**Grupa 132**

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**WikiLeaks – The Fifth Estate: Redefining Journalism in the Digital Age**

**Structure:**

1. A New Era of Journalism
2. The Origin of Wikileaks
3. Wikileaks major leaks
4. The arrest of Julian Assange and the successors of Wikileaks

**UNGUREANU MATEI-STEFAN:**

To start with, let me introduce the concept of The Fifth Estate. It is a socio-cultural reference to groupings of outlier viewpoints in contemporary society, and is most associated with bloggers, journalists publishing in non-mainstream media outlets, and the social media or "social license". The "Fifth" Estate extends the sequence of the three classical Estates of the Realm (clergy, nobility, and commoners) and the preceding Fourth Estate, the mainstream press.

Of all the blogs on the Internet only a few have a real power to influence the policy-making process, specifically political and current affairs blogs with large and involved audiences. These blogs can help organize the public to take a stance on an issue, be used in political campaigns, help cultivate grassroots movements, and assist in fundraising. Furthermore, blogs have several unique features that give them potential influence in policy making: a lack of editorial supervision, low barriers to entry, difficulty for governments to censor or control content, and the ease of responding to events in real time. Blogs can affect policymaking by providing insider information, facilitating communication between experts, promoting grassroots efforts, discrediting political figures, and setting policy agendas.

Let's now move on to the second part of our presentation. In journalism, there is a specific role that journalists may decide to take: investigative journalism. Investigative journalism focuses on showing the truth, no matter who may be involved in the story. Without investigative journalism, citizens could be totally left in the dark about all political issues and wrong doings, including murders, that occur. Investigative journalism is imperative to a society so the public can make personal decisions about the world.

One of the most significant acts of investigative journalism concerns the Watergate Scandal of the 1970s. Investigative journalists collected evidence of leaks, public records, inside sources, and standard reporting to eventually convict Richard Nixon, the 37th president of the United States, and 48 other individuals with criminal charges. This resulted in Nixon resigning from the presidency. Investigative journalism is both risky and controversial, and it leads to the potential destruction of lives and jobs. However, this type of journalism is justified. Journalists can investigate and write about crimes if proper evidence is provided, and it is protected under the first amendment right of free speech.

We have now come to the last part of our presentation: the origin of Wikileaks. WikiLeaks is a multinational media organization and associated library. It was founded in 2006 by Julian Paul Assange, Australian editor, publisher, and activist.

WikiLeaks specializes in the analysis and publication of large datasets of censored or otherwise restricted official materials involving war, spying and corruption, describing itself as "an un-censorable system for untraceable mass document leaking". It has so far published more than 10 million documents and associated analyses.

The inspiration for WikiLeaks was Daniel Ellsberg's release of the Pentagon Papers in 1971. Assange built WikiLeaks to shorten the time between a leak and its coverage by the media. WikiLeaks was established in Australia, but its servers were soon moved to Sweden and other countries that provided more legal protection for the media.

While many applauded Wikileaks, calling it a "new breed of media organization" that "offers important opportunities for media organizations" some considered it not so journalistic in nature.

In a 2013 resolution, the International Federation of Journalists, a trade union of journalists, called WikiLeaks a "new breed of media organization" that "offers important opportunities for media organizations". Others do not consider WikiLeaks to be journalistic in nature. Bill Keller of The New York Times considers WikiLeaks to be a "complicated source" rather than a journalistic partner. Prominent First Amendment lawyer Floyd Abrams writes that WikiLeaks is not a journalistic group, but instead "an organization of political activists; … a source for journalists; and … a conduit of leaked information to the press and the public". In support of his opinion, referring to Assange's statements that WikiLeaks reads only a small fraction of information before deciding to publish it, Abrams wrote: "No journalistic entity I have ever heard of—none—simply releases to the world an elephantine amount of material it has not read."

**SARIGHIOLEANU SEBASTIAN-LAURENTIU:**

Now in the second part of our presentation I will start presenting to you Wikileaks’s major leaks and their social impact. Firstly, I will talk briefly about their first one, named The Kaupthing Bank leak, also known as "Icelandic Bank Files" that occurred in 2008-2009 during Iceland's financial crisis. These leaked documents exposed the bank's involvement in extending significant loans to its shareholders and executives, practices that contributed to its collapse. Despite the gravity of the revelations, media coverage in Iceland was restricted because of legal reasons. However, WikiLeaks played a pivotal role by providing a platform for the leaked material to be shared more widely. This leak had profound consequences for Iceland's financial industry, it led to reforms aimed at preventing similar crises in the future.

The most significant leak attributed to WikiLeaks, often regarded as the biggest military leak in history, involves the release of the "Afghanistan War Logs" and "Iraq War Logs." Bradley Manning, a soldier in the US military, provided over 500,000 classified military documents to WikiLeaks. These documents offer a detailed overview of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, unveiling previously unknown facts about the nature and conduct of these wars.

Additionally, Manning released 250,000 confidential US diplomatic cables from 1966 to 2010. These cables provide insights into US foreign policy, diplomacy, and various global issues, including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the global financial crisis, and human rights abuses worldwide.

One notable revelation from the leaked documents is the "Collateral Murder" video, which shows American soldiers firing from a helicopter in Iraq on a group of unarmed individuals, including children carrying a camera mistaken for a weapon.

To put this numbers into perspective: the combined total of over 500,000 leaked documents, alongside the additional 250,000 diplomatic cables, would be comparable to occupying the entirety of a standard medium-sized university library.Unfortunately, Julian Assange took the decision of publishing the war logs without editing them which endangered the lives of international troops and their informants in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The last leak that I included in this presentation is Vault 7. Vault 7 is a series of documents that WikiLeaks began to publish on 7 March 2017, detailing the activities and capabilities of the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to perform electronic surveillance and cyber warfare. On 13 April 2017, CIA director declared WikiLeaks to be a "hostile intelligence service." In September 2021, Yahoo! News reported that in 2017 in the wake of the Vault 7 leaks, the CIA considered kidnapping or assassinating Assange and spying on associates of WikiLeaks.

In November 2010, after the Afghanistan and Iraq War Logs were published, Sweden issued a European arrest warrant for Assange over allegations of sexual misconduct, which he denied and said that the warrant was a pretext for a further extradition to the United States over his role in the publication of secret US military documents. He took refuge in the Embassy of Ecuador in London and he was granted asylum by Ecuador on the grounds of political persecution and fears he might be extradited to the United States. On 11 April 2019, Assange's asylum was withdrawn, the police were invited into the embassy and he was arrested.Currently he is behind bars in the United Kingdom, he is fighting extradition to the U.S., where he faces 17 counts of espionage. If convicted, he could face a sentence of up to 175 years in prison.

On WikiLeaks, there haven't been any new documents published since 2019. However, new media organisation and publishers of leaked documents appeared. Just to name a few: Distributed Denial of Secrets is considered the successor of Wikileaks, founded in 2018 by Emma Best who worked for Wikileaks and The Intercept founded by the co-founder of eBay Pierre Omidyar. This are websites with similar aims: to expose corruption and unethical practices in institutions and organizations.

In conclusion, while publishing information comes at a cost for websites, they do so in the belief that it serves humanity's greater good. However, transparency with governments may have both positive and negative implications, impacting individuals differently. Therefore, it is our responsibility as a nation to monitor the government to prevent corruption, aiming for transparency and safety for all.

Thank you!