

“Leaking”: Digital Activism Is Today’s New Radicalism

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A new radicalism is rocking the foundations of modern politics, rapidly destroying venerated but defunct notions about our political systems and replacing them with new activism and political configurations of astonishing sophistication and power. Though there remain unresolved problems and tensions arising from this new political subject, the excitement amongst radicals worldwide is considerable and leading critics of empire are claiming that we are witness to a new age of dissent.

This activism is called “leaking” and though the activity and its marriage with “scientific journalism” is hardly new, a number of astonishing breakthroughs in the technological apparatus of whistleblowing at the turn of the new millennium have culminated in its evolution, suggesting that maybe we are finally perfecting investigative journalism: a comprehensive, secure framework that would unite whistleblowers and citizen journalist worldwide to expose corruption and reform, transvaluate obsolete politics.

Advocates of digital leaks even claim that the invention, with all credit to Aaron Schwartz, could even represent a renaissance or revolution in publishing.

Although publishers are generally conservative in their approach to new ideas, the backlash against the new media and its spokespeople has proven a point they will continue to dominate the publishing agenda for the foreseeable future. “If wars can be started by lies, peace can be started by truth”, said Julian Assange, progenitor of Wikileaks. At several conferences, he astonished traditional journalists by declaring a new means of organising the media, a new means of informational production, one with a distribution of labour between whistleblowers and citizen journalist that undercuts the need for fake news dictated by unelectable boardrooms. He added that as a great internet library, Wikileaks would lead to a new understanding of what history and society and politics really are, which is arguably the most dramatic change in civilisation since the printing press.

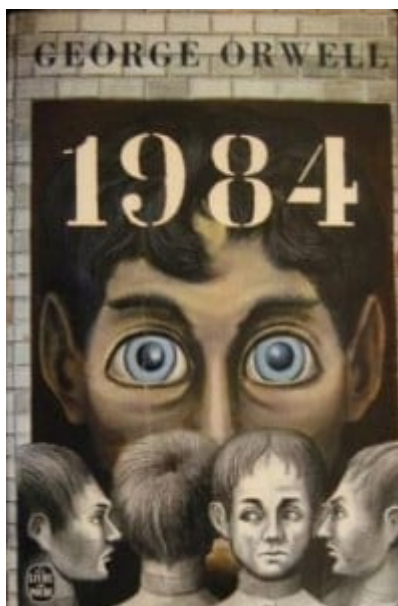
Even John Pilger, ever cautious not to hype the claims of journalists, compared Wikileaks’ work to Orwell’s. This genesis, he declared, may be no less profound than the transition of working class reality from the illusion of equality to 1984.

Two of the project’s researchers, Sarah Harrison, an investigative journalist, and Birgitta Jonsdottir, a radical anti-corruption parliamentarian in Iceland and bard represent – beneath the surface of media cartoons of a dictatorship – a project that spoke through many people and spoke to many.

At the heart of this endeavour is the knowledge that the internet, cryptography and

computer science may provide a comprehensive framework to support the quick verification, dissemination of information and protection of a source. The project even embraced startlingly modern techniques of decentralisation and asymmetric warfare when in combat with enemy lies, beginning to change the playing field.

Historically, whistleblowing has developed rather fragmented.



The great work of Tom Paine and George Orwell, for example, who computed the facts of the motion of Machiavellian politics with their critical reason and sharp, acid pens, differ significantly from the actions of Reality Winner, Daniel Ellsberg, Chelsea Manning, Jeremy Hammond, Edward Snowden, John Kiriakou and countless other selfless individuals who revealed the workings of deep state corruption with their publication of repressed information. Moreover, the virtues and principles required for contemporary whistleblowing seem unlike to Solzhenitsyn's literary portrait of totalitarianism, which described the grim Gulag system, dissidents' repression, and the absolute power of Stalin.

With developments in the technological apparatus of whistleblowing, however, it now becomes possible to apprehend these separate pieces of the puzzle and see them whole, as something bigger than the sum of their individual efforts. Although the quest for repatriation of truth is a recent one, with most of the pioneering work done in the past ten years, in retrospect it is easy to remediate the great works of whistleblowing in society in terms of the coherent concept of scientific journalism.

