

Wiki-Leaks-An Enigma of Information Sensation Sans Accountability: A Case Study of India

C.S.H.N Murthy* Reetamoni Das, Oinam Bedajit Meitei

Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University, Napaam, Tezpur 784028, India

*E-mail of the corresponding author: cshnmurthy@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

The world of academics and the media professionals looked at the WikiLeaks as a greater champion of freedom of expression (Sifry M 2011). No deeper academic study/discourse has emerged as yet on this positing. Questions arise whether mere reproduction of cables as 'free and transparent' flow of information will lead to any 'agenda setting' as do the conventional media within the meaning of media theories or will it only tend to herald an era of global disorder and chaos. Given the questions raised on the subjectivity involved in the drafting of these cables emanating from the US consulates across the globe, the present study shows how India had already overcome the crisis that WikiLeaks temporarily created in the sub-continent. The study, which has adapted content analysis of the WikiLeaks published in *The Hindu*, leading English news daily under a tie-up with the WikiLeaks since March 15, 2011 to April 30, 2011, revealed that WikiLeaks failed to generate any effect on Indian public represented by its political representatives in the Parliament, let alone an agenda setting.

Keywords: WikiLeaks, The Hindu, Freedom of expression, Response of Political Establishment, Agenda Setting, Subjectivity of the Cables, etc.

1.Introduction

WikiLeaks has been a new sensation of information in the world's superhighways of information explosion. Though the WikiLeaks first broke out in 2010, no critical discussion on its nature, scope and extent leading to an academic discourse has been done. This is very important considering several unique features of the WikiLeaks. Firstly it is a website not a news paper/portal. Its sole aim is to post the confidential cables of information that flowed from the US consulates to the US head quarters. Secondly, these cables are in the nature of reports/briefs/opinions/interpretations/discussions which they held officially/secretly with the diplomats/political personalities of the respective countries where they have been operating. The US consular officials would keep writing to the US about their perceptions of several instances happening in those countries where they are operational. Hence the cables are tended to be basically US centric and are essentially in the nature of messages. Another important feature is that except that these cables emerged from the US consulates across the globe, there is no way to ascertain the genuineness of the content in them. Yet, the WikiLeaks tended to gain a very fast popularity. Why?

Firstly there are anti-US academics/intelligentsia that can quickly support any anti-US activity. For them the WikiLeaks is a shot in the arm and blue from the bolt. Secondly none wondered as to why WikiLeaks is always publishing cables that would show the US in the poor light. It means that there is either selective publication of leaks which are meant to embarrass the US establishment and the rest of the world or there is no cable from the US consulates across the globe in appreciation of something happening in a country. Thirdly, never it has been a focus of discussion what WikiLeaks has achieved by disclosing what the US cables carried from different consulates to the Whitehouse, Washington. No one questioned as to where from WikiLeaks amassed so much of money to extract these cables from its sources in the embassies world over. Who is funding the WikiLeaks? What is the aim and objective of the WikiLeaks? Is it the sole aim of

WikiLeaks to generate antagonism or hatred against the US from its own allies or from among the third world countries against the US or their neighbour? What has WikiLeaks achieved so far is another billion dollar question. On the other hand so much of praise was heaped on it and its founder Julian Assange (Micha Sifry 2011), as a champion of freedom of expression, though WikiLeaks as it stands now hardly measures up anywhere in comparison with either new media (such as Face-book or Twitter which maintains a two way flow of communication and are capable of setting an agenda for the society to debate) or traditional media like print and television.

Scholars like Micha Sifry (2011) opined that Julian Assange floated a new culture of Internet freedom and free flow of information beyond any secrecy through WikiLeaks. On the other, David Leigh and Luke Harding (2011), the journalists of repute from *Guardian*, sarcastically put it like this:

The media and public were torn between those who saw Assanage as a new kind of cyber-messiah and those who regarded him as a James Bond villain. Each extremity projected on to him superhuman powers of good or evil.

<http://januarymagazine.blogspot.com/2011/04/non-fiction-wikileaks-inside-julian.html> accessed on May 7, 2011).

Commenting on the book in a review, the editor Aaron Blanton wrote that –‘If the WikiLeaks storm took you with surprise, and left you with unanswered questions the book *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrecy* will come close to answering them. At the same time, it delivers a riveting portrait of the culture and personalities that made the WikiLeaks matter not only possible, but perhaps inevitable.

