

The WikiLeaks Disclosures in Perspective

Many Americans view the release of secret U.S. government documents by WikiLeaks to be an attack on our country. Newt Gingrich, for example, said on Fox Business Network's *Freedom Watch* that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange "is an active enemy combatant who is engaged in information warfare against the United States. What he is doing is going to have incalculable damage to this country. It is going to have a number of innocent people killed, a number of our allies killed. It is going to put Americans at risk.... This is an act of war against the United States."



If Assange is an "enemy combatant," as Gingrich claims, he certainly is not a stereotypical one. Not only is he unleashing information rather than bombs on a war-weary world, but the information in question, so far as we know, is authentic, not fabricated. At least, official sources have not claimed that the released cables are fabricated or altered, which presumably they would do if WikiLeaks were engaged in a massive disinformation campaign.

The same cannot be said, however, about U.S. government foreign policy, which, the WikiLeaks disclosures show, is rife with duplicity and deception.

This is not to suggest that WikiLeaks is pristine or that every government secret should be made public. Obviously, information should not be released endangering American lives — or the lives of any innocents for that matter. But to what extent has WikiLeaks actually done this? Another question: Does the exposure of the duplicity and deception undergirding American foreign policy place America in greater danger, or does it provide impetus for a change in policy ultimately making America safer? Put simply: How damaging or beneficial is the circulation of unpleasant truths by WikiLeaks, as opposed to keeping those truths hidden from the world?

Consider, for Exhibit A, WikiLeaks' release of secret documents regarding the war in Afghanistan. That release provides compelling evidence that Pakistan's ISI has guided the insurgency in Afghanistan. The *New York Times* reported that "many of the reports rely on sources that the military rated as reliable" and that "some of the reports describe Pakistani intelligence working alongside Al Qaeda to plan attacks."

Yet Pakistan, an "ally" in our war against terror, has received billions of dollars in U.S. military aid. That aid is helping a regime that, through its intelligence service, is helping an insurgency that is killing American and other NATO soldiers. It is understandable that the architects of our foreign policy are embarrassed by the release of information about ISI's role in Af-

ghanistan and would have liked to have kept the documentation of that role under wraps. But it is incomprehensible how this release could increase the risk to our soldiers in Afghanistan.

If anything, that information should reduce the risk to our soldiers in Afghanistan — if it helps to force a reduction of, or an end to, our aid to the Pakistani regime. And this and other WikiLeaks-released information should reduce the risk to our soldiers even further — if it leads to an end of our support of the corrupt Afghan regime and the withdrawal of our soldiers from Afghanistan.

Consider too the WikiLeaks-released cables confirming America's "secret" war in Yemen, where missile strikes against targets inside the country were credited to Yemen when they were actually carried out by the United States. One cable, describing a January 2010 meeting of U.S. General David Petraeus with Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, quotes Saleh saying: "We'll continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours." The cable then says that this prompted "Deputy Prime Minister Alimi to joke that he had just 'lied' by telling Parliament that the bombs in Arhab, Abyan, and Shebwa were American-made but deployed by the ROYG [Republic of Yemen Government]."

Does the release of information confirming our "secret" war endanger American lives? Or could it make America safer, at least in the long run? Obviously, if an American President is able to carry out a war unbeknownst to the American people in Yemen, then he can do so elsewhere as well. And these "small" wars could potentially become bigger wars. No President should be allowed to engage the United States in "secret" wars. In fact, no President should be allowed to take the United States into any war — secret or otherwise — without the congressional declaration of war required by the Constitution.

Finally, consider the WikiLeaks-released cables showing that the Obama administration has engaged in bullying, bribery, and even espionage to move its climate-change agenda forward (see page 8 for a summary of this revelation). Should the unsavory tactics employed by the administration to bring about a global "consensus" on climate change be allowed to continue without being subjected to the light of public exposure? And if CO₂ restrictions are imposed, what effect would the negative economic impact have on the national security of the United States?

Newt Gingrich may be fuming about the risk posed by WikiLeaks' releases. He should be more concerned about how U.S. government actions documented by the releases undermine U.S. security while ostensibly safeguarding it. ■