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From the Selected Works of Athina Karatzogianni

Winter December 12, 2014

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Athina Karatzogianni
Andy Robinson



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Digital Prometheus: WikiLeaks, the State-Network Dichotomy, and the Antinomies of Academic Reason

Athina Karatzogianni & Andy Robinson

This article focuses on the academic reinscription of the WikiLeaks affair, focusing on the different receptions received within different literatures and fields. The WikiLeaks affair – with or without its hypothesised connections to the Anonymous collective and the Arab Spring – has had massive ruptural effects on aspects of the global political system. A small, movement-based website has inflicted a tremendous informational defeat on the world's last superpower, revealing the possible emergence of a global networked counter-power able to mount effective resistance against the world-system, possibly even the emergence of the state-network conflict as the new great-power bipolarity after the Cold War. Therefore, in many respects, and notwithstanding WikiLeaks' relatively closed political structures, the WikiLeaks affair expresses the power of networked, decentred social movements to disrupt hierarchical arrangements of state and capitalist power. WikiLeaks has struck a tremendous blow for the power of transnational activist networks, against the power of states. How this blow – and the corresponding redistribution of global power – is perceived, will depend fundamentally on how the commentator feels about the current distribution of global power in favour of states. Perspectives can thus be divided, not only by discipline, but also by the author's position on the state-network dichotomy. Furthermore, different academic disciplines can be mapped in terms of their relative closeness to the statist or network side of the controversy.

One of us focused recently on the diffuse and diverse affects and subject-positions mobilised by WikiLeaks through the “Revolutionary Virtual” – the field of construction in which zones of affect are selected and actualised (Karatzogianni, 2012). As a creation of new zones or assemblages of affect, the WikiLeaks affair can be seen as an event, and like all events, it is controversial. From a Badiouian perspective, one might divide scholars' responses into those who are in fidelity to the WikiLeaks Event, and those who react against it as representatives of the established situation. The study of the academic reception of WikiLeaks is thus a study of the reverberation of an Event through the social field.

WikiLeaks can be viewed through the figure of Prometheus – the archetypal Internet troll of Greek mythology. Prometheus is a trickster figure, bringing life to clay (to create humans) and fire to humanity (to create civilisation), in defiance of the fatalistic order of the Gods. Tricksters in mythology are typically on the side of creativity and chance, and crucially, aligned with the rebel who defies and escapes the order of Fate: “the hero – for example, Prometheus – challenges fate with dignified courage, fights it with varying fortunes, and is not left by the legend without hope of one day bringing a new law to men” (Benjamin 1995, p. 294). WikiLeaks here stands for exactly such a gesture: within the world of neoliberalism, the fatalistic advancement of global capital, and of the State as the bearer of Fate (ibid. pp. 285-6), has been interrupted by a technological 'progress' long forecast by the fatalists, but detoured decisively from their fatalistic narrative of progression. Instead, this Promethean flame is an uncontrollable force of networked power, which seems chaotic from within the statist order of Fate. Hence the attempts of the state to punish Prometheus, to sentence him to eternal punishment as did Zeus, for rupturing the divine order. But here the accounts of the myth diverge: did Heracles free Prometheus from his enchantment? Perhaps digital social movements are the Heracles in this scenario, flexing their own muscle (such as the Anonymous DDOS attacks) to protect Prometheus from the order of Fate. It remains an open question whether Zeus will have his revenge, or whether Heracles will ultimately prevail.

In discursive terms, these two stances can be mapped along two axes of intellectual controversy, which arise in the literature. In International Relations (IR) and related disciplines, including foreign policy studies, comparative politics and law, the main focus is on *transparency* versus *secrecy*: the ethics of whistleblowing versus national security, the impact of leaks on the 'war on terror' and American foreign policy, and so on. In disciplines more closely aligned to the social, such as cultural studies, media studies and sociology, the major debate is between *openness* and *control*. Issues include the relationship between WikiLeaks and the hacker ethic, the constraint of overwhelming state power, the emergence of a global public sphere, the changing relationships between old and new media, and the emergence of shifts in social relationships marked by the current wave of social movements. These differences emerge for a particular reason: the framing of the state- (social-movement-) network conflict through the gaze of the state, or from an interpretive standpoint framed by the attempt to understand the social. Furthermore, they express the anxieties and orientations of particular authors. As Foucault (1977) rightly argues, power and knowledge directly imply one another, and the success and survival of different academic schools and disciplines may hinge on the balance of global power (p.27). Advocates of disciplines threatened by a diffusion of information are likely to be far more alarmed at the WikiLeaks affair than those working in disciplines, which flourish on networked methods. We see in some accounts the voice of Zeus seeking to silence and torture the digital Prometheus, in some the voice of a Promethean force, and in some the voices of those who would draw on the Promethean force to revitalise the order of Fate.

International Relations Scholarship: Disgruntled Statists and the Right to a Cover-up



“Umadbro?” - Internet culture meme

The first standpoint to examine here is that of the state, or Zeus. Like any good trickster, Prometheus is a prolific troll. He has successfully trolled Zeus, who is now, in online terminology, “butthurt”. This is a source of endless *schadenfreude*, or “lulz”, for Prometheus and his allies. But the state's reactive affects, directed against the trickster, take the horrifying form of divine vengeance. In academia, the standpoint of the state, and the order of Fate, is borne mainly by mainstream scholars within International Relations and security studies. These scholars are bearers of the desire to chain and torture Prometheus – variously manifested as declaring WikiLeaks a terrorist group, assassinating Assange or jailing him as a spy, torturing Chelsea Manning, and

rounding up Anonymous and other hacktivists as “criminals” or even “enemies”.

Statists generally minimise the benefits done by WikiLeaks in order to maximise its alleged harms. From the statist point of view, the events exposed in the WikiLeaks cables are unsurprising. For International Relations Realists, it is quite normal for states to use Realpolitik to achieve their objectives. Indeed, the content of the cables may strengthen Realists against rivals such as liberals and constructivists, who maintain that states can be constrained by norms and ethics. The Realist objection to WikiLeaks is not, therefore, to the information revealed, but to the violation of a state privilege, which is taken to amount to an anarchist destruction of the state (Lim, 2010). Since anarchy is for Realists singularly undesirable, and the state – despite its evils – is seen as a necessary guarantee of a worthwhile life, WikiLeaks is to be treated as a threat. Hence, Steinmetz (2012) condemns WikiLeaks for causing unmanageable harm to U.S. foreign relations, destabilising the world by violating state secrecy, despite admitting that it exposes 'state crimes' such as the killings in the 'Collateral Murder' video, and diplomatic misconduct such as spying on U.N. officials.

