The Balance Between Security and Liberty

If we were placed in Edward Snowden’s situation of witnessing immoral acts on the NSA’s behalf, we would have done the exact same thing that he did. We believe Snowden’s actions to be courageous and not “treasonous” against the general public. Though we do not criticize the existence of these government departments, we disagree with their overstepping of the boundaries in regards to invasion of privacy. Despite the accusations of breaking the law, Edward Snowden was justified in his act of informing the public that the NSA was behaving in a secretive, unethical manner throughout their conquest for information.

It is clear that there is a missing link between the government and the general populace--trust. Both Thomas Jefferson and Edward Snowden believe we are missing a crucial link in the chain of informing citizens by not having an oversight in the process. Thomas Jefferson points out, “I know of no safe depositor of the ultimate powers society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion [freedom of choice], the remedy is not to take it from, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power.” [[1]](#footnote-1) Our government’s major mistake is underestimating the intelligence of the American people. In doing so, they have taken our chance to voice our opinion on our inclusion in certain matters, such as intelligence gathering. We do not want to be active participants in these matters, but neither do we wish to be kept in the dark.

Though Snowden was not alone in his belief that the NSA was overstepping their boundaries, he was the first to take action against the agency. Before committing the federal offense of leaking confidential information, Snowden followed routine procedures in his quest for awareness and change. Eventually, he realized one cannot fight injustice through the NSA, because it is a flawed system. In his interview with ABC News, Snowden explains his reasoning for stealing files and emails that documented the conversations that took place throughout the NSA’s procedures, adding evidence to his defense. In the end, he felt morally obligated to inform the public, despite knowing the severe consequences that awaited him.

In regards to the NSA’s poor handling of the current cyber situation, they are in some ways increasing security threats. By gathering and storing all the information in one place, it would expose everything if the database were to be hacked. In addition to this, some of the government’s actions, such as spying on other nations and on our own, are unethical, and that weakens the trust between our allies and the people in our country. Also, the consequences of the NSA’s methods have caused the harmonious balance between liberty and security to become uneven. Snowden’s attempt to reinstate the missing link between public and government will hopefully restore the balance.

1. Pocket Constitutional Guide, pg. VI [↑](#footnote-ref-1)