In yet another review on the same book in Kaieteur news, Freddie Kissoon has written:

There are times, when Assange thinks that the journalists are mainstream bureaucrats who have loyalty only to themselves while the media people think that Assange is too impressed with his importance. It comes down to what is your goal in life. Assange wanted publication of Governments’ misbehaviour around the world. The newspapers were not interested in the political consequences of the release of the cables. From reading the book, this seems to be the cause of the confusion. It is clear from this publication that the Guardian and New York Times players do not see Assange as a genuine human rights crusader. It has to do with his behavioral traits, a style in political activists that journalists would not understand. I see a little bit of that everyday in the relation between Mark Benshop, which is the closest thing we have to Julian Assange in this country, and the mainstream media.

But David Leigh and Luke Harding (the authors) seem convinced that Assange is not your run-of-the mill anti-establishment zealot. They genuinely think that Assange has a troubled mind. (<http://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2011/03/05/%E2%80%9Cwikileaks-inside-julian-assange%E2%80%99s-war-on-secrecy-%E2%80%9D-a-brief-review>). The Editor of The Asian Age wrote immediately after the first publication of millions of cables on the WikiLeaks in Nov 2010. Fundamentally, however, the exposures made by the whistleblower site do not advance anyone’s understanding of processes that go into US policy-making in the world arena. A good deal of the WikiLeaks material splashed around by the media refers to matters that have been a subject of widespread comment or expert analysis over time (<http://www.asianage.com/editorial/wikileaks-hold-lesson-india-084>).

The editorial further castigated the manner the cables were sent from the US consulates to the US:

The new WikiLeaks material leaves no one in doubt that US diplomats have now been asked to carry out relatively low-level tasks that lie in the province of spies. This has been officially denied by Washington but the denial appears far from convincing. The inference to be made is that US diplomacy has fallen on inglorious times. When American diplomats now hold meetings with politicians, civil servants, diplomats and society leaders from other countries, the latter are likely to be watchful.

Is that the sole objective of WikiLeaks to create a world tension/hatred/war between nations by bringing into open the espionage activities that every country, including third world countries like India, indulge in? While several questions as to the aim and objectives, let alone the propriety, (especially of its US centricity) of the WikiLeaks as well as its founder Julian Assange remain unanswered by any academic discourse (that we have read so far), it appears that the sensation which WikiLeaks has initially generated is gradually dying down both in India and elsewhere. Though we may not be able to say that this is the case with the entire world, at least, we can say confidently that the sensation which WikiLeaks initially created in India, and across the globe as well, is slowly waning; perhaps one may say that is even dying forever.

2. WikiLeaks on India meets its Waterloo, fail to 'Set an Agenda'

*The Hindu*¹ one of the leading English news dailies in India, ranking third in its readership figures, (Table 4) has entered in to a tie up with the WikiLeaks and started publishing the stories of WikiLeaks on India and other related subjects in it since March 15, 2011 (N.Ram 2011). Though some of the early stories published by the WikiLeaks on Manmohan Singh's government surviving on a 'cash for vote' (bribing Members of Parliament of opposition parties) during its first stint as UPA –I led to a furore in the Parliament with the entire opposition frying the UPA II leaders-Sonia and Manmohan on charcoals and halting the process of Parliamentary proceedings for a long time, the trend declined later when the WikiLeaks exposures irked the opposition party (the NDA led BJP) as well.

In a way both the nation and the people of India did not find a sense of direction and the purpose for what the WikiLeaks has been publishing involving both the opposition and the ruling UPA I and II. A situation of confusion has swept the minds of intellectuals when Pranab Mukherjee, the Finance Minister, told the jam packed Parliament that the 'Government of India could neither confirm nor deny the so called cables reported in WikiLeaks purportedly sent by the US officials in India to the US'

(<http://www.timesnow.tv/Cannot-confirm-or-deny-Wikileaks-Pranab/articleshow/4368006.cms>).

Surprisingly both the opposition and the ruling party soon began to empathise with each other in terming the WikiLeaks as inconsequential and incredible and even dubbed them as mere subjective mails from India to Washington and do not mean anything more than that. The leaders of Opposition party (NDA) in Parliament Sushma Swaraj and Arun Jaitley in Rajya Sabha held separate press meets where they interpreted the versions reported in the WikiLeaks regarding BJP's position on Hindutva have been the subjective statements emanating from the US consulate in India and had nothing to do with the actual views they held on this subject. (<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/wikileaks-congress-slams-jaitley-for-remarks-on-hindutva/1/133574.html>). A transition has thus set in from the initial aggressive reaction of the political establishment to an indifference to the WikiLeaks being published in *The Hindu* on day to day basis ever since March 15, 2011.

A reader Prashant Agrawal posted a blog on the website-The Indian Fusion-which sum up briefly the feelings of people of India at the WikiLeaks.

I just want to remind the Wiki leaks that you can not consider you readers to be fool and release every cable and think 'it would be valued by the reader'. I hope to see some responsible reporting both by wiki leaks and the Hindu in the future which we all expect from them. (<http://indianfusion.aglasem.com/?p=6820>).

