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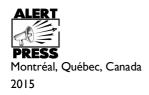## THE INSTRUMENTALITIES OF IMPERIALISM

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ON SECRECY, POWER, AND THE IMPERIAL STATE: PERSPECTIVES FROM WIKILEAKS AND ANTHROPOLOGY

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> "['Anne,' journalist at a Pentagon press conference]: Do you have any mechanism or authority to compel WikiLeaks to do as you say—as you are demanding?
>
> "[Pentagon spokesman, Geoff Morrell]:...how do we intend to compel, what I would say there, Anne, is that at this point we are making a demand of them. We are asking them to do the right thing. This is the appropriate course of action, given the damage that has already been done, and we hope they will honor our demands and comply with our demands. If it requires them compelling to do anything [*sic*]—if doing the right thing is not good enough for them, then we will figure out what other alternatives we have to compel them to do the right thing. Let me leave it at that". (US Department of Defense [DoD], 2010b)

Speaking as a moderator for a public conversation with Julian Assange and Slavoj Žižek, Amy Goodman declared, "information is power. Information is a matter of life and death" (Goodman, 2011/7/5). "Information is power" is not just a popular cyberactivist article of faith, it is arguably a core premise in Julian Assange's theoretical repertoire. Assange thus conceptualizes WikiLeaks as a "mechanism" whose goal is to "to maximise the flow of information" which results in maximising "the amount of action leading to just reform" (Davies, 2010/7/25). This is reminiscent of the "force multiplier" idea outlined by the US military and diplomatic establishment, as discussed at length in the Introduction to this volume. Anthropologists, on the other hand, will be

tempted to respond that information is not the same thing as knowledge, and neither is the same thing as meaning, and that power rests on a base that is far broader than information-control alone. Nevertheless, with the conflict between the US government and WikiLeaks there is much to be learned about the exercise of state power as it applies to secrecy and counter-surveillance, especially in terms of the actual expanse of the power of the US imperial state. The focus of this chapter is on the relationships between power, knowledge, and the social organization of the imperial state. WikiLeaks, and in particular its chief representative, Julian Assange, have a great deal to say in terms of theorizing information and power that might be of value to anthropology; likewise, most anthropologists, with extensive experience with secrecy at the local level, and especially those who have focused specifically on secrecy, have much to offer in return, given certain caveats. Unfortunately, the perspectives of those anthropologists who over the generations have served in the US' clandestine intelligence apparatus are not presented here (however, see Price 1998, 2008).

Secrecy of/as Science

One of the aims of this chapter is to present two different approaches to understanding secrecy—from WikiLeaks and anthropology—with special reference to mapping state power, and to issues of responsibility and trust (of particular concern to the state), and accountability and conspiracy (of particular concern to some critics of the US imperial state, and to WikiLeaks). (To an extent, both sides share a concern for accountability, but to different ends, and at different points along the power gradient, with the imperial state favouring accountability on the part of the weak.) The reason for the dual focus stems from an acknowledgment of the possibility that both WikiLeaks and anthropology have something to gain from each other. Anthropology is a treasure-trove of knowledge about secrecy, built up over generations of research by countless ethnographers, with many insights that offer WikiLeaks a thicker conceptual armour that could aid its practice in better understanding, scrutinizing, anticipating, and deflecting attempts by states (particularly the US) to circumscribe or even quash it. WikiLeaks, on the other hand, has much to offer in terms of putting a spotlight on how information and power are related in the imperial state, besides of course also offering a great deal of information

that is useful for anyone attempting to "study up," as Laura Nader put it (1972).

At the outset we already saw the start of what appeared to be a certain "science of secrecy," which in the case of WikiLeaks, as with the US military, is a science of mechanisms that *do* things. Both WikiLeaks and the US military have an obviously intimate relationship with machines, and with machines as the prime means of achieving their goals, with the apparent result being that their conception of human action is mechanized, instrumentalized, even automated. Anthropology is not innocent of such constructs either (historically it has not been immune to scientism), nor is the conception of force multipliers alien to it, given various ideas about how to create "effective allies" for US power, in South Asia for example (see Bateson in Price, 1998, p. 381). Nor is the instrumental exploitation of Indigenous Peoples and their natural resources beyond the pale of US anthropology, especially during World War II (see Price, 2008). However, for the most part, we shall see in anthropology a different science of secrecy that focuses on meaning and social relations, more than mechanisms as such. Otherwise, there are broad connections between secrecy and social science as a whole—as a former professor and US Senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1999), affirmed: "social science" is "the science of secrecy".

It may not be an accident that there are close correspondences between preferred phrases in anthropology and those used by both diplomats and intelligence agents. For example, anthropologists in North America and Britain speak of going into "the field," and "going native" (as a problem), and refer to local hosts as "informants". It is noteworthy that even as some anthropologists object to the nomenclature of the US Army's Human Terrain System (see González, 2012)—finding it objectionable that, in the military's linguistic rendering, human beings are symbolically reduced to inanimate *terrain* to be mapped and marched on like dirt—anthropologists themselves nonetheless persist in using a term related to terrain through land, that being *field*. In fact, *terrain* is also a synonym of two other key conceptual terms in anthropology: *space* and *arena*. Interestingly, forming a bridge between field and terrain are various other synonyms pertaining to the *battlefield*. While González (2012) would like to a see a linguistic analysis performed on military terminology, we should also turn that gaze back. One would in fact not have far to travel to find identical terminology in US anthropology, as when George Marcus described "multi-sited ethnography" as follows: "multi-sited ethnography is an exercise in

mapping terrain" (Marcus, 1995, p. 99). In a theoretical piece of dubious value, that was nonetheless influential in US anthropology, Arjun Appadurai disaggregated the world-system into one composed of distinct "scapes" (such as mediascapes, technoscapes, etc.)—which is not too distant from the idea of "landscape," a term that approximates "terrain" (Appadurai, 1990).

It is also no accident of misrecognition that so many local communities have, as retold by generations of anthropologists, seen anthropologists as spies—many were just that (see Price, 2008). Numerous US anthropologists continue to serve as "force multipliers" in multiple formal and informal capacities. As if to cloud the air further, the American Anthropological Association even went as far as censuring one of its founding figures, Franz Boas, for having dared to condemn anthropologists working as spies during WWI, and then kept that censure in place for the next 85 years. In recent decades the AAA even excised the injunction against secret research from its code of ethics, before reinstating it in the last few years. Collaboration with the CIA is also not foreign to the AAA. At one point, collusion with the CIA, secret research, and Boas' continuing censure were all simultaneous facts—none of this can be a mere accident. More recently, the AAA's 12-member Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC), charged with investigating the ethics of anthropologists working for intelligence and military agencies, included three persons[1] who were working precisely with the US military and weapons contractors, even as they served on the commission. The obvious conflict of interest, on a panel addressing ethics no less, was an irony that seemed to disturb few commentators. Apart from that, the fact that so many US and British anthropologists prefer not to write about their "field methods," with many against teaching methods courses, can only add to the aura of suspicion, suggesting that secret techniques are being used to elicit secret information. Of course, I would only be relating an open secret if I said that among the ranks of North American anthropologists there is also widespread, simmering resentment against ethics review boards, or that students reluctantly plod through ethics review applications as a mere formality.

WikiLeaks, while generally lacking a history of collusion with imperialist states, has immense practical experience with state secrecy and particularly with diplomacy and military intelligence, in ways that probably most anthropologists do not, since they rarely confront the power of the imperial US state. As anthropologists we should learn how to expand our research repertoire by including

what I refer to later in this chapter as the methodology of WikiLeakism, while also revising our own ideas about the actual practice of imperial intervention to include the role of non-state actors working in combination with the imperial state, even if/when not under its formal and rigid direction. Theoretically, WikiLeaks' conflict with the US power structure affords us a glimpse into something that is different from either conspiracy theories (not intended pejoratively here) or coincidence theories, and moves us towards something like a theory of convergence, where goals are shared and understood, and agents act, but without any need for central coordination—a march without a marshal. This is likely due to the confluence of interests in the corporate-oligarchic state, which explains the nearly automatic readiness of credit card companies, banks, and Amazon.com in acting as proxy censors that debilitated WikiLeaks' operations, though not necessarily under any explicit commands from the US state.

Secrecy as Viewed from WikiLeaks, Anthropology, and Sociology

More than journalism, communications/media studies and law, the fields that have arguably dominated the bulk of public debates about WikiLeaks, anthropology can claim special expertise on the study of secrecy. While anthropologists have a wide range of in-depth knowledge about secrecy in diverse social and cultural contexts, and of the ways in which secrets are spoken in socially acceptable ways, these are usually derived from experiences in small-scale, local settings, usually outside of the cultural West, and only rarely dealing with state secrecy (however, see Price, 1998). Anthropological work has primarily been on secrecy as found in secret societies, cults of initiation, shamanic practices, worship, the installation of priests, the socio-linguistics of secrecy, all within settings of intimate inter-personal ties and dense social bonds tying the actors together. The diverse treatments of secrecy reveal multiple analytical paradigms, whether functionalist, instrumentalist, situationalist, or political-economic in the Marxist sense (see Piot, 1993). Concerns range from how social stability is maintained, to analysis of the rules of accepted behaviour around secrecy, to how power is maintained in situations of social inequality (Fulton, 1972; Little, 1949, 1966; Watkins, 1943; la Fontaine, 1977; Murphy, 1980; Ottenberg, 1989). In terms of caveats regarding care needed in applying any anthropological lessons to WikiLeaks, we need to

remember the problem of a mismatch between units and scales of analysis. However, in terms of how elites work to maintain their networks and associations, and how the management of information becomes a vehicle for distributing power, there is something of value to learn from anthropology.

WikiLeaks, for its part, has given us an anthropological gift. It is a gift to core areas of anthropological concern, spanning questions of universalism-particularism, power, and knowledge. For example, WikiLeaks' clash with the US has shown us that what underpins hegemomic liberal claims to moral universalism is instead a particularist commitment that sits easily with the kind of moral turpitude exhibited by the merciless expansion and unquestioning defence of imperial power. Put in other words, the gift here is to further expose and once again put on public display the kind of moral dualism that is the practical reality of moral universalism. In this respect, the conflict generated around WikiLeaks has helped to render more visible not just specific state practices, but also the workings of the state in defence of a particular ideology that is superficial and altogether deceptive in espousing values of universal rights.

We could argue that WikiLeaks also has its own distinctive research methodology, one not readily comparable to anything we know of in the social sciences, and yet in some respects worthy of emulation. It's not fieldwork immersion and conversational interaction with informants (their informants are unknown to them). However, they learn a lot about actors through documents, and could learn even more through the actors' reactions to the release of the documents (in a way that conventional ethnography would not normally achieve). It is distinctive because WikiLeaks does not collaborate with informants, it does not send operatives into the institutions whose behaviours it unmasks, and it is not scientific lab research. It also neither steals information nor does it gain access through deception and covert action. It is neither a naturalistic nor an experimental methodology. We could thus call it *WikiLeakism* since it lacks an exact parallel in the social sciences.

What is not too persuasive is the apparently defensive counter-argument of some anthropologists, who hold that "we" also have experience working with leaked classified documents and the reports of investigative journalists. WikiLeaks does not just work with classified documents and journalists, since it is the publisher of such materials and uses software, mass media, and social networking to ensure that the information is available to the public without barrier—this is not what anthropologists can generally

claim to have done. The institutional context, praxis, and audiences are very different when comparing WikiLeaks and academic anthropology, particularly in the US. On a political level, the differences can be even more striking, since WikiLeaks has been willing to engage in head-on conflict with an imperial power, a power about which most US anthropologists prefer to remain silent.

WikiLeakism and Non-Local Ethnography

As a methodology, WikiLeakism shares some traits in common with more recent forms of "non-local ethnography" of the kind advocated and articulated by Feldman (2011), and older ideas of "studying up" (Nader, 1972). A range of important methodological points have been made between studying up (research that travels up the scale of power and dominance, focusing not on the traditional powerless groups but on the powerful), and non-local ethnography (which can study abstract and impersonal apparatuses that are localized nowhere or are not available to direct sensory experience). A spectrum of methods has thus opened up in anthropology that, though still marginalized (for broadly political and disciplinary reasons), places value on the use of virtual interfaces, documentary research, and media analysis, among other options. A non-local ethnography would thus research phenomena such as NATO, whose expansion and escalated aggression has largely been met with silence by US anthropologists writing on related topics. Possible reasons for this silence in current Anglo-American anthropology include the assumption that NATO policies and practices do not involve "ordinary people" and are thus for some reason "outside the purview of anthropology/ethnography" (Feldman, 2003, p. 1). NATO is therefore constructed in much of Western anthropology as if it were removed from "everyday life". Feldman summarizes some of the problems with this occlusion:

1. It neglects the indirect social and economic impacts on ordinary people as a result of maintaining excessively large militaries designed for foreign intervention;
2. It glosses over the identification of nation with the military;
3. NATO is not just a military organization confined to Brussels, but "rather it is a function of socially reproduced discourses of military, state, nation and even civilization" (Feldman, 2003, p. 2); and,
4. NATO's effects are localizable and therefore accessible to anthropologists.

The third assumption challenged by Feldman is that,

> "NATO precludes ethnography because its Brussels headquarters is even more secretive than the European Commission. An anthropology of NATO necessitates ethnography at headquarters, which is not feasible. No anthropologist will gain ethnographic access to the elites working in Brussels, unlike those who have undertaken ethnographies of the European Commission". (Feldman, 2003, p. 2)

Feldman's response is that this view is an antiquated one that privileges access to specific (usually "remote") locations, rather than being in line with more contemporary arguments in anthropology that reconceptualize "the field" as multiple, interlocking social and political formations. Where Feldman came closest to producing a really challenging answer that opens up horizons, is in pursuing this line of the geographical decentering of research and what this means for participant observation:

> "It is not that participant observation is irrelevant or unnecessary, but in instances where face-to-face interaction does not address the necessary research question, anthropologists should use alternative methods that focus on non-localizable sites to expose the culturally produced logic structuring unequal social-political relations" (Feldman, 2003, p. 2).

It is interesting to note in the passages above—on issues relating to secrecy, access, and NATO specifically—how much the turn to WikiLeaks precisely addresses these gaps, making it an essential resource for any non-local ethnography that studies up the imperial chain.

Indeed, secrecy is one of the problems highlighted by González (2012, p. 21), when discussing the methods to be used in studying dominant military formations, such as the Pentagon. One of these involves documentary analysis, and in his discussions González specifically mentions leaked documents, some of which came to light as a result of the work of WikiLeaks. The only point I would add here is that we may view the practice of WikiLeaks as representing either the complete obliteration of ethnography (in its localist, small-scale, direct sensory mode), rendering the latter not just marginal but almost wholly irrelevant, or an expansion of ethnography (into a non-local mode that studies up). In the latter sense, Julian Assange would have an even stronger claim to make that he is an ethnographer, more than a journalist who has not had

the "privilege" of experiencing first-hand the machinations of the imperial state apparatuses, which Assange can also claim and which would take him closer to ethnography in the traditional sense of not just observation and listening but also participation.

The Problem of Secrecy

WikiLeaks is a problem—as seen from the perspective of the US state. It is specifically a problem for secrecy, for rendering state secrecy problematic, and for bringing state secrecy back within the domain of questioning and critique. Contrary to former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's assertion that WikiLeaks' disclosures represent an "an attack on America's foreign policy interests," and even more than that, "an attack on the international community" thus representing, in her claim, a threat to "global security" and "economic prosperity" (Kessler, 2010/11/30), Carne Ross (2010/11/30), a former British diplomat, takes a different and more analytically useful approach. For Ross, the real attack is on a mode of international diplomacy that is premised on the claim that government business is secret business, and an attack on the ability of governments to claim one thing and do another.

For others, the significant attack is on the patron-client relationship between the state and the corporate media. In exchange for access to official sources (that privileged access is itself a by-product of secrecy, and an enforced scarcity of information that allows public officials to "buy" favourable stories [see Stiglitz, 1999, pp. 11–12]) journalists promise to keep certain information out of public knowledge and to write up stories more favourable to government (also see the Introduction to the volume on the media's military analysts). The corporate media (many of which are linked to the state through their parent corporations' involvement in defence contracting) become part of the reality-management machine of the imperial state, in what some liken to Army Psychological Operations (see Politact, 2010/12/2). If information is a mechanism, as Assange maintains, then it can also be a mechanism that disrupts the force multiplication offered by the mainstream corporate media to the imperial state—information thus becomes a force diminisher, and the willingness to use it for those purposes is part of the broad "blowback" that Chalmers Johnson identified (see the Introduction to this volume).

Beyond diplomacy, and the state's relationship with the chronically embedded media, WikiLeaks also poses a challenge to

the secret wars of the US imperial state. As Will Wilkinson (2010/11/29) of *The Economist* put it:

> "The careerists scattered about the world in America's intelligence agencies, military, and consular offices largely operate behind a veil of secrecy executing policy which is itself largely secret. American citizens mostly have no idea what they are doing, or whether what they are doing is working out well. The actually-existing structure and strategy of the American empire remains a near-total mystery to those who foot the bill and whose children fight its wars. And that is the way the elite of America's unelected permanent state, perhaps the most powerful class of people on Earth, like it".

WikiLeaks thus rendered visible the clash between empire's work in the shadows and democratic accountability (see Mueller, 2010/12/7). It would seem as if the careerists that Wilkinson mentioned work on the unexamined assumption that the less people know, the more they will trust the state—or, perhaps, the less people can question, the more the state gains in legitimacy. Trust cannot thrive when questions are provoked, especially when the imperial state's behaviour is shown to be based on a series of duplicitous fabrications. Legitimacy cannot flourish when critique is validated, especially when the imperial state's behaviour is shown to violate both legality and morality. But is it all about the content? Is the problem of trust and legitimacy—cornerstones of what Assange calls conspiracy—largely based on control over information flows? This takes us to some anthropological questions about secrecy.

Leaks: Sacrilege, Privilege, Social Control and Bureaucracy

Taking umbrage at *sacrilege* and *defacement*, with everything that functionaries of the US imperial state believed ought to have remained secret instead coming to light, is how we can begin to understand the sometimes shrill responses of state actors such as Hillary Clinton, or the former Pentagon spokesman, Geoff S. Morrell, or Admiral Mike Mullen, the now former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As Michael Taussig argues the, "[public] secret may […] be defined as that which is generally known but cannot be spoken," and he asks that we pay special attention to:

"[T]he heterogeneity of the knowledge at stake here, with its *knowing what not to know*, its strategic absences, its resort to riddle and tone…a Swiss-cheese reality of unexpected shapes…of roller-coaster rides through the carnival grounds of 'concealment and revelation,' fuelled by the intensity of the ambivalence of active not-seeing". (Taussig, 1999, p. 50, emphasis added)

This presents us with the explanation that there are different kinds of secrets, and different ways to speak about them (which takes us to rules, below). What is open to question, having read thousands of the ordinary and mundane reports produced by US diplomats that were published by WikiLeaks, is the limited extent to which there is any solid empirical distinction to be made between public knowledge and state secrets, especially in cases where diplomats are merely writing up summaries of local news reports on a given topic of interest to the relevant US mission. Another distinction drawn by some is between the "private secret" (such as a lie) and the "public secret" (secrecy that takes on outward manifestations as in public rituals)—see Bendix (2003, p. 33) for further explanation. I find this treatment of privacy to be problematic, for assuming that we can draw comparisons between individual, public, and state phenomena, without understanding the qualitative difference be-tween each. In practice, this has resulted in some treating Assange's assertion to a right to privacy as somehow "hypocritical" given his publication of leaked state secrets—when the two are not compa-rable, unless we are to confuse transparency as governmental openness with transparency as a form of personal nudity. Al-though, perhaps it's a case of the emperor having no clothes after all that unconsciously leads some to conflate the personal and the statal.

How we speak about secrets is crucial, for it is in naming them as such that we create them. In different words, Taussig argues "there is no such thing as a secret," being instead an "invention that comes out of the public secret" and says that "to see the secret as secret is to take it at face-value," rather than a great "as if" with-out which "the public secret would evaporate" (1999, p. 7).

A second important analytical point comes from something as deceptively simple as the way that Franz Boas, a founding figure in American anthropology, wrote up the transcripts of George Hunt, his Tlingit collaborator, wherein Boas frequently converted the word "secret" into "sacred". The implication of this, as Taussig ex-plained, is that "the sense of something as secret has to be main-tained at a pretty high level in the community of believers [dealing with shamanic practices here]," and "the secret itself must remain

secret" (2006, p. 136). As Taussig (1999, p. 7) reminds us, "wherever there is power there is secrecy" and at the core of this power lies also public secrecy.

This explanation points to secrecy as a social practice, as a means of social control, which involves practices of inclusion and exclusion that serve to lock out competitors while locking in knowledge as a privilege. The higher the classification of information, the higher up is the level of access in a hierarchic system of control. This clearly takes us to the work of Georg Simmel (1950) in which secrecy is understood as an inherently social relationship involving those who possess and share the secret, those to whom it is permitted to divulge the secret, and those from whom the secret is concealed, and thus differences that bring power to the fore. Simmel also made the case for judging the role of the secret not by its contents, its topics, which constantly shift, but by the social rules that are employed to manufacture and contain the secret (1950, pp. 331, 335).

Leaking is therefore *not* in fact banned outright by the upper echelons of the US imperial state; rather, it is an act that is endowed with privilege. Note how General Stanley McChrystal's classified assessment on the war in Afghanistan was released in time to force Obama's hand in sending more troops (Schorr, 2009/9/23), without any hint from the White House of a hunt to find and prosecute the source of the leak (Smith, 2009/9/22). Even more striking is the now confirmed fact that former Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, himself leaked details of the operation to assassinate Bin Laden. As Daniel Ellsberg explained, the only leaks that US administrations condemn are those "that they haven't made themselves, that haven't actually been authorized by their own high officials, which is the greater part of leaks. Nearly all leaks to the newspapers, so-called, are actually authorized by a boss, or even by the highest officials" (Ellsberg, 2011/1/24).

As part of this broad canvas of ideas that inform anthropological and sociological approaches to power and secrecy, there is the question of what Max Weber called the "official secret," as a "specific invention of bureaucracy" (1968, p. 992) and here we come closest to some of Assange's statements on state power as conspiracy, and the ostensibly "irrational" over-classification of information, such that what was published via WikiLeaks often seemed to be of little consequence (again, this should tell us that *content* is not quite the issue in this conflict between the US and WikiLeaks). Going beyond any strictly functional interest in maintaining a secret, Weber explains that state bureaucracy is really interested in exercis-

ing rights over the secret as a means of pursuing and enhancing its power against competing entities, such as parliament or various "interest groups". Moynihan (1999) adds to this by attesting to the role of "symbolic secrecy"—secrecy that serves no actual purpose other than to advance state power as an end in itself, and is closely connected to an ideological extremism that rose to power in the Cold War (Shils in Moynihan, 1999). As Weber put it, quite sharply, "bureaucracy naturally welcomes a poorly informed and hence a powerless parliament—at least in so far as ignorance is somehow compatible with the bureaucracy's own interests" (1968, p. 993). As just one available indication of the over-classification of information in the US, of the 6,610,154 million secrets created in 1997 alone, only 1.4% were created under statute, and "the remainder are pure creatures of bureaucracy, via Executive Orders" (Moynihan, 1999). And Weber was right to be blunt, as others have explained the condition in our political system where the public has little knowledge of the extent of the state's regulation of information (from the 1997 Report of the Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy quoted by Moynihan [1999]), and as Joseph Stiglitz argued, this reflects "a mistrust between those governing and those governed; and at the same time, it exacerbates that mistrust" (Stiglitz, 1999, p. 2). Moreover, as Stiglitz argued, secrecy not only shields bureaucrats and policy-makers from having their mistakes exposed, secrecy puts incumbents at an advantage over rivals in elections since the incumbent can always argue (thanks to secrecy, left unspoken) that the costs of change would be too high as the rivals are "unprepared" (i.e. they lack the information necessary to govern a situation) (1999, p. 12).

It is also important to understand the limits of Weberian theory, in part due to the neoliberal restructuring of government. Making government run more like a private business, contracting work out to the private sector and bringing in private consultants, clearly challenges Weber's model of bureaucracy. No longer can we argue that there are clear lines separating the state and private sectors, bureaucracy and market. Rather than an impersonal machine, state bureaucracy has in part fallen into the hands of private, personal networks, where loyalty to persons and ideological adherence matters most (Wedel, 2009, pp. 28, 102). So altered is the landscape, argues Wedel, that "the term 'governance,' a relative newcomer to the vocabulary that refers to rule by a combination of bureaucratic and market entities, now often substitutes for 'government'" (2009, p. 77).[2] This is also part of the reason for the decline in government's public accountability, and increased sequestering of infor-

mation by private networks with access to public goods, that is, the public information paid for by the public. Policy, and its making, has been increasingly privatized "beyond the reach of traditional monitoring systems" (Wedel, 2009, p. 75). The "privatization revolution" of neoliberalism (Wedel, 2009, p. 33), is met by actors such as WikiLeaks, engaged in what we may call a "publication revolution".

The Power of the Secret Tellers:
Anthropological Perspectives

The media publications of some non-anthropologists helped to bring certain anthropological points to mind regarding the ways that WikiLeaks has been perceived as a threat, and what that can tell us about the reality of the secret, and the manner in which the state constructs "non-authorized" actors. For some, it is not the *content* of the released documents that matters, but rather the *rules* governing the use of those documents, and this is the real centre of the conflict between WikiLeaks and the state. It is the "rupture in the rules of the game that the practitioners of US foreign policy find astonishing and threatening" (Mueller, 2010/12/7). That the conflict is around a question of rules more than content is given further weight by the public statements of former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. He referred to the revelations as "embarrassing" and "awkward," but with little practical effect on the conduct of US relations with foreign partners, adding that the public response has been "overwrought" (US Department of Defense [DoD], 2010a)—presumably that includes the response of his colleague, Hillary Clinton. In another instance, Gates stated that a Pentagon review had "not revealed any sensitive intelligence sources and methods compromised by the disclosure" (Levine, 2010/10/16). Likewise, the German Minister of the Interior referred to the disclosures not as a threat, but rather as "annoying" (Stark & Rosenbach, 2010/12/20). This does not mean that WikiLeaks' work had no significance; rather, it is *what* was significant that is in question, that is, whether what mattered most were rules of disclosure, the relationships and the power structure upheld by those rules, or the empirical content of the leaks.

Breaking the rules that maintain the structure of a system is a very significant act, arguably more than the leak of discrete bits of often unremarkable data. The official spokesman for the Pentagon, Geoff Morrell, confirmed as much when speaking about whether US troops could be trusted with access to information generated

from higher levels. In language whose sanctimony and pompous pretence only magnifies the social effect of the "breach," Morrell declared: "we instill an incredible degree of trust and responsibility in our most junior officers and our most junior enlisted," and that clamping down on access, which would represent internal distrust, was not then being considered as officials would "not want to do anything to jeopardize the fundamental goodness of this trusting relationship that has existed for decades in the United States military" (DoD, 2010b).

In some ethnographic studies, a secret is something everybody knows, but agrees not to talk about, or not to talk about except in certain ways (Piot, 1993). This does not seem entirely applicable to the WikiLeaks case, where in many cases we did not know certain secrets, and when we did, many certainly talked about them openly. The latter fact could be seen as stemming from the public's alienation from governance, as having no real stake in the system and hence freely speaking about the open secrets, which would be another of the revelations wrought by WikiLeaks, even if the organization were not conscious of this.

If "secrets are meant to be told," as some anthropologists have contended is the case in most societies where secrecy is practiced (see Bellman, 1984), then if accurate this further distances the discussion away from content and toward rules. Secrecy thus has to do more with excluding the non-members of a social unit, than with content; language metaphorically alludes to concealed information, in societies where members agree on the rules (Bellman, 1984; see also Rosaldo, 1984, and Weiner, 1984). What defines a secret then is not its content, but *who gets to tell it* (see Brenneis & Myers, 1984; Bellman, 1984; Rosaldo, 1984).

Who gets to tell it also alludes to a body of people governed by certain rules. Secrets can help to create communal affect, by including some in knowledge of the secret, and excluding others, thus creating both boundaries and alliances (Kasfir, 2010; Gable, 1997, p. 230, fn. 7). *How the secret gets told* can involve what some call "deep talk," that is allusive, metaphoric speech (Bellman, 1984, pp. 76, 140). However, the concept of "deep talk" should be amplified with the more colloquial concept of "double talk," as when President Obama hailed himself, ironically, as "a big supporter of non-censorship," stating rather surprisingly: "I think that the more freely information flows, the stronger the society becomes, because then citizens of countries around the world can hold their own governments accountable. They can begin to think for themselves" (Branigan, 2009/11/16). One view might be that Obama was being

dryly "honest": these qualities of openness, accountability, and freedom of thought are not meant for the US, where patriotism and national security reign paramount. These qualities are instead meant to be practiced by the targets of US destabilization—their absence used to justify interference, and their presence allowing for the regularization of interference.

How information attains the value of being secret is also critical. With reference to magic, some hold that the secret is a "privileged possession," and that secrecy "elevates the value of the thing concealed" making it seem "desirable" and "powerful"—magicians exploit this in order to give significance to their knowledge, and to conceal it from scepticism, indeed, to provide a means by which their own scepticism may be muted (Luhrmann, 1989, p. 161). To make knowledge unquestionable, it needs to be surrounded with "sacredness" (Rappaport, 1979).

Being initiated into a secret society requires respect for the rules of secrecy, unsurprisingly. In an extreme rendition of this principle, joining the US diplomatic corps has meant that career services offices at some US universities, and some newspapers, published notices to students advising them not to read the WikiLeaks cables, or risk any future employment prospects with the US government (Grinberg, 2010/12/8; Dortch, 2010/12/9). In this case, students had to agree to *not* know the secrets that everybody knew, in advance of joining the institutions that created the information that was now no longer secret. Clearly, secrecy and rationality are not partners. That secrecy flourishes in the presence of irrationality, can be seen in the demand made by the Pentagon spokesman, Geoff Morrell, who instructed WikiLeaks to "return" the documents—as if a physical body of original paper files that had not been received as copies of electronic data (DoD, 2010b). Adding to the apparent irrationality is the US state's injunction against staff reading the same reports—which they or their colleagues might have produced—and which were published by WikiLeaks, even when such files are available internally. Assange describes this irrationality in terms of a logic of maintaining the sanctity of classification:

> "While a given document can be read by cleared staff when it issues from classified government repositories, it is forbidden for the same staff to set eyes on the exact same document when it emerges from a public source. Should cleared employees of the national security state read such documents in the public domain, they are expected to self-report their contact with the

newly profaned object, and destroy all traces of it". (Assange, 2015)

Even without being initiated into formal membership, the other principle that comes into view is that of *responsibility*—responsibility better understood as submission, or as collusion. In order to gain legitimacy from the state, with the promise of possibly being included among its ranks of "authorized" knowledge bearers, it is important to abide by the rules of "responsibility". To be irresponsible, is also to be a threat. As Senator Joseph Lieberman commanded, "no responsible company—whether American or foreign—should assist WikiLeaks in its efforts to disseminate these stolen materials," and he referred to WikiLeaks' disclosures as "illegal, outrageous, and reckless acts" (Arthur, 2010/12/7). Similarly, Bill Keller, editor of *The New York Times* which for a while partnered with WikiLeaks in publishing these disclosures, distanced Julian Assange by referring to him merely—and inaccurately—as a "source" thus denying him membership in the club of responsible journalists (Benkler, 2011, pp. 37–38). While it called for action against Assange, the White House, according to Keller, "thanked us for handling the documents with care" (Keller, 2011/1/30).[3] The Pentagon itself seemed keen to distance the *New York Times* from WikiLeaks, stating that they doubted the former would describe itself as the latter's partner (DoD, 2010b).

Crisis, Secret Arrangements, and Neoliberal Restructuring

The WikiLeaks releases occasioned a sense of crisis among the powerful. Eric Wolf argued that, "we owe to social anthropology the insight that the arrangements of a society become most visible when they are challenged by crisis" (Wolf, 1990, p. 593). For Wolf, power is at least in part manifested in the ability to shape the "arena" in which interactions take place (1990, p. 586), and that implies the rules that govern those interactions. But power is also "implicated in meaning through its role in upholding one version of significance as true" against competing versions (Wolf, 1990, p. 591). Secrecy matters here: "To keep a secret creates the sense of the secret's power without the need for its demonstration" (Luhrmann, 1989, pp. 142–143).

Crisis may make some rules become visible, but it can also usher in a new set of invisible rules as seen in what anthropologist Janine Wedel describes in her 2009 book, *Shadow Elite*, as the restructuring of government in the US towards work done by insider-

outsiders, that is, "flexians". These flexians occupy multiple roles in state, non-state and parastatal organizations such as think tanks, academia, business, the media, and military contracting, with increased power even when it comes to making policy. They are higher order "force multipliers". As private contractors, doing the work formerly done by public servants who were at least nominally accountable to the public, these flexians pursue what Wedel calls a "coincidence of interests" and have "privileged access to *official* information" (2009, pp. 1, 3). This privileged access even allows some flexians (such as the notorious neoconservatives, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Douglas Feith) to provide classified information to a foreign power (Israel), without ever facing prosecution (Wedel, 2009, pp. 148–149). Similarly, the White House Iraq Group, attached to Vice-President Dick Cheney, was also involved in deliberately leaking intelligence to the media (Wedel, 2009, p. 186). The result of the post-Cold War redesign of governing—"the privatization of the state by the state" (Kryshtanovskaya in Wedel, 2009, p. 7)—results in "increased authority delegated to private players" which "has enabled them to become guardians of information once resting in the hands of state and international authorities" (Wedel, 2009, p. 4).

The information security that WikiLeaks threatens, as we are told by flexians such as Geoff Morrell (who, not coincidentally, has worked both as a journalist and the Pentagon spokesman), is in fact the security of a fragmented order of power marked by the "frequent relinquishing of information by states to all manner of private players"—particularly, private players with multiple loyalties beyond the home state (2009, p. 9). Official information, previously available to both government and theoretically the public (or legally in some cases), is now increasingly privatized (2009, p. 10). As gatekeepers of inside access and knowledge, flexians are able to "brand information and control its applications" (Wedel, 2009, p. 16).

Wedel saw that state agencies such as the Pentagon had started to recruit "the next generation of workers who are tech savvy, open-minded, multi-tasking, and perhaps unprepared for command and control environments" (2009, p. 39)—which almost perfectly describes the source of the largest leaks to WikiLeaks, Chelsea Manning, as well as Edward Snowden, the source of the leaks on the National Security Agency. In the case of Snowden, we see yet another example of the force multiplier concept coming to ruin; perhaps the boomerang should have inspired Pentagon thinking instead.

What WikiLeaks threatens is this new, neoliberal order of re-designed government, and it does so by radically dropping the price of access to privileged information and returning it to the public. Cry as she might about law, security, and responsibility, Hillary Clinton herself operated as a flexian: as a private citizen, but married to then President Bill Clinton, she chaired the Task Force on National Health Reform. She was not then a public official, yet she asserted the right to conduct proceedings behind closed doors, thwarting public monitoring and accountability (for more on this see Wedel, 2009, p. 101). Of course she would feel threatened by WikiLeaks—her effort, however, is to make the rest of us believe that threats to positions such as those she wielded, are somehow threats to everyone. Yet the secrecy itself proves that the US is far from a "republic of everyone," but rather a corporate-oligarchic system (Kapferer, 2005; Gilens & Page, 2014; Guerin, 2014), where the very few presume to manage and control the great majority in the interests of the same few. "Irresponsibility" thus means the failure to obey the laws of submission, denying the role of authorities to authorize.

Julian Assange: Information Politics and Government as Conspiracy

There is some correspondence between Assange's views on information, secrecy, and state power and those of both Weberian and US libertarian inspiration, as suggested by the quote from James Madison in Stiglitz (1999, p. 5): "A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both". This creates part of the dualism of WikiLeaks: when it stresses the *content* of its leaks, it does so in a context where it defends itself as journalism; when it instead stresses its identity as one that is about freedom-of-information activism, it is inevitably dealing with the *rules* governing access to information.[4] This dual approach to its self-description reveals more than just that: it is a dual theoretical approach to confronting secret information, which arises from WikiLeaks' self-analysis, as revealed in this passage:

> "we're an activist organization. The method is transparency, the goal is justice. Part of the method is journalism. But it is our end-goal to achieve justice, and it's our sources' goals, usually, to also achieve justice". (Assange, 2010)

Julian Assange's theory of power and secrecy differs to a considerable extent from what has been presented by anthropologists thus far—and to be fair, given the age of this chapter (see the Acknowledgments below), the version of Assange's theory discussed here is primarily that which took shape up to 2011, but is otherwise a work in progress that manifests considerable change in the present (see Assange, 2015). In summary, thanks to Benkler (2011, p. 40), Assange posited that:

1) Authoritarian regimes depend on secrecy in hiding their internal communications from the public that is subject to state suppression;

2) Secrecy is vital to minimizing the potential for resistance, by essentially keeping the public ignorant of the backstage machinations; and,

3) By exposing the internal communications of authoritarian regimes, regimes will be forced to further tighten restrictions on their information, thereby slowing internal communications, and thus decreasing the ability of the regimes to work effectively.

Much of Assange's analysis of power seems to over-emphasize the instrumentality of data, to the exclusion of meaning and affect. This can lead to a misunderstanding of the proliferation of personal smear pieces in the media, and an overabundance of articles on the so-called "rape" allegations faced by Assange in Sweden. The result is that Assange may perceive this as simply designed to create an "interference pattern" (see Benkler, 2011, p. 21) in media coverage of WikiLeaks, as if designed solely to undermine or reshape the Google visibility of WikiLeaks releases. While no doubt in part correct, this perspective might not offer an adequate explanation for either the sustained nature of this production of personal coverage, and might overlook the deeper significance of the pieces: to class Assange as an irresponsible, reckless, dangerous, and even literally dirty *outsider*. (Assange himself has come to see the "contamination" undertones of the accusations launched by the US [Assange, 2015].). Articles in mainstream news coverage form rungs on a growing step-ladder of demonization, aimed at training public opinion to more and more see Assange as a serious problem—a problem that needs "fixing" by state authorities. In addition, though Assange shows some awareness at times of the multiple loyalties of those attacking him from their positions in the media, the focus on interference patterns can obscure the nature of flexian governance that he is up against. The result of Assange's analysis is a picture of an all-knowing, centralized, conspiratorial

state and various dupes and sellouts (force multipliers) that serve them, which minimizes the social importance of networks whose rules of information control are challenged by WikiLeaks.

Assange's analytical emphasis is on the mechanics of information control, which is a necessary emphasis, even if incomplete on its own. Assange speaks of the need to "discover technological changes that embolden us with ways to act in which our forebears could not" (Assange, 2011). His view of power reduces to a vision of "collaborative secrecy," behaviour which, as he says, can be defined as "conspiratorial" (Assange, 2011). "Literacy and the communications revolution," he argues has,

> "empowered conspirators with new means to conspire, increasing the speed of accuracy of their interactions and thereby the maximum size a conspiracy may achieve before it breaks down. Conspirators who have this technology are able to out conspire conspirators without it. For the same costs they are able to achieve a higher total conspiratorial power". (Assange, 2011)

With a view that sees the information technology architectures of power more clearly than anything else, Assange says that,

> "our will came from a quite extraordinary notion of power, which was that with some clever mathematics you can, very simply...enable any individual to say no to the most powerful state. So if you and I agree on a particular encryption code, and it is mathematically strong, then the forces of every superpower brought to bear on that code still cannot crack it". (quoted in Obirst, 2011)

Again, this does more than just transfer the array of struggles between civil society and the state to the cyber domain; in fact, it seems to reduce all such conflict to the virtual and informational planes alone, to a question of mathematics.

At the very least, Assange has a more serious theory of "force multipliers" than anything we saw from military and political circles in the US in the Introduction to this volume. On the other hand, his theory shares something in common with the "force multipliers" notion. Here I turn to Baudrillard's (2005) critique of the fetishizing of "information" as a "machine" and its destruction of true knowledge and meaning, condemning the "immense banalization of life by the information machine" (p. 134):

> "The policing of events is essentially carried out by information itself. Information represents the most effective machinery for de-realizing history. Just as political economy is a gigantic

machinery for producing value, for producing signs of wealth, but not wealth itself, so the whole system of information is an immense machine for producing the event as sign, as an exchangeable value on the universal market of ideology, of spectacle, of catastrophe, etc.—in short, for producing a non-event. The abstraction of information is the same as the abstraction of the economy. And, as all commodities, thanks to this abstraction of value, are exchangeable one with another, so all events become substitutable one for another in the cultural information market. The singularity of the event, irreducible to its coded transcription and its staging, which is what quite simply constitutes an event, is lost. We are passing into a realm where events no longer truly take place, by dint of their very production and dissemination in 'real time'—where they become lost in the void of news and information. The sphere of information is like a space where, after having emptied events of their substance, an artificial gravity is re-created and they are put back in orbit in "real time"—where, having shorn them of historical vitality, they are re-projected on to the transpolitical stage of information. The non-event is not when nothing happens. It is, rather, the realm of perpetual change, of a ceaseless updating, of an incessant succession in real time, which produces this general equivalence, this indifference, this banality that characterizes the zero degree of the event....We have, then, to pass through the non-event of news coverage (information) to detect what resists that coverage. To find, as it were, the 'living coin' of the event. To make a literal analysis of it, against all the machinery of commentary and stage-management that merely neutralizes it. Only events set free from news and information (and us with them) create a fantastic longing. These alone are 'real,' since there is nothing to explain them and the imagination welcomes them with open arms". (Baudrillard, 2005, pp. 121–122, 133)

Baudrillard would thus have a very strong criticism of the mechanism of information presented in WikiLeaks' theory. Indeed, many of the authors cited in this chapter themselves make no distinction between *information* and knowledge. One of the problems that can present us with is that concerns focused on information as such—on data—serve to reduce knowledge, and the process of gaining knowledge, to an extractive process. In more extreme ways, this manner of thinking can be used to shut down debate—"don't tell me what you *think*, professor," the US student militarist tells the "radical" professor whose name is listed on Campus Watch, "just tell me what you *know*". In other words, give me information, quick, and hold the knowledge.

On another plane, in terms of conspiracy, the question that comes up is how much of a conspiracy is the phenomenon analyzed by Assange. Wedel argues that what we instead witness, in the case of the neoconservative flexians who penetrated deep into the George W. Bush administration, is not a conspiracy but rather a "coincidence of interests" and a "coordination of effort" (2009, p. 153)—where some activities and information are kept secret, but much else is made public, including the identities and networks of association of those Assange would call the conspirators. Yet, if they were conspirators in the commonly-understood sense, and if secrecy was really secret, we might not even know who they were in the first place. However, given what was outlined in the Introduction to this volume, certain US diplomats and military strategists themselves choose to write in conspiratorial terms, which tend to validate Assange's approach.

What is particularly interesting about Assange's theory and practice is the extent to which it virtually annuls Foucault's work on governmentality, rendering it both less useful and less interesting. Foucault tends to minimize state violence and state coercion. Foucault typically locates surveillance outside of the state, positing surveillance as something that is distributed, which takes the form of self-monitoring and compliance. If Foucault de-centres the state, then Assange has fully re-centred it. Assange is not alone in doing so of course; among those in agreement is the US military itself, which in its recent *National Military Strategy* asserts: "states remain the international system's dominant actors. They are preeminent in their capability to harness power, focus human endeavors, and provide security" (DoD, 2015, p. 2).

Lastly, it should be noted that very recently some of Julian Assange's analysis of secrecy has come to more closely resemble what is found in older anthropological treatments, especially on the question of "magic," the sacred and profane, and the rites of privileged access. For example, in his introductory chapter for *The WikiLeaks Files: The World According to US Empire*, Assange writes on the US state's religious approach to classification:

> "Many religions and cults imbue their priestly class with additional scarcity value by keeping their religious texts secret from the public or the lower orders of the devoted. This technique also permits the priestly class to adopt different psychological strategies for different levels of indoctrination....

"The implication is that there is a non-physical property that inhabits documents once they receive their classification markings, and that this magical property is extinguished, not by copying the document, but by making the copy public. The now public document has, to devotees of the national security state, not merely become devoid of this magical property and reverted to a mundane object, it has been inhabited by another non-physical property: an evil one.

"This kind of religious thinking has consequences. Not only is it the excuse used by the US government to block millions of people working for the 'state within a state' from reading more than thirty different WikiLeaks domains—the same excuse that was used to block the *New York Times*, *Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *Le Monde*, *El País*, and other outlets publishing WikiLeaks materials". (Assange, 2015)

As Assange notes in the same text, the "religious hysteria" generated by the state might be "laughable," were it not for the fact that many US scholars take it seriously—seriously enough that, "the US-based *International Studies Quarterly (ISQ)*, a major international relations journal, adopted a policy against accepting manuscripts based on WikiLeaks material—even where it consists of quotes or derived analysis" (Assange, 2015).

The State as a Network

Through the conflict between WikiLeaks and the US, we also learn more about the actual expanse of state power, which embraces non-state actors and extra-legal means. As Benkler (2011, p. 18) put it: "The integrated, cross-system attack on WikiLeaks, led by the U.S. government with support from other governments, private companies, and online vigilantes, provides an unusually crisp window into the multi-system structure of freedom and constraint". Also interesting to note is how the state and pro-state actions were combined without being centrally coordinated, as if mimicking the decentralized structure of various counterattacks from Anonymous, consumer boycotts, and the distribution of WikiLeaks clone sites. As Benkler (2011, p. 26) observes, this is an "implicit alliance" (we might find some of Wedel's flexians here), "a public-private partnership between the firms that operate the infrastructure and the government that encourages them to help in its war on terror" which "was able to achieve extra-legally much more than law would have allowed the state to do by itself".

The Code of Silence

Perhaps one way to configure the results of this dual-focus analysis of secrecy from the perspectives of WikiLeaks and anthropology would be to consider how "code" is understood by each side. For WikiLeaks, code essentially has to do with data, with cryptographic codes, with breaking through the electronic walls that form the infrastructure of secrecy. These things exist, Assange has personally done battle with them, and there is no denying the validity of his experience and the logic of his understanding.

For anthropologists, there is another kind of "code" that they instead emphasize. This is the code of conduct—code in terms of the rules, personal loyalties, the sociolinguistic code of discretion in speech, and the political code of privilege that governs who gets to divulge certain information. These two codes are not entirely dissimilar. We may or may not gain from combining our diverse understandings of code into one unitary, synthetic approach. But perhaps the more immediate and less abstract lesson to learn here is that just as Assange has mastered the art of electronic hacking (information is power), anthropologists have mastered another hacking, that which exposes the meanings, rituals, and bonds that construct certain ideas as sacred information (the power that creates information).

Information Supremacy?

Finally, and returning to some of the US military's assumptions of "full-spectrum dominance" addressed in the Introduction, which to some extent are shared yet more maturely developed by Assange, we have reason to be sceptical about the power of information, especially information assumed to be "the truth". Information is not power, nor is it knowledge, let alone a philosophy of knowledge. It is, at best, raw material for potential knowledge. Nor does everyone have access to the same information, as some netizens would flatter themselves in thinking. There are still numerous paywalls and firewalls, and even having physical access ensures neither *use* nor the ability to *understand*, that is, the ability to access intellectually. Greater access to information then is literally meaningless. In the absence of motivation, the right questions, and the skills needed to make meaning out of information, leaks only have symbolic value.

There are many criticisms of WikiLeaks, and Assange's theory, criticisms that are sometimes based on tenuous foundations: that if the imperial state continues in spite of the leaks, then Assange has

failed, and his theory is a failure. That is a bit too hasty. First, real history does not move at the speed of Twitter, and we are not yet in a position to ascertain the full outcome of the now regular publication of leaks, large and small. Our theories and descriptions will largely determine how we discern the outcome. Second, there is a mistake made in concluding that because WikiLeaks failed to disrupt the flexians' order, that it is not a threat. Clearly, WikiLeaks does undermine the social relationships of power constructed around the management of information, while undermining the ability of the US to effectively use "soft power" on issues of press freedom, government transparency, and individual civil liberties, which are also core areas of the neoliberal agenda. We would have been mistaken to assume that dramatic, earth-shattering consequences would arise from the publication of so many leaks. However, what damage there has been to the imperial order has been significant in terms of the erosion of the propaganda produced by key states such as the US and its allies, at a time when they are desperate to salvage credibility following the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and especially Iraq (and now Libya). The government of the UK specifically identifies the risk of "political harm or embarrassment" that can arise from the leak of classified documents—as we learn from a document leaked to WikiLeaks (Ministry of Defence [MoD], 2001, p. 2-26). In a wide definition of what constitutes a "threat," the UK's MoD explains that "the 'enemy' is unwelcome publicity of any kind, and through any medium" (MoD, 2001, p. 17-3). Anthropologists would well understand the significance and value of symbols, public image management, credibility/credulity, and reputation, all of which are involved in the latter statement. Also noteworthy is the number of times that MoD lists "investigative journalists" along with "terrorist groups," often placing these two together in the same sentence (see WikiLeaks, 2009).

Others have also convincingly laid out a series of WikiLeaks' successes that I need not recite here (see Hawley, 2011), with some insisting that, "the world has changed in major ways for democratic possibilities, with WikiLeaks as a catalyst" (Solomon, 2015). The fact that Assange is so consistently rebuked, reviled, and demonized by government officials, political elites, and members of the corporate media, is taken as evidence of the power of WikiLeaks' sting. More than that, it is evidence of how much we are intended not to know, while being asked to continue supporting the dominant classes. As Solomon (2015) explains,

"in acute contrast to so many at the top of the corporate media and governmental food chains, Assange insists that democracy requires the 'consent of the governed' to be *informed* consent. While powerful elites work 24/7 to continually gain the uninformed consent of the governed, WikiLeaks has opposite concerns".

This is a critical revelation in itself that WikiLeaks has helped to magnify, one that should cause us to debate to what extent hegemony is really based on the "consent" of the governed—as so many adaptations of Gramsci would have us believe, thereby implicating the dominated in their own domination. It is also a strong blow to the "democracy" myth reproduced in Western, namely US international propaganda campaigns. Ours is shown to be a democracy that daily operates on the basis of lies, secrets, and mass ignorance. That reminders of this fact are constantly needed, only reaffirms the value of WikiLeaks' continued work.[5]

On the other hand, there are clearly flaws with the assumptions at the base of Assange's theory of information freedom. We are daily proving ourselves to be better informed than ever and yet somehow more powerless and passive than ever. A more visible imperial state is not one that is less imperial. The "shadow elite" continues in its daily operations *seemingly* unruffled by the all too rare examples of a Manning or Snowden. Their position is even more of an open secret, in the words of one reviewer of this chapter. Spectacular disclosure has annoyed the imperial state, but *apparently* it has not disrupted it—however, this may also be due to the fact that the disclosures have not been as regular or as extensive as they might yet be.

However, it would still be a mistake to believe that the shadow elite can function without some expectation of secrecy, especially given the extent to which regime change is tied to market considerations and converted into insider trading schemes—all of which require a tight and exclusive control over information:

"Since corporate property was always restored after a successful regime change [with 24 national leaders installed by the CIA], these operations were potentially profitable to nationalized companies. If foreknowledge of these operations was truly secret, then precoup asset prices should not have reflected the expected future gains. However, this article shows that not only were U.S.-supported coups valuable to partially nationalized multinationals, but in addition, asset traders arbitraged supposedly 'top-secret' information concerning plans to

overthrow foreign governments". (Dube, Kaplan & Naidu, 2011, pp. 1375-1376)

What we learn is that some of the top US-based transnational corporations benefited "from top-secret events, suggesting information flows from covert operations into markets" (Dube, Kaplan & Naidu, 2011, p. 1376).

What does anthropology have to learn from the experience and practice of WikiLeaks? For an anthropology of international relations, for the study of imperialism, for more documentary depth on the US and NATO occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, for critical analysis of the foreign policy realities shielded by diplomats, and to develop a stronger realization of how mass media are manipulated as instruments of elites that form part of the military-industrial complex, then the study of WikiLeaks itself, and the documents it has released, are indispensable. As a mode of research that differs from Western anthropology's current ethnographic fetishism, WikiLeaks shows exactly how "studying up" can mature and expand in practice. From these vantage points, I believe that WikiLeaks has had more to teach anthropology about both research methodology in the context of contemporary geopolitics, than vice versa.

Acknowledgements

This is also an unusual chapter because though ostensibly self-published, it has probably been kicked around more than most papers, after several stages of peer review and revision, over a period of years. However, as an elder colleague once said, "you only get to kick the cat so many times before it runs away". Hence, here is my cat.

I am thankful to the organizers of "Leaks, Lies, and Red Tape: State Secrecy and its Discontents," for inviting me to participate in the session which took place at the conference of the American Anthropological Association, held in Montreal on November 18, 2011. In addition, I wish to thank several WikiLeaks supporters, for their numerous leads, suggestions, debates, and analyses, in particular some of those who were once involved with writing for WL Central, but who remain anonymous. A fair portion of the documents and news articles which initially formed the foundation for this research came thanks to their recommendations. None of these acknowledgments are meant to imply any sort of endorsement for the contents of this chapter.

Notes

1   The three persons in question are Laurie Rush (Cultural Resource Management at Ft. Drum, NY), Kerry Fosher (affiliated with Syracuse University and the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity [MCIA]), and Laura McNamara (Sandia National Laboratories)—see the CEAUSSIC page at:
    http://web.archive.org/web/20081121014400/http://www.aaanet.o
    rg/cmtes/commissions/CEAUSSIC/index.cfm.

2   To allay the concerns of one reviewer, it is doubtful that Wedel is referring to Foucault's treatment of the concept of *governmentality*, or whether she means that in government circles themselves "governance" is only recently the new buzzword. I suspect it is the latter, and that what she describes is how government insiders use the term *governance*, which is not the same idea as governmentality.

3   It was interesting to watch some US anthropologists discussing WikiLeaks on Twitter in 2010, sharing inchoate gripes about the organization and Assange personally, while endorsing an incompetent and collaborationist rival, OpenLeaks, whose founder actually destroyed thousands of Afghan war documents. To date, not only has OpenLeaks never published anything (but has erased a lot), it is no longer even open, having surrendered even its Internet domain name. I suspect that the fact that most US anthropologists vote Democrat, have known sympathies for Obama, and retain some margin of patriotism, likely motivated them to join the media-orchestrated chorus of denunciation of WikiLeaks, without a gram of their much vaunted "reflexivity" ever on display. On the other hand, I am not a neutral party either—more than once I have donated funds to WikiLeaks, published articles in its defence, and used *Zero Anthropology* as a part-

ner website that hosts WikiLeaks documents so as to ensure access during numerous distributed-denial-of-service attacks against WikiLeaks' websites. As a result, I was publicly listed as a "media contact" by WikiLeaks. Nonetheless, on numerous points of political theory and practice, I depart significantly from WikiLeaks, including its past anarcho-libertarian messaging; the convictions it sometimes shares in common with the US State Department; the manner it can soften itself to appeal to mainstream media; and, its sometimes naive analysis and resultant enthusiasm for the regime change extravaganza that delighted Western cyber-spectators, known as the "Arab Spring," among other differences in perspective and practice. Assange's theory, however, is a work in progress.

4   For a much more in-depth view of WikiLeaks self-descriptions as an activist organization around issues of freedom of information, see the organization's older "About" page on its former website, now archived at:

http://web.archive.org/web/20080328010014/www.wikileaks.org/wiki/Wikileaks:About.

5   It may be disappointing, but nonetheless important to note that none of the anthropologists who reviewed an earlier version of this chapter seemed to have any concern for this question of democracy, when accusing WikiLeaks of having achieved so little.

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