As a typical Realist, Steinmetz (2012) explains the American state's responses – such as threatening to prosecute Julian Assange for espionage, labelling WikiLeaks a terrorist group, and calling for the execution of whistleblowers -- the following way:

Realpolitik explains why those events – and others – may have occurred and why the government became so upset when revealed. It is posited here that the United States was largely not concerned with maintaining foreign policy relations for ethical or moralistic reasons. Rather, these relationships were manipulated and maintained for the state's own interests.

(Steinmetz, 2012, p. 22)

Steinmetz admits a real danger that the government can use secrecy to cover up wrongdoing (ibid., pp. 23-4). Steinmetz demonstrates through his analysis of secondary data sources that the government officials' public statements “attempt to manipulate public opinion in a manner conducive to realpolitik governance” (ibid. 27). His analysis points to the U.S. arbitrary rhetoric of supporting government transparency and whistleblowing, but considering WikiLeaks an organization seeking to undermine national security. In this way “the U.S. reserves the right to define who is and who is not a whistle-blower and seeks ways to prosecute those who are not categorized as such” (ibid. 35), while this “process of employing arbitrary rhetoric then deciding who is covered is a result of intense realpolitik” (ibid. 36). Realism simultaneously exposes and condones the double standard whereby America attacks WikiLeaks while condemning China for its actions against Internet dissidents (Karatzogianni, 2010) and while operating its own cyberwar capabilities, including arguably the networks which DDoS'ed WikiLeaks.

Also implicitly seeing the conflict between state and network power, national security specialist Eric Sterner (2011) analyses the conflict in terms of two different views of cyberspace and its relationship to “society”: a view that cyberspace must conform to existing institutions, and a view that cyberspace is re-ordering society and unleashing new possibilities for human freedom (p.1). These two views can be summarised as a state and network perspective respectively. Not surprisingly, Sterner is broadly sympathetic to the former view, maintaining that WikiLeaks has harmed American national security, and typifying Internet freedom advocates, following Tim Hwang, as “expansionists” (ibid. p 3). This follows a long tradition in IR of accusing new political formations of aggression and revisionism, disrupting the stable balance of world peace. So-called “expansionists” ostensibly believe that “large institutions and organizations, such as governments, are not entitled to privacy or secrecy” (ibid. p. 4). On the other side, proponents of imposed conformity are typified as instrumental, seeing cyberspace as a “tool of society” which “should

conform to established relationships, values and laws” (ibid. p.4). The subtext here is that the established laws are those of the state, the established relationships are those of dominant groups (not of long-time Internet users), and by extension, “society” refers to the capitalist system or the state. Despite this assessment, Sterner also sees WikiLeaks as part of a trend which is here to stay, based in the culture of the Internet, and which will “undermine the long-term utility of the Internet for commerce and governance” (ibid. p.3). He sees the two sides engaged in an intensifying conflict which is playing out in courts and legislatures across fields such as net neutrality and intellectual property (ibid. p. 5).

Sterner's criticisms of so-called expansionists are twofold. Firstly, attacks on the “instrumental view of cyberspace” are taken to undermine “trust”, which makes cyberspace less useful for “conducting activities”. Secondly, if large institutions and corporations “step back from the use of cyberspace because they lose trust”, its revolutionary potential is also diminished (ibid. p.7). The subtext here is blatant: cyberspace is valuable, only if global elites can still exploit it, without which, it becomes useless. By an act of verbal acrobatics, Sterner thus portrays a process of corporate and state enclosure of an autonomous zone as a status quo threatened by aggressive attacks. The scenario of complete de-commodification of the Internet, which he posits is unlikely, unless accompanied by a thoroughgoing move towards networked, peer-to-peer production structures. Outside such a context, a less corporate-friendly Internet would see capitalists forced to reach compromises and conform to Internet culture, rather than altering it. It would take more than a reduction in trust to prevent their exploitation of whatever profit opportunities they can find, since as we know from the subprime mortgages affair, capitalists are not necessarily averse to risk. In any case, the biggest threat to the trustworthiness of online transactions is doubtless the state's attempts to break encryption systems through means such as quantum computing, a process which poses very real risks of rendering e-banking and secure purchasing obsolete.

The idea of “expansionism” is seriously problematic. As suggested by various scholars (Christofoletti & Oliveira, 2011; Flew & Liu, 2011; Ludlow, 2010), WikiLeaks has its ideological origins in the hacker ethic. Since the hacker ethic is as old as the Internet, and arguably provides the constitutive power generating the Internet's emergence and evolution, claims of “expansionism” are poorly directed. Rather, it is the state's attempts to striate or encroach on the Internet as an autonomous networked terrain, largely due to the expansion of corporate and conformist assemblages online, which entails “expansion” and the revision of the status quo.

It is worth contrasting Sterner's work with another work from a similar angle. From a cybersecurity perspective, Betz and Stevens (2012) argue for a less repressive approach to the governance of cyberspace. The state must accept the autonomy of cyberspace in order to benefit from its economic potential. The division among statist scholars shows a key dilemma of state power, between the addition of axioms and tolerance of autonomy so as to exploit it, and the subtraction of axioms and repression of autonomy so as to suppress lines of flight (Karatzogianni & Robinson, 2010, pp. 50-2). The expansion of capital, and thus of state power, depends on exploitation of flows of creativity, but tolerating or enabling these flows requires a relaxation of the pervasive desire for control. In seeking to make cyberspace “safe” for itself, the state risks killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Ultimately the Promethean fire of constitutive power underpins the order of Fate, and Zeus is at risk of destroying himself along with his “enemy”.

Also discussing the power-conflict between states and networks, Saunders (2011) casts the WikiLeaks affair as a hacktivist challenge to the diplomatic system. He argued that the cables on the whole revealed little more than gossip – such as the scandalous leaks about Berlusconi, Qadaffi and Putin -- or else affirmed unsurprising facts about American foreign policy, such as Yemen's collusion in drone strikes, NATO plans to defend the Baltic States and Poland, and American anger at Armenian arms sales to Iran. A few leaks, he admits, were genuinely revealing, such as American complicity in Ukrainian tank sales to Southern Sudanese militias, and Hillary Clinton's orders to spy on key UN officials (ibid. p. 6). More broadly, he sees the WikiLeaks affair as a “crisis” which

threatens “traditional forms of diplomatic power in the international system, particularly those that are dependent on closed networks, reliable distinctions between public/private information and established geopolitical narratives” (ibid. p.2). This challenge comes from emergent structures of digitised global communication: “Perhaps at no time in history have ordinary citizens possessed so much power in the field of global politics” (ibid. p. 9).