2.1 Aims of the study

Against the backdrop, the present study has been under taken to examine as to:

- how much heat WikiLeaks generated in India both politically and academically,
- how many of the WikiLeaks published in *The Hindu* had been taken seriously by the political establishment, let alone academics, in India and responded to, and
- how far the discussions done on the WikiLeaks have achieved any tangible or perceptible change in India's perception towards the US or the UPA II government.

Though not much of literature in terms of academic discourse is forthcoming on WikiLeaks *per se* for the present study, we used the editorials and articles which we considered as a sample for the present study itself as a reference material too. For instance in an editorial published in *The Hindu* its editor wrote on Feb 23, 2011as follows:

As the WikiLeaks episode makes clear, US policy is deeply flawed by the contradiction of espousing an open Internet and in parallel, working to prevent inconvenient disclosures. At a time Ms Clinton was underscoring high opportunity costs for countries which filter or shut down the Internet, the US administration was pursuing legal action to arm-twist the Twitter, the very website that she was praising for helping frustrated citizens of the Arab world. US government officials are seeking court orders to compel Twitter to hand over personal details, including private messages of Julian

Assange of WikiLeaks, Bradley Manning, the detained American soldier and Brigitta Jonsdottir, a member of Iceland's Parliament.

The editorial unequivocally supported the WikiLeaks by stating that:

'To praise the Internet for aiding truth-telling and, in the same breath, dismiss the discussion on free speech for websites such as WikiLeaks as a 'false debate' is hypocritical'.

This has simultaneously raised a pertinent question --Is WikiLeaks an eternal enigma of information, and nothing else? It is from this kind of editorial as an academic that I would foresee an ample scope to develop a theory on WikiLeaks as to what constitutes the 'truth-telling' and 'free-speech' (N.Ram, Editor, *The Hindu*, March 15, 2011).

The above statement has been made by the editor obviously on two basic assumptions:

- One is that WikiLeaks has always been espousing the 'truth' and 'nothing else', the contradictions emanating from the political establishment in India notwithstanding.
- Secondly the editor reposes a great faith, as much as WikiLeaks itself, in the 'objectivity' and 'truthfulness' of the US information officials (than in the US?), who draft these mails and send across the cables to the US. It is the latter assumption that came under severe attack in Indian Parliament.

Coming to the latter first, we would like to state here that to give such a magnitude of 'credibility to the US officials' who drafted these cables from the US embassies across the globe is nothing short of a paradox, and it leads to a strange argument/positing that the US can be culpable but its officials elsewhere are not; US can be biased but its embassy officials are very objective and accurate. How far the world academics look at this bifid argument as a primary doctrine of validation of the WikiLeaks is billion dollar question.

As to the former proposition, I would like to place before the larger readership the content analysis that I had done on the WikiLeaks published in *The Hindu* from March 15, 2011 to April 30, 2011.

2.2 Content Analysis: Formation of Categories on the basis of response of the political establishment-both ruling and opposition- representing its people

2.2.1. Sample

As I had taken full sample it assumes the same validity as that of a random sample itself. The Table 1 showed on which dates the WikiLeaks were published in *The Hindu* after its first ever publication under the tie-up since March 15, 2011 (Red square in the calendar). Table 2 shows the distribution of items on WikiLeaks inside the pages of *The Hindu*. Tables 3a and 3b show the categorization of items based on the response of the political establishment both ruling and the opposition. Tables 3c & 3d show the distribution of categories on the basis of the nature of the content: one oriented towards India and the other oriented between India vs other countries.

2.2.2. Dilemma of coding and formulating categories: done in two ways-one subject as a tag line and the other as country involved as a tag line

A total of 168 items (see Table 2) of WikiLeaks were published during this period in *The Hindu*. We counted all of them as stories involving both the *India-US relations*, *India-other countries relations* and *Responses of Indian political establishment to the WikiLeaks*. For the purpose of analysing these items we have to code the content.

Strangely we have encountered a serious dilemma in this regard. Firstly, if we were to code the content as per the main subject each cable dealt with, then we would have categories like (as tags): Diplomatic, Military, Defence, Business, Corruption, and others (see Table 3c). If we were to code the content based on the county and its relation to the subject, then we will have coding running with country names as tags in relation to the subject of category explained earlier. (See Table 3d). However, after coding the content in

both the ways we realized that in either way the coded content looked very much skewed. (see Table 3c and 3d).

2.2.2. A. Under the first treatment the following categories have emerged:

Diplomatic: Issues that concern diplomatic relations between India-Pakistan, India-US-Pakistan, India-Sri Lanka, etