdoing as of yet. Through the use of military surveillance, seizing of computers and mobile devices, interrogations, and other covert operations costing hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars the government is trying to gather the necessary information to convict the workers. The US government has been working to convict Assange for a number of crimes, including: espionage, stealing of classified documents, treason, and distribution of government property; but due to the legal implications faced and lack of evidence nothing has been charged (Britannica). It appears the massive amount of money that the government is pumping into investigations is fruitless and just causing more heartache.

As of this moment the true economic impact of the WikiLeaks website and the articles it has posted are unknown, but through general knowledge and deductive conclusions it is apparent that there is more than just a blizzard of controversial news. Aside from the money being spent to convict Assange and his partners, millions have been spent trying to cover up the mess. As seen through the news the US Supreme Court is not only trying to lock up the perpetrators, but they are trying to cover up the massive amount of news that has flooded the mainstream media. From asking news organizations to remove stories to hiring lawyers to work out the technicalities, there are numerous people working on just the most basic of details. Some of the highest paid jobs and largest amounts of money going into the cover-up are the professional hackers that were attempting to tear the sites down with Denial of Service attacks, as mentioned in the New York Times last Friday. This is where programmers tell massive numbers of computers to access that same website hundreds of times each, every second, until it renders the website unreachable. The total cost of the operations is unknown to the general public, but the processes are inherently expensive and time consuming. There is also the problem of an "insurance file" being passed around the internet that is encrypted with military grade encryption. The contents of the massive file are unknown, but many believe that the file contains the remainder of the un-leaked stories and that if something happened to the site or its maintainers a password would be released giving the world access to everything contained in the file. (Masnick) According to the New York Times the release of the documents will be less of a security threat than they are "an embarrassment to the US government". In any case, the release of the leaked content is still going to be detrimental to the economy and government as a whole.

Aside from the massive monetary losses created by the site, many social stresses have been cropping up. One of the largest is a newfound opposition to the way that our government has been handling situations. In a properly functioning government everything will appear to be running smoothly, but there will always be speed bumps, band-aids, and blunders. In this situation, because the government is running effectively, people are less likely to hunt for flaws. In the case of the US, we have entered into a recession and people are on the hunt for someone to blame. This new need to point fingers has people searching for the faults and publishing them to the mainstream media. This is not a healthy relationship between the government and its people, especially in a time where so much work needs to be done. For our leaders to do their jobs correctly, they need the people to support them through their decisions, but with the sensitive documents being leaked the countries morale will drop. With low morale comes less spending, which in turn will eventually lead to a decrease in the health of our economy. In addition to a lacking in economic stimulus, the government will begin to receive fierce opposition when it comes to war. Many of the leaked documents refer back to faults in military leadership and brutality committed by the soldiers, caused by misinformation and subpar training. The next time our country tries to make a strategic move and needs it approved, the media will get a hold of, publish, and possibly bend it further causing more opposition by some of the community. In addition it would be difficult gathering the funding to keep the war effort running smoothly.

The most difficult hurdle caused by the influx of news will be the strained relations between the US and our allies. By releasing the highly classified documents, the foreign nations will form opinions based on they have experienced and read. Even if a nation has a strong relationship with the US prior to the leaks, depending on the information they read, it could rest in the back of their minds, wondering if we are what we claim to be. In addition, the countries who already have trouble working with us will just get pushed further away. In a time of crisis when we need to rely on the assistance of a foreign nation, they may not be there willing to assist on a whim. This can also be detrimental to our economy because the world is tied together through international trade and cooperation. Without these ties we are practically stranded. Keep in mind that these are all hypothetical, and, worst case scenario situations, but in the event where the classified documents contain volatile information and such a catastrophe would occur, it would most definitely leave a permanent scar on the face of the world's strongest country.

Many people either take a pro freedom-of-speech, or the pro preserve-the-national-integrity stance when it comes to websites like WikiLeaks. By taking the pro freedom-of-speech side, you are reassuring your constitutional rights, but in turn may be putting the very country you are proud to be a part of, and of whom created the very constitution you rely on, in jeopardy. On the other hand by taking the pro preserve-the-national-integrity stance you may very well be letting part of your constitutional rights slip between your fingertips, while allowing the US to remain the economic powerhouse of a nation it has been for centuries. The decision of which side to support is yours, but I assure you that I am all for keeping the country's economic and political well being at the top of my priority list, and will flex my constitutional rights in a responsible, and non obstructive way.

**Works Cited**

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