Overall, however, Saunders’ verdict rules out the participation of new political formations in global diplomacy. “While Julian Assange & Co. proved that even the most clandestine exchanges might be plastered across the front page of the New York Times, no member of the WikiLeaks will ever be called upon to solve the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, negotiate trade agreements between Azerbaijan and Russia, or set environmental policy for the G-20” (ibid. p.9). This importance is not only ethical, but strategic: since diplomatic elites can shape mainstream media discourse, they will continue to rule the roost (ibid.). What this account misses is that social movements and networks *do* seek to act on all these issues, from mass resistance to unequal trade agreements in Korea and Bolivia, to ecological protests, which have forced strong concessions in regions such as Uttarakhand and the Penan territories, to grassroots conflict transformation initiatives such as those of *La Ruta Pacifica*. States are, of course, more effective in finding statist solutions which benefit elites, but social movements are very much players in all of these fields, often in a highly public way. The transfer of power from states to networks may alter the balance of power towards social movements in many of these fields, ensuring more socially just and sustainable outcomes than statist diplomacy would have realised. In addition, the revelation of what is already known or suspected is itself significant, in that it removes the deniability behind which power can otherwise hide.

Again on diplomacy, but from a cybersecurity point of view, Bronk (2011) emphasises the rise of “cyber-enabled diplomacy”, in which cyberspace is itself used for diplomatic purposes by the US government. He suggests that the WikiLeaks affair triggered the US state's decision to install a “cyber coordinator” (ibid. p. 4), but also suggests that the incident is ultimately unimportant, since similar information breaches are unlikely to be repeated in similar ways (ibid. p. 13). The Edward Snowden leaks in the summer of 2013 have spectacularly refuted this argument. In Bronk’s case, it is the technical, tactical, operational emphasis which creates the chain connecting scholar to state: by seeing WikiLeaks saga solely in terms of a technical failure to prevent a “breach” (defined as such from the state's point of view), Bronk is a typical ‘problem-solving theorist’, bracketing out the broader frames within which technical problems are embedded. The WikiLeaks “event” in effect becomes invisible, reduced to a failure of the coordination of elements in the existing situation.

On a similar note, Erbacher (2011) uses the WikiLeaks affair as the basis for a discussion of technical means of preventing further leaks – deemed in the usual fear-inflated language as “insider threats”. He proposes the use of procedures which will expose “significant irregularities” so as to identify threats (p. 1). As Erbacher admits, such profiling has traditionally been avoided because it both fails to detect actual threats and accuses too many innocent people. In the authoritarian drive for a threat-free, totally controlled world, Erbacher glorifies the use of data mining techniques, which effectively can breach both privacy and encryption and criminalise difference. The NSA and GCHQ surveillance operations as revealed by Edward Snowden are an case in point of the pitfalls of such approach and the potential for abuse.

Another cybersecurity specialist, Paul Rosenzweig (2011), argues that the US needs an online counterinsurgency strategy. He sees WikiLeaks as “launching an assault on state authority” (pp. 1-2), expressing an enemy ideology which is shared by groups such as Anonymous. He also suggests that Anonymous’ vulnerability to counterattack is likely temporary (ibid. p 2). He calls for attacks to “isolate fringe actors from the general populace and deny them support and refuge” (ibid. p. 5). Though differentiated from a purely technical response, this approach still fails to engage with the adversary on anything other than an operational level. The technical means used are simply broader (and more dangerous to civil liberties). The possibility that actions against a secretive and

repressive state might be justified is simply framed-out of this kind of analysis, which takes the legitimacy of the global system for granted, and sees any means which preserve it as justified. A reader of the likes of Erbacher and Rosenzweig will be left in no doubt that the American state is waging full-spectrum war against autonomous global networks – that social war is not a figment of imaginations of insurrectionary anarchists, but an accurate appraisal of how global capitalism operates today. To a civilian reading such texts, this is a chilling revelation, showing the danger that this overbearing apparatus poses for individuals and groups in diverse socio-cultural and political settings. The more prepared the state becomes to smash every adversary – blown-up by its own ideology into “threats” and “enemies” – the more it generates the very conditions of illegitimacy which render such adversity both necessary and justified.

Strong statist positions have also appeared in the ethical theory literature. For instance, Somerville (2010) had argued that leaking is a “wrong means”, which is not outweighed by “good ends”, as well as arguing that it poses large risks such as global war. She argues that it poses such a threat to America's “social capital” – such as trust in the government – to be considered harmful. In other words, government wrongdoing should be covered up so as to maintain the basis for social support for the dominant system. By extension, anything that undermines the dominant system – even if only by showing its own failings and hypocrisy – is “wrong” and should be suppressed. Somerville's view is implicitly totalitarian, in that there seem to be no circumstances in which state power could meaningfully be constrained on her model – any reduction in concentrated power would entail the “harms” of reducing social capital and reducing control (hence risking war, breakdown, etc). As Žižek (2011) put it, it means “Socrates was guilty as charged: philosophy *is* a threat to society. [It] undermines the citizens' loyalty, and thus the basis of normal social life” (p. 2011). This is where the logistical model of the contemporary state logically leads: every field of social life must be micro-regulated to guarantee that no crisis can possibly emerge. This approach necessarily elides or minimises the harms done by the state itself, eliding the possibility that concentrated power can be used for harm and diffuse power for good.

Responding to Somerville's view, media and propaganda theorist Randall Marlin (2011) argues that WikiLeaks is on the whole a good thing for media ethics. This does not simply mean that ends justifying means, but a higher ethical good negating the wrongness of the means (p. 3). Hence, Marlin maintains that WikiLeaks is deontologically – not only consequentially – defensible. WikiLeaks is a counterforce against anti-democratic or anti-truth forces in the contemporary world, providing “the raw material that the public often needs to form sound judgements” (ibid. p. 5). WikiLeaks could also lead to great goods, such as making it harder to fabricate the basis for going to war (ibid. p. 5). He concludes that, “some drastic means are needed to push back against the increasing inequalities favouring the very rich” (ibid. p. 6). The real stakes of the dispute between Somerville and Marlin can easily be seen to reflect their opposed assessments of the merits of constraining executive power. For Somerville, the state is identical to society, and undermining it reduces social trust. For Marlin, the state must be counterbalanced or held to account in order to restore it to a socially beneficial position, as it has been subject to capture by elites. Marlin thus embraces the redistribution of power from concentrated to diffuse forces, which WikiLeaks entails, whereas Somerville construes it as a threat.

There is a significant irony here. In other contexts, the state is all for what Virilio (1997) terms “telepresence”, supporting surveillance with the duplicitous claim “nothing to hide = nothing to fear”. The inversion of telepresence, the sudden exposure of the state to the ease of visibility in the information age, thus exposes the hypocrisy of its own reactions, seeking a special exception from the vulnerability to visibility it imposes on others. Radical commentators have made short shrift of the statist account. For instance, Chomsky (2011) claims that “one of the major reasons for government secrecy is to protect the government from its own population”. He adds that much of what was in the WikiLeaks cables consisted of material Americans should know, but the

government does not wish them to know, and that the elitist nature of the cables shows a “profound hatred for democracy” by American and foreign rulers (ibid.). Similarly, anarchist commentator Lawrence Jarach (2012) relates the WikiLeaks issue to the importance of “the self-perpetuating cycle of knowledge and secrecy” for bureaucratic and government control. The government has sought to distract attention from itself with attacks on WikiLeaks, and the real reason for the outcry is exposure. “The sociopath caught in the act of stealing is not embarrassed about stealing, but [about] getting caught” (ibid.). However, he is sceptical of the possibility of radical effects arising from disclosure, both because the documents contain too much information to process, and because people are too used to being fed sound-bites instead.

Critical IR and Diplomacy Responses to WikiLeaks

Since diplomats were the main target of the Cablegate leaks, one might expect them to echo the securitarian attacks on WikiLeaks. In practice, however, they show (perhaps predictably) more tact and awareness than their statist brethren. Former Canadian ambassador Jeremy Kinsman (2011) unusually suggests that the cables actually show a positive image of America struggling, vainly and often alone, against an encroaching global disorder. He also contests the view that the WikiLeaks affair will lead to greater secrecy, suggesting that it should contribute to a growing awareness of the need for greater openness to keep up in a networked world. Also from a diplomatic perspective, Cull (2011) likens WikiLeaks to the Soviet decision to publish Russian imperial diplomatic archives in 1917, portraying it as a ‘game change’ in international diplomacy (p. 1). Diplomats have increasingly had to maintain a public face to take advantage of new information technologies (ibid. p. 4). Cull suggests that “individuals are inherently more powerful than they have been at any time in history”, particularly when organised in networks. “This global and wired public cannot be ignored” (ibid. p. 6). While this “frightening aspect of chaos” has caused panic among those in power, such as the reaction to WikiLeaks, it ultimately requires changes in how politicians and diplomats operate (ibid. p.7). Cull suggests it will create pressure against double-dealing and for greater openness, just as the Soviet revelations did (ibid. p. 2).

Similar observations appear in the scholarship on diplomacy. French critical scholars Devin and Tournquist-Chesnier argue that diplomacy is evolving into a new configuration in which the public vs. secret dichotomy no longer operates, and the relation to non-state actors becomes more important. This “opens up new fields for research by questioning the intra-systemic relations of a ‘diplomatic community’ ” conceived in expanded terms, examining networks of diplomacy in terms of vertical and horizontal connections (ibid. p.73). They call for a move towards a “new diplomacy” that is multilateral, public and itinerant instead of secretive, sedentary and individualised, a transition arguably aided by WikiLeaks. The WikiLeaks affair is conceived in terms of the new-found vulnerability of states to non-state actors (ibid. p.71).

Discussions of diplomacy also involve fears that diplomacy as currently constituted is at risk. According to its advocates, the diplomatic privilege and the confidentiality of diplomatic communications are supposed to allow “states to communicate with each other in open and candid ways, and also for important figures to say things they think true, but too politically damaging or physically dangerous for publication” (Page & Spence, 2011, p. 237). Page and Spence suggest that WikiLeaks has challenged such norms of diplomacy, but also suggest that the system is flawed and requires change. The leaks should inspire caution in America's sources, as well as raising concern over the boundaries between diplomacy and espionage. Nevertheless, they suggest that in the longer term diplomacy will not change, and if anything, will become more secretive rather than less (ibid. p. 242). Similarly, Chesterman (2011) thinks that governments will respond to the risk of leaks through increasing self-censorship, secrecy and the use of oral briefings, which “will lead to worse decision and less accountability for the decisions that are made. It seems a high price to pay

for gossip” (p. 4). One can perhaps revisit the irony of such defences of diplomacy, with Assange living under diplomatic asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy since 19 June 2012, and with the British government threatening to violate diplomatic norms to get him out.

Some international studies work offers perspectives similar to those of the diplomacy literature. For instance, Beth Simmons (2011) argues that the WikiLeaks affair is symptomatic of the importance of information and new media in contemporary international politics. She argues that new social media “seem to empower social actors” (p. 590), and that greater ease of exposure could help expose state duplicity and enforce international agreements (p. 594). However, she also repeats the arguments that governments may respond to WikiLeaks by becoming more secretive – classifying more material as “top secret” or restricting diplomatic discussions so as to avoid leaks. For Simmons, this expresses a core capitalist principle that there is no such thing as a free lunch (p. 593). Of course, this repeats the ideological framing in which capitalism is somehow inevitable, and every resistance simply reinforces it – resistance is therefore futile. This position is premised on a belief that another world – one where “free lunches” are part and parcel of peer-to-peer distribution – is not possible.

The broader context of WikiLeaks is one in which the US is attempting to reproduce a climate of global war. Strategic analysts such as Miskimmon et al. (n.d.) offer a constructivist account of the situation. These authors suggest that strategic narratives are “a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of international politics to shape behaviour of domestic and international actors” (p.8). Authors such as Gray (2011) maintain that the US state is seeking to keep alive the 'war on terror' strategic narrative, even while seeking multilateral engagement (p. 35). The argument that “American identities are deeply embedded and remain heavily imbued with racial, religious and imperial features” also challenges any transformational claims of the Obama national security strategy (Parmar, 2011, p. 153). Other critical IR scholars emphasise the outpouring of violent rhetoric and repressive actions by the American regime, from threats to assassinate Assange or designate WikiLeaks a terrorist group, to the attempts to have Assange extradited. Such responses are taken to show the worst about sovereign power, as they “amount to a profound showing of authoritarianism” (Springer et al., 2012).

Between Human Rights and Sovereign Exception: Legal Scholarship

Also broadly within the state domain, but more alert than most to the abuse of power and concerned to protect the professional niche of law from the expansionist national-security apparatus, legal scholars have responded by focusing on the ambiguities thrown up by the affair. In the American literature, the WikiLeaks affair reignited ongoing debates between the liberal commitment to transparency – enshrined in the First Amendment and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) – and the nationalist obsession with preserving security at any cost. Legal scholars have called for clarification or reform of existing laws to determine what information is protected and what is prohibited (Opper, 2011, pp. 240-1), though in the current climate this is likely to lead to a securitarian outcome. American regime commentators have been quick to distance WikiLeaks from First Amendment precedents such as the Pentagon Papers case, instead seeking to frame WikiLeaks within the 'global war on terror', as espionage, terrorism or security threat. This expresses a contradiction within law, which is becoming increasingly salient in the context of securitization, and which is highlighted especially by Agamben: the contradiction between the claim to legal inclusion, such as human and civil rights, and the “sovereign exception” on which law is secretly based, the arbitrary decision to divide the world into bare life and politically-recognised life, that is between the state as orderly life and as divine vengeance. Pro-regime commentators have been quick to seek to portray WikiLeaks as “bare life”, unprotected by media freedom, whistleblowing precedents or the American First Amendment, whereas supporters of WikiLeaks emphasise its fundamental

continuity with other cases of whistleblowing, and the arbitrariness of the sovereign exception. As Wall (2011) suggests in relation to the Anonymous collective, the defence of human rights in a contemporary period is “anti-sovereign”, occurring across the boundary between liberal rights and a radical theory of the multitude. It involves the enforcement of human rights by networks, against states.

Legal scholars have generated a backlash against the militarisation of the WikiLeaks affair which stands somewhere between a strong statist perspective and a pro-network position, as one might expect from the position of lawyers as part of the included stratum, seeking to constrain but not undermine the state. Criticising the expansion of sovereign power to cyberconflict, military legal specialist Dunlap (2011) argues against the common view that there is a lack of international law governing cyberconflict, suggesting that the difficulty is, rather, in establishing the facts necessary to apply the law. He suggests that a less tolerant “national security” framework is being used, in which force is used to eliminate perceived threats and is “intolerant of any injury”, instead of a “law enforcement” framework, which uses force to detain suspects for trial (p. 84). Dunlap suggests that online incidents such as the WikiLeaks affair are insufficient to qualify as use of force or to justify acts of war, both because the harm caused is insufficiently great, and because the actors involved are not representatives of states. This places the issue within the field of law enforcement. Such an approach would certainly pare back discourses of national security, but still seems to suggest an ultimate primacy of states over social movements. He fails to see the social factors – i.e. the emerging power of networks, and their ability to act autonomously from states – which repressive “national security” regimes seek to suppress.

In Australia, while political responses have been conflictual as to what international whistleblowing might entail, there is a developing pressure “for a new whistle-blowing framework, so that current unworkable presumptions against any disclosure are removed, and conflicts are more manageable” (Brown, 2011). Such apparent legal ambiguities arise from the conflict between the state's expansive demand for logistical control of territory and the restrictions placed on this demand by other social forces in the course of history. The difficulty is in fact an effect of the dual structure of neoliberal law, in which a regime of rights coexists with expansive sovereign exceptions grounded on security. Since the twin dynamics of movement-led opening and state-led closure construct the material field in which the conflict of values occurs, it seems utopian and dangerous to trust to one of the contenders – the state – to arrive at a fair “balance”.

Another legal scholar, Fenster (2011) suggests that WikiLeaks calls into question the meaning and effect of the suppression and disclosure of government information on a level more about power than law. With networked technologies creating an age of transparency, the relationship between government and citizens is changing. Fenster suggests that the information revealed by WikiLeaks is less important than the fact that government officials can no longer assume that their communications will remain confidential.

The WikiLeaks disclosures both represent and portend enormous changes in how secret documents become public, and in the meaning and extent of transparency in a wired, digital age. The celebrity suggests that disclosure matters – that, in some combination, the documents have enlightened the public, affected the ability of state actors to perform their jobs, and created risks for the ongoing efforts that the documents revealed.

(Fenster, 2011, p. 15).

In short, the rise of discloseability in a wired age portends changes in the balance of power between states and other actors – a recurring claim across all perspectives.

A particularly strong counterpoint to security perspectives in legal scholarship comes from those

seeking to protect transparency, free speech and media inquiry from what they see as government censorship. For Benkler (2011b), there is no constitutional basis to prosecute Assange in America. The US government has overstated the dangers of the leaks, and the media has been complicit in this, engaging in self-censorship. Benkler likens the case to the Pentagon Papers release. He suggests that the attempt to single out WikiLeaks as a singularly irresponsible media actor distinct from mainstream media is simply government rhetoric. He cites WikiLeaks' activities and media commentary on them as evidence that it is an instance of exemplary investigative journalism. In contrast, he calls for prohibitions of private operators' withdrawal of service to a target of government or public outcry, on the grounds that the present arrangement of privately-ran communication provision leaves dissidents vulnerable to what he terms "vigilante responses" by allies of the government.

Social Scholarship and the Power of Networks

If security studies and Realist IR theory are the preserve of die-hard statisticians, then a counterpoint of sorts can be expected from scholars working primarily on social, rather than state, issues. Social scientists, particularly scholars in media studies and 'Internet and society', start from similar observations to other scholars: WikiLeaks emerges from digital social networks, and expresses a growing power of, and emerging culture of, digital networks counterposed to (certain forms of) state power. However, they are generally either sanguine or excited about the prospects for change, which this redistribution entails. To be sure, few of these scholars write purely from the side of Prometheus. Many are liberal-democrats, seeking to insert greater accountability, transparency and responsiveness to popular power into the existing system, or to bring it in line with new technologies. Nevertheless, their closeness to the Promethean flame, and ambivalence regarding the Order of Fate, are clear markers of their closeness to the networked, societal side of the WikiLeaks divide.

What is for statisticians a matter of fear, is for social scholars a matter of potentially emancipatory change. We have already seen that, for conventional IR scholars, the potential subversion of the power-advantages of states is a matter of anxiety. In Hungary, Radó (2011) takes the issues of diplomacy and risk further, from a more critical perspective. He argues that WikiLeaks opens up questions of the inside and outside of the public and private spheres in a digitally networked world. Using concepts such as sense/nonsense, materiality/simulation, state/nonstate and participation/spectatorship, she asks whether the current system should fear the collapse of the public sphere and dominant forms of diplomacy, or whether WikiLeaks instead portends the expansion of the public sphere. Her position is that "WikiLeaks presents an in-between phenomenon, in which case its appearance on the stage of world politics already signifies that there is a move from a traditionally conceptualized "public sphere" towards the operation of the sphere of 'publicity' in the terrain of politics" (Radó, 2011: 6). WikiLeaks thus portends, not an apocalyptic scenario of uncontrolled harm, but a rebalancing of the relationship between society and state towards a more participatory regime of power.

As seen above, the data provided by WikiLeaks is portrayed as a threat to scholarship. Scholars of diplomacy have a vested interest in the preservation of diplomatic records that are necessary to the pursuit of their own craft, and hence in the availability of untainted records in thirty years, rather than instant records now and a risk of no records tomorrow. Scholars in other fields, in contrast, have found the WikiLeaks cables an invaluable source of data. For instance, human geographers find the data revealed to be a treasure trove for mapping contemporary conflicts (O'Loughlin et al., 2010). Similarly, el-Said (2012: 1) suggests that the leaked cables show a "bleak picture" of American imposition of intellectual property laws on the global South. He uses the WikiLeaks cables on the American-Jordanian Free Trade Agreement negotiations to reveal America's

manoeuvres and agenda, with the US pushing on behalf of pharmaceutical lobbyists to impose their patents on Jordan, to the detriment of the Jordanian health system. El-Said's research on Jordan is echoed by Sarikakis (2012: 16), who shows that WikiLeaks exposed American lobbying for repressive anti-piracy laws in France and Spain. WikiLeaks has provided a valuable trove of data which, due to its publicity, can be mined by academics as well as journalists and activists.

WikiLeaks has also been cautiously welcomed in postcolonial studies. Yamaguchi (2012) argues that, before WikiLeaks, few scholars exposed the functioning of American state decision-making relative to its spaces of exception, suggesting that this is an effect of a pervasive Orientalism, which reinforces the construction of exception. It has also been noted, however, that the value of transparency is culturally relative (Southern Perspectives, 2011), while some leftist commentators have questioned the valuation of transparency over secrecy (Birchall, 2011). Discussing the impact on the Middle East, al-Karoui argues that the WikiLeaks phenomenon could only happen in societies, which place a high value on transparency. Nevertheless, it was framed through a false dichotomy of "a tradeoff between the security of citizens and society on the one hand, and sacrificing transparency on the other" (p. 1). However, it should be noted that similar hacktivist methods *are* used in countries such as China and Iran, as ways to fight censorship. The similarities between these movements and the western campaign for WikiLeaks is shown by the support offered by hacktivist collective Anonymous to the Iranian 'green revolution' and the Arab Spring. Ironically, it was WikiLeaks who exposed Chinese hacking against the Dalai Lama (Simmons, 2011, p. 592), while another group, the Hong Kong Blondes, similarly disrupted Chinese networks in the 1990s (Ludlow, 2010). In short, the relationship between WikiLeaks, western values and 'transparency' is not as easily linked. The empowering effects of diffuse technologies for otherwise weak social actors are obviously not exclusively observed in western liberal democratic societies.

One narrative which is given short shrift in the academic literature is the media narrative which sees WikiLeaks as the cause of the Arab Spring and hence of a wave of democratisation in the Middle East. Scholars of the region have criticised this teleological narrative for failing to see local factors and the incompleteness of the revolution. For instance, Way (2011) compares the Arab Spring to 1989, and concludes that the collapse of authoritarianism does not guarantee democratisation, particularly if the 'structural underpinnings' of authoritarianism remain intact (p.18). Similarly, Krieg (2011) argues that the transition to democracy in Egypt is being held up by state-military relations, and Dennison et al. (2011: 2) emphasise Tunisian discontent over the EU's failure to support Tunisian democratisation. Such scholars add necessary caution to observations regarding WikiLeaks' revolutionary effects.

Further, the broader issue of 'transparency' versus 'privacy' is a recurring theme. Citizen journalist Heather Brooke (2011) frames the WikiLeaks affair as part of a wider information war in which grassroots activists challenge the control over information exercised by the ruling Establishment. She suggests that this movement could determine whether the Internet empowers people, or ushers in a new age of surveillance. Ludlow (2010) emphasises the role of hacker ethics in WikiLeaks, particularly the idea of sharing information, and ridicules the posture of statists who seek an evil mastermind behind the organisation. In contrast, Rosen (2011) frames the issue in terms of the death of privacy in an era of enforced visibility. Arguably, this debate about values is something of a smokescreen for the real stakes, which are about diffuse versus concentrated power. It might be suggested that the values of transparency or secrecy are actually split: neither state secrecy nor the transparency of social action to state surveillance are positive phenomena. Correspondingly, both individual anonymity or small-group invisibility, and 'sousveillance' against the powerful are liberatory. The real stakes of the dispute are not between two generic values applied in a classless way, but rather, in a conflict between concentrated and diffuse forms of power.

Although many social scholars are interested in the revolutionary potential of new technologies, some are more interested in how this potential can be recuperated. From a citizenship and participation perspective, Bruns (2011) suggests that the “self-organising community responses” shown by the Anonymous actions and WikiLeaks' mirroring project show the ability for networked groups to “bypass or leapfrog, at least temporarily, most organisational or administrative hurdles” (p. 35). WikiLeaks is itself sustained by citizen-to-citizen connections, drawing on a sense of directly “fighting the system” (ibid. p. 46). As befits someone interested in citizen integration, however, he is also concerned that the dynamic is “too decentralised”, “outside the social compact of society”, and lacking means for citizen-government negotiation (ibid. p. 47). He seeks to draw from such dissident responses the resources for more effective forms of e-democracy at a state level, expressing an archetypal “addition of axioms” position.

The issue has also been approached using actor-network theory. This time using a social analysis rather than a legal approach, Benkler (2011a) argues that the Internet renders media more censorship-resistant, altering the distribution of power among actors in an actor-network (p. 723). He suggests that the Internet makes actors such as WikiLeaks freer than they would otherwise be, which in turn constrains actors such as the US Government. Similarly to statist scholars, Benkler uses a frame focused on a state versus network conflict, but with a positive-sum view of power (as actualisation of preferences), in which increased freedom or power for one actor reduces that of others. “WikiLeaks can be said to be an exercise in counter-power, because it disrupts the organizational-technical form in which governments and large companies habitually control the flow of information about their behavior in ways that constrain the capacity of others to criticize them” (ibid. p.728). Furthermore, the Internet provided Chelsea Manning with information about the army, and means to disseminate information, which gave him increased power (Benkler, 2011a, p. 722).

Certain accounts also focus on the response to the repression of WikiLeaks. Analysing the Anonymous DDOS attacks, Barnard-Wills (2011) suggests that the metaphor of war conceals more than it reveals, instead suggesting that cyberconflict is a complex, dynamic conflict over hegemony, democracy and securitisation. Alleyne's (2011) discussion emphasises that WikiLeaks acted as a focal point for a global community of hackers and open-source activists, using methods that Alleyne emphasises are hardly new, and not at all reducible to the personality of Assange (pp. 12-13). Lovink (2011) discusses the lack of security measures by Anonymous participants, alleging that they failed to protect their own anonymity and that, perhaps, their name is out of sorts with the telepresence of contemporary web culture (p. 48). He suggests that, in an age of forced transparency, transparency signals administrative availability rather than democratic transparency, and fake identities provide resistance against such control (ibid. p. 49). The Anonymous attacks seem to be the key issue separating radical commentators from those, such as Sifry (2011), whose critical support for WikiLeaks comes from a desire to restore liberal governance, against the national security state. For liberals, such actions risk undermining the message of free speech, and reinforcing the view of WikiLeaks as anarchic and dangerous. From a radical perspective, in contrast, they amount to a form of counter-power directed against the power of the dominant system.

