

Assessment 3: Ethics or Privacy Report

CP5806 – Data Information: Management, Security, Privacy, and Ethics

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Section 1: Description of your case study (10%)

Chelsea Manning, formerly known as Bradley Manning, was born in Crescent, Oklahoma on December 17, 1987. She joined the United States Army in October 2007, and due to her exceptional computer skills, she was deployed to Iraq as an intelligence analyst in 2009 (Hakala, 2015). On 24th May 2010, she was arrested by the United States government on suspicion of leaking highly classified military information to WikiLeaks (Garnett & Hughes, 2019). Wikileaks is a whistleblowing platform founded by Julian Assange, established to obtain, and reveal sensitive documents and data sets from anonymous sources and leakers (Whittaker, 2018). The data was saved to a CD labeled "Lady Gaga", uploaded to her personal laptop, and then sent to WikiLeaks via a secure file-transfer protocol (Shaer, 2017).

As an intelligence analyst, Manning had access to two key networks that included top-secret military and government documents: JWICS (the Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System), which is used to transmit top-secret dispatches globally, and SIPRNet (the Secret Internet Protocol Router Network), which the State Department and the Department of Defense use to share information (Hakala, 2015).

This case also known as the 'Chelsea Manning whistleblower case,' turned out to have a major impact on American politics and military operations. It was a significant development in the history of government accountability and transparency. The content from the leaked material included videos from the 2007 Baghdad airstrikes where army personnel was accused of killing civilians and diplomatic cables that revealed sensitive information about U.S. foreign nationals (Davies, 2022)

"I believed that if the general public, especially the American public, had access to the information contained within the [Iraq and Afghan War Logs] this could spark a domestic debate on the role of the military and our foreign policy in general as well as how it related to Iraq and Afghanistan " ("Bradley Manning's personal statement to court martial: full text," 2013). The conflict between Manning's duty to protect classified information and her belief that the public had the right to know about the actions of the U.S. government and military was one of the primary ethical issues which were raised in this case. She asserted that the information she leaked exposed the abuse of human rights coupled with other wrongdoings and that the common people had a right to be informed. Another ethical issue, in this case, was the potential harm that could result from the disclosure of classified information. The government argued that Manning's deeds risked national security and endangered the lives of not only soldiers but also other members working in the U.S. military and government.

Apart from the aforementioned ethical issues, this case also raised several privacy issues. The diplomatic cables which were included in the leaked materials contained the personal information of several U.S. government and army officials. The release of this information without the individual's consent raised concerns about privacy rights and the potential harm to these people. Also, the release of this classified information may endanger national security, harm diplomatic relations, and violate individual privacy. Furthermore, the

information in Manning's uploads could be used by the press or US adversaries to undermine support for current operations in Iraq or Afghanistan (Pilkington, 2017).

In summary, the Chelsea Manning whistleblower case exposed troubling U.S. military and government actions, including human rights abuses and secrecy in foreign policy. The revelations sparked a global conversation about government transparency, accountability, and the role of whistleblowers. The case resulted in policy changes, including reforms to military operations and additional government oversight. However, Manning's role in the leak resulted in her being sentenced to 35 years in prison, including prolonged isolation and mistreatment which raised concerns about government overreach and abuse of power. The case demonstrates the value of government accountability and transparency while highlighting potential risks for those who unintentionally disclose sensitive information.

Section 2: Justifications supporting the party causing the problem (5%)

Ethics is a set of beliefs about right and wrong behavior within a society (Reynolds, 2015). Ethics is also what helps an individual develop habits that are acceptable (virtue) and repel behavior that is unacceptable (vice). The following are the reasons that Chelsea Manning gave justifying leaking the military information:

- **Revealing military war crimes:** The information leaked by Manning provided evidence of war crimes committed by the U.S. military. Manning felt responsible to make the world understand what was happening in Iraq and Afghanistan by revealing the true casualty numbers, thereby laying bare the heinous acts of the army (Brookes, 2022).
- **Bringing to light the true nature of U.S. foreign policy:** Manning (2010, as cited in Shaer, 2017) stated that "Let's protect sensitive sources. ... Let's protect nuclear information. Let's not hide missteps. Let's not hide misguided policies." She believed that the military logs and diplomatic cables would reveal the true nature of the U.S. foreign policy and possibly bring a change in military reforms.
- **Responsibility towards the public:** Manning believed that the information she leaked would invoke public discussion, particularly on the problems within the U.S. Army and the government policies. She did not believe that her leaks threatened national security, but she did believe that she owed it to the American people to know what was going on behind the scenes regarding the army's actions (Manning, 2017).
- **Support democracy:** Chelsea Manning leaked classified information to raise public awareness about the US military's indiscriminate killing of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. She believed that exposing the truth would educate the public and promote democratic values. Manning hoped that people would realize that those living in war zones are more than just targets but are people struggling to survive in a

pressure-cooker environment ("Bradley Manning's personal statement to court martial: full text," 2013).

Section 3: Justifications supporting the affected party or parties (5%)

The US government was severely impacted by Chelsea Manning's leaks, and the following are the US government's justifications to sanction Manning and how the leaks affected them:

- *Threat to national security*: One of the main reasons given by the U.S. government was that Manning's leaks could jeopardize national security by revealing sensitive information that could be utilized by the enemies of the U.S. Information such as military strategies, war equipment, spying technologies used by the U.S.A. could be revealed to potential enemies who then can develop countermeasures and threaten national security (Myre,2019).
- *Military operations at risk*: When the WikiLeaks story broke in 2010, P.J. Crowley, the State Department's spokesperson, stated that civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq who were secretly providing information to the U.S. military were the ones most at risk (Myre,2019). He claimed that many people were forced to relocate, particularly civilians in conflict zones who had provided American soldiers with information about the whereabouts of the Taliban and al-Qaida.
- *Damage to Diplomatic relationships*: The 2004 Abu Gharib prison scandal, where the images of U.S. Army prison guards brutally torturing prisoners were revealed (Gaskell,2013), and in 2005, U.S. Marines raids on several houses in Haditha, Iraq, killing two dozen unarmed civilians were some of the outraging incidents that came to light after the leaks (Gaskell,2013). Both these incidents sparked outrage across the globe and bought immeasurable damage to the U.S.A. and the military.
- *Violated laws and regulations*: By disclosing sensitive military information, Manning broke the Espionage Act, which forbids anyone from collecting data, taking pictures, or copying descriptions of anything related to national defense with the intention of using it against the United States or for the benefit of another country (Kaufman, 2022). As an army officer, Manning was sworn to protect classified information; by disclosing the information, she broke the oath and broke U.S. government laws and regulations.

Section 4: Whose side are you on? (7.5%)

The video footage known as “Collateral Murder” along with the “Afghan War Logs” and the “Iraq War Logs” were some of the vast quantities of data leaked to Wikileaks by Chelsea Manning (Maxwell, 2015). The video footage in “Collateral Murder” shows U.S. military servicemen shooting at civilians from a U.S. Army Apache helicopter. Along with Iraqi civilians, two employees from the international news agency Reuters were also killed in the firing. By making public US diplomatic cables, she also revealed the US government's flawed foreign policies, violation of human rights, foreign government corruption scandals, and various instances of US military abuse of power.

I believe I support Manning for her contribution to exposing the actions of the U.S. government and military after considering the background of the circumstances that led to Manning leaking classified information and the arguments she provided in support of her case. I believe that she acted on her conscience and did what she believed was right. She was well aware that if exposed, she would not only destroy her career but also her personal life. And rightly so, soon after the leaks were revealed, she was sentenced to 35 years of prison for the violation of the Espionage Act. This sentence was the longest sentence ever imposed for revealing classified government information. She was held in solitary confinement for months and locked in a large steel cage (Shaer, 2017). The government officials tried to imprison her for life but had no proof that her leaks had cost the lives of their soldiers or allies (Pilkington, 2013) .

Another reason I supported Manning's actions was that she first attempted to reveal classified information through official newspapers (the Washington Post and the New York Times), which could be easily accessible to the public. Since neither newspaper took an interest, she sent it to WikiLeaks, who then leaked the information. The term "whistleblower" was used by Manning's supporters rather than "traitor," which was the term used by U.S. government officials. A whistleblower is someone who plays a significant role in society as a safeguard for the public good when it is threatened by private interests pursued in the shadow of secrecy (Maxwell, 2015). Manning was obviously driven by concern for the general welfare, and her decision to leak state secrets was made with selfless intentions. Additionally, I think that the government's secrecy surrounding these matters is unjustified and that her leaks led to increased support for democracy. Furthermore, I think that the leaks contributed to increased accountability and transparency in government activities.

In conclusion, while opinions may vary on Chelsea Manning's actions, I believe that her sacrifices for the public should be acknowledged and honored and that her leaks were a courageous act carried out with great conscience.

Section 5: What would you do? (7.5%)

The 5-step decision-making process would be as follows:

Develop Problem Statements: In 2009, while assisting U.S. military operations in Iraq, I gained access to classified files containing sensitive information about the events that took place in Iraq and Afghanistan war revealing the military's inhumane actions and the government's questionable foreign policy.

Identify alternatives: The few alternative actions which could be considered are :

- Remain silent and concentrate on assisting the US military.
- Reveal the classified information to the public anonymously.
- Use newspapers and/or radio to inform the public about classified information.
- Continue working while discussing the situation with the military's ethics department.

Choose alternatives: Given that the documents contain classified military information and the gravity of the action, I would take the common good approach, whose guiding principle is to make the best ethical choice that benefits the common good. I would keep working my job while discussing the situation with the military department. Keeping the third option as a backup in the event of the failure of the first option, I would reveal the classified information via newspapers or radio. I would then turn myself to the appropriate authorities since my actions could be justified ethically but not legally. This arguably would align with the fairness approach where ethical choice treats everyone the same without displaying favoritism or discrimination.

Implement decision: Using the common good approach, I would first focus on my duties to aid military operations and repel enemy attacks, while also discussing the issue with the military department's ethics officer. This is a challenge because it can be considered a threatening act that exposes the government and military's actions and may be met with resistance from senior officials. In a thorough report, I will explain why the government's actions are incorrect and the benefits of conducting operations in a more moral manner to act in everyone's best interests. As previously stated, if my first option fails to produce results, I will release the documents to the press via newspapers and/or radio and surrender myself to the appropriate authorities.

Evaluate results: Following the implementation of my first decision, I believe the government will be more cautious when conducting military operations, as well as rethink the ethics and fundamental values of how the military is supposed to serve the public without harming it. Given the information I have, I am also aware that my actions may result in my being demoted or even fired from my job. The second option is the riskiest and has the potential to ruin both my personal and professional lives. I may end up being called a traitor for disclosing classified information, but I firmly believe that my actions will expose the questionable practices of the American government and military, arousing public awareness of the value of human rights and bringing about changes to military reforms and foreign policy.

Total words: **2,183**

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