Due to the momentum created by Wikileaks, the history of journalism is fast being reshaped - beginning with the man who globalised cryptographic journalism, Julian Assange, and his discovery of the applications of computer science to source verification and protection, arguably the most impressive journalistic development in several hundred years of human history.

In the Age of Revolution, the journalism and publishing world was thrown in to seismic turmoil by a series of incendiary writings that challenged centuries of colonial rule. Earth was bearing witness to the genesis of a new consensus forming the ruins of the old Empire's order. Out of this maelstrom, however, emerged not one, but two legends.

Tom Paine fired the first canon and focused his work on understanding how the nature of elitist power such as royalties and dynasties corrupted the natural impulse of reason and democracy. The foundation for the criticism of how power works and manipulates the human species on a psychological level, however, was fired by the second legend, George Orwell, who virtually governs the world of modern radicalism. He was an Eton dropout and sought to collaborate with comrades in the international.

Interestingly, the fates of Paine and Orwell were analogous, though they stood aeons apart. Both of noble origin, they were renegades and iconoclasts who battled the orthodox wisdom and dogmas their contemporaries took for granted as operative truth. They continue to dominate and determine the course of dissidence for centuries beyond their own times.

Socrates was and remains an accomplished hero who went beyond the perimeters of the known world on a brave voyage for knowledge and returned with a new story to preach to the world. He was also a critic of power's corruption. According to the story of Socrates, both the hero and whistleblower are skilled at destroying seemingly stable illusions about reality and piecing together the facts of a given matter to piece together answers to seemingly invisible problems.

Since Chelsea Manning, politicians have been consumed by the futile task of cracking the whistleblower's staying resolve and finding the means to roll back the successful establishment of a technological infrastructure to support data age dissidence. Only in the past few years, however, have establishment actors realised the possibility of power over official, incriminating secrets can be found in manipulating the data about these renegade's work by systematically excluding their stories from representation in the media, except for where the facts can be manipulated for propaganda.

Commentators and politicians of different persuasions have expressed an authentic range of divided views on how the information released by Wikileaks can support democracy and maintain global peace. But at the same time, ostensibly partisan lawmakers and establishment staff are coordinating a unilateral response to reports in the libertarian press in which they, the elite, are implicated in or identified as conspirators in crimes that may push the US and world at large to withdraw support for the contemporary world order in exchange for genuine freedom.



Wikileaks' work is likely to make people demand an alternative to the dominant political and economic system after it failed in its promise to spread freedom, justice and prosperity through the world in exchange for individual and collective surrender to the liberal ideology. Significantly the publisher has quoted secret conversations between states, intelligence, transnational lobbies and diplomats, as saying they acknowledge and work to ensure success for the US empire's strategies and objectives worldwide because such deals are an obligation under the code of honour reified in the norms of power and world order—the dynamics that regulates the global balance of power, in the suppression and near absence of meaningful democratic internationalism.

According to the establishment, Wikileaks real target is to support terrorism against and collapse within America, a strategically important asset of modern empire in the North-Western hemisphere, at the centre of the core of the capitalist economy and the territory of neo-conservatism. Because America occupies a unique opening in history, the neoconservative establishment says, it can serve an evangelist and missionary role in the world and could help enforce a world order based on its political system. Given its special strategic role, America has been built into a fortress to safeguard itself against communism, and as much is evident from the flurries of communist repression.

The UN noted that policies America enforces have generally tried to cut support for human rights even as it reduces states and outlying satellites to rubble to bring it under pseudo-democratic control and conform to human rights obligations. The UN said it has never recognised legitimacy of any recent US, NATO led force in the East which has led to wholesale atrocities. Thomas Carothers, director of the Carnegie Endowment Program on Law and Democracy, in his recent book *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion* says:

“Where democracy appears to fit in well with US security and economic interests, the United States promotes democracy... Where democracy clashes with other significant interests, it is downplayed or even ignored.”

America has significantly reduced the number of individual and united opposition groups stationed in outposts the world around to less than a critical mass, it is possible to conclude, and it is time for resistance to reciprocate the offensive by rejecting empire's propaganda targeted at captive minds and the hollow ceremony of establishment democracy.

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