Luckily, no global controversy today is complete without an intervention from Slovenian critical philosopher and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek and unsurprisingly, he has weighed in on the WikiLeaks affair. Žižek likens Assange to the Joker in *Batman: The Dark Knight*, a villain who exposes the Straussian lie on which the dominant order is based. WikiLeaks' radicalism is disruptive of the global order because it prevents people going on pretending not to know: “even if everyone knows an unpleasant fact, saying it in public changes everything” (p. 3). Hence, “our shame for tolerating such power over us is made more shameful by being publicised” (ibid. p. 5). WikiLeaks is also radical because it avoids traditional means of challenging power. However, this argument does not stop with this position in favour of WikiLeaks. Žižek also suggests that the

crucial ideological battle is not between WikiLeaks and the US state, but within WikiLeaks itself, between a truly radical critique and a hegemonic reinscription (for more on WikiLeaks and ideological and organizational internal tensions, see Karatzogianni, 2012). This is Žižek version of the common footnote that WikiLeaks itself is too closed and “conspiratorial”. But it also entails concern about how WikiLeaks is recuperated as mere investigative journalism by its mainstream defenders. Žižek thus attempts to draw a line between a truly radical position, supporting WikiLeaks' transgressive generation of an event, and the 'addition of axioms' positions discussed above.

“We Told You So”: Internet, Media, Culture and Communication Studies

While WikiLeaks is a spectacular new event for the global media, the US state and its defenders, and for scholars in many fields, it is more clearly perceptible within Internet and media studies, in which it can be seen as an effect, a critical mass, arising from an accumulated process of becomings which were visible long before the event itself. In Internet studies, the WikiLeaks affair has reinforced an existing emphasis on emerging networks and social transformation, and the events of the WikiLeaks affair do not come as much of a surprise, reflecting trends already widely discussed in the field. However, the WikiLeaks affair has re-ignited debates about the impact of digitality, social media and networked communications on politics, media and society. The issue inter-relates closely with those on digital statecraft, cyberprotest and hacktivism, the political economy of communications, and information justice / intellectual property.

Micah L. Sifry, a specialist on social transformations and new technology, has published a book that uses WikiLeaks as the hook to discuss the social changes it expresses. He locates WikiLeaks as part of a grassroots groundswell of pro-democracy and transparency activism. 'The “Age of Transparency” is here: not because... WikiLeaks exists, but because the knowledge of how to build and maintain such networks is now widespread' (p. 14). WikiLeaks is simply one part of a “larger continuum of changes in how people and the powerful relate to each other... changes that are fundamentally healthy for the growth and strength of an open society” (ibid., p. 17). The power to spread information “beyond centralized control, is our best defence against opacity and the bad behavior it can enable” (ibid. p. 187). Repressive responses are deemed a threat to the freedom of the press (ibid. pp. 17-18). Again, a reservation is put forward regarding Assange's leadership and WikiLeaks' “autocratic” structures (ibid. pp. 168-9). Overall, however, Sifry sees WikiLeaks as an instance of a phenomenon already widely theorised in Internet studies. On a similar note, Berry (2012) uses WikiLeaks as an example of a growing trend for dissidents to use open-source forms of publishing.

Also from an Internet studies perspective, new media theorist Geert Lovink (2011) suggests that WikiLeaks can be “seen as the pilot phase in the evolution toward a far more generalized culture of anarchic exposure beyond the traditional politics of openness and transparency” (ibid. p. 177). WikiLeaks is a small player in global affairs, but is able to exercise power through media attention and spectacular revelations, bypassing the formal “one-world” structures that bind most civil society groups into existing forms of state power (ibid. p. 178). He also suggests that the US state is a relatively soft target, compared to more authoritarian or culturally diverse states, or to corporations (ibid. p. 178). In retrospective, his argument holds considerable weight in light of the Snowden affair in the summer of 2013. The structural difficulties with WikiLeaks stem from its position somewhere between a mere conduit for data and a media agency selecting and publicising content. Lovink also emphasises the impact of 1980s hacker culture and problems with Assange's “sovereign” role in the organisation (ibid. p.181). Against the image of Internet 'expansionists', Lovink suggests that statists are seceding from a previous libertarian consensus that kept regulation at arm's length. This is occurring because the outcomes of growing social networking are not what corporate rulers wanted (ibid. p. 3). Powerful forces had previously accepted a free Internet in the

belief that it would ultimately become a neoliberal Internet of its own accord, but are becoming frustrated that everyday networking is evolving in alternative directions.

Taking a pro-WikiLeaks position, leading network scholar Manuel Castells (2010) argues that WikiLeaks affirms his point that “power lies in the control of communication”, and that such power now escapes the apparatus of power, much more than does traditional journalism. Attempts to shut down WikiLeaks by cutting its connections have failed, because of the proliferation of mirror sites, showing the structural prevalence of freedom of information today. He suggests that ideas of risks of war or to informants from revelations are cover stories, designed to cover the real objection from governments that WikiLeaks undermines their ability to censor news and cover-up wrongdoing. “No security is at stake for states... At issue is the right of citizens to know what their governments are doing and thinking. Hence, the WikiLeaks affair is an instance of cyberwar between states and civil society” (ibid.). Castells' concerns about state responses are perhaps effects of his broader technological determinist position, in which states are encouraged to adapt to globalisation instead of constraining it. He would doubtless concur with Betz and Stevens' view that repression impedes the economic potential of the Internet and stifles innovation.

In a later work, Castells (2012) embeds WikiLeaks in a broader account of technologically-mediated social change. He emphasises that the Internet was initially promoted by DARPA and entrepreneurs. However, he also suggests that it grew from the dissident cultures of the 1960s-70s, with their emphasis on subjective freedom. Observing that Internet use increases people's valuation of autonomy, and also discussing the Arab Spring, Castells suggests that WikiLeaks is part of a broader, “mass insurrection against secret information”. What is important about WikiLeaks is the reaction against it, not WikiLeaks itself. This reaction is so excessive because it attacks the heart of contemporary power: control over information. WikiLeaks attempted to provide a safe repository for whistleblowers; it provided opportunities, rather than soliciting information. He cites Assange on the need to empower people to act in ways they could not before, and thus force regimes to change. This is based on a “deep philosophy of autonomy”, which seeks to prevent power-apparatuses from disseminating information privately, thus forcing them either to publicise themselves or become increasingly ineffective. It is not in fact a wiki, since the editorial committee makes publishing decisions, but it shares with wikis the fact that anybody can leak. He points out that most of what WikiLeaks has published is hidden from the public, yet is not a state secret. Because of WikiLeaks we are able to read 6500 Congressional reports which should be available to US taxpayers in any case, expose scandals from Germany to Kenya, access published but later censored materials, track censorship in China and shady religious groups, and so on. As with other authors, the main limit he sees to WikiLeaks is its own organisational closure.

Also from the social movement side, Internet sociologist Balasz Bodó (2011) portrays WikiLeaks as a manifestation of the counter-power of networks. “The ability to place the state under surveillance limits and ultimately renders present day sovereignty obsolete. It can also be argued that WikiLeaks (or rather the logic of it) is a new sovereign in the global political/economic sphere”. He also suggests that the repressive response to WikiLeaks raises questions about how networked power can sustain itself when states attack. WikiLeaks was attacked through its connections to a world system vulnerable to statist and corporate intervention – its access to the global payment system, web hosting, and use of the domain name system. This happened without any legal charges or due process. This raises questions such as, “what are the critical infrastructures for any digital, networked, organization to survive? Are there any real gatekeepers on the web, and if they are who are they, and how powerful they are? How effective is their control over the critical infrastructures? To what extent can any organization be sovereign in the cloud?” (Bodó, 2011). Hence a detailed examination of network power suggests that it still suffers from vulnerabilities relative to the state, and to state uses of networked power to their own advantage. Such vulnerabilities are already being addressed through projects such as the PirateBay plan to operate servers from mobile drones, the emergence of BitCoin, and the creation of radio-based Internet transmission to combat state

blackouts. Bodó also repeats the criticisms of WikiLeaks' organisational model, which is clandestine and far from transparent, suggesting that it shares too much of its social logic with its adversaries, and could be becoming a new sovereign.

In media studies, Flew and Liu (2011) examine the impact of WikiLeaks on the structure of journalism, based on analysis of online coverage of the WikiLeaks affair by both new and old media in Australia. They suggest that WikiLeaks' old-media partners have failed to catch up with an age of "information abundance" (p. 4). On a government level, the affair reflects the growth of a large number of "information insiders" at the same time that increasing amounts of information are removed from the public sphere (ibid.). They cite arguments that, whereas traditional leaking sought to offset government ineffectiveness, WikiLeaks aims to disrupt or constrain an increasingly controlling system in which government, media and corporation are enmeshed – an aim which finds sympathy from both left and right (ibid. p. 7). The widespread appeal of this view is one of the notable aspects of the affair in examining media commentary. What criticism WikiLeaks attracted in Australia was mainly focused on Assange's cult of personality and secretiveness, which are seen to impede the very social network ethic he promotes (ibid. p. 8). This reveals a possible tension between the hacker ethic and the goal of a public, networked world. On a similar note, Christofletti and Oliveira (2011) suggest that WikiLeaks is "the most potentially transforming journalism since the rise of Twitter" and is part of a "growing and irreversible trend" (p. 1). Analysing it as a crossover between journalistic ethics and hacker ethics, they argue that it is a positive force for uncovering information in the public interest (ibid.).

Chadwick (2011), meanwhile, uses WikiLeaks as a case-study of an emerging hybridity between old and new media, which throws into question the separation of the two within media studies. WikiLeaks is part of "broader networks of affinity" defined by "libertarian hacker culture" (p. 17) and is best defined as a "sociotechnical assemblage" (ibid. p. 21). Resilience is provided by systemic redundancy, as well as a wide raft of technical measures such as encryption (ibid. pp. 17-18). However, it acts more like "a team of traditional investigative journalists" in seeking to encourage leaks (ibid. p. 20), and a traditional editorial body in editing the film *Collateral Murder* (ibid. p. 23). Further, collaboration with old-media partners is used as a way to increase impact and recognition (ibid. pp. 24-5), leading to a "symbiotic" relationship to traditional media (ibid. p. 26). On the other side, traditional media used a custom search engine to mine the massive trove of data provided by WikiLeaks (ibid. p. 28). Chadwick also refers to constant attempts by journalists to boundary-police their relationship to WikiLeaks, falsely claiming to be more responsible or that WikiLeaks was "just a source" (ibid. pp. 30, 35), claims which leave WikiLeaks vulnerable, in violation of older precedents of media rights (ibid. p. 38). In contrast, he argues that WikiLeaks "occupies an important boundary space between old and new media" (ibid. p. 36).

Similarly, media studies scholar Michael I. Niman (2010) argues that the WikiLeaks affair shows the "disdain for democracy and a free press" shown by the US regime. He argues that "the WikiLeaks staff does what journalists are supposed to do – piss off powerful people", stressing that their targets have been worldwide, from Catholic hospitals violating religious codes to press censors in Bermuda. While he suggests they should have been more careful in protecting diplomatic privacy, he suggests the real scandals are the misclassification of harmless information as secret, pervasive government lying, and the extrajudicial attacks on WikiLeaks by global financial organisations. He also suggests it reveals the disturbing vulnerability of the Internet to state censorship, which should lead to a re-think of the migration of alternative media to the web. It can thus be suggested that responses in media studies are predominantly positive. Media scholars are excited by the transformative effects of WikiLeaks, because they create a new research agenda and open possibilities for expanded media freedom.

Conclusion: Unchaining the Digital Prometheus?

The receptions of the WikiLeaks affair across (and on the margins of) academia are thus diverse, and reflect different subject-positions in relation to the eventual effects, both of the WikiLeaks affair itself, and of the broader redistribution of social power that it expresses and portends. The WikiLeaks affair is a characteristic instance of an irruptive Event that disrupts an existing order of power. The reactionary response of statist seeking to preserve or restore a *status quo ante* manifests itself in a series of panicked outpourings calling for the restoration of order. In contrast, scholars sympathetic to emerging social networks – whether as a source of a revolutionary, peer-to-peer social alternative, as a source of constraint on over-empowered elites, or a source of energies and innovation to be exploited by capital – have embraced WikiLeaks as an expression of fundamentally positive changes. Internet and network scholars have been unsurprised at the affair, which demonstrates the validity of their existing work on emerging forms of networked power, while media scholars have welcomed the new informational openness enabled by the Internet.

Overall, then, what are the prospects that the Digital Prometheus can be unchained from the Law of Zeus? Ultimately, the persistence and expansion of networked power does not come down to the contributions of scholars. It is an effect of the innovations made by social movements and dissidents on the one hand, and logistical controllers on the other. It can be questioned whether scholarly commentary can really do much more than interpret the forces at play, arguably aiding their recuperation. Nevertheless, different streams of scholarship are feeding rather differently into the balance of forces. While securitarian statist scholars provide a veneer of respectability to the repressive backlash, social researchers frequently contribute to the comprehensibility of the WikiLeaks phenomenon, inserting it in a wider social context and showing its wider social effects. By rebutting the hysteria of statist, helping the transmissibility of emergent forces to new domains, reducing fear of the unknown, and showing the enormous positive potential of networked social forces, it can be hoped that scholars can play a role in the process of unchaining Prometheus.

To conclude, this article was originally written to understand the immediate impact of WikiLeaks in several fields of academia published during 2010-2012. Since then, Edward Snowden, by revealing the massive surveillance operations of the US government, has opened further, and in a spectacular manner, the debate about ethics and privacy in cybersecurity and internet governance, which WikiLeaks inevitably forced on the academe. It is healthy and vital, however many antinomies it generates, for academics involved in the debates explored here and elsewhere, to engage in debates with practitioners that could still unleash creative energies to a new world, where individual privacy is protected and where social justice, solidarity, and transparency are enmeshed in free, open, and inclusive social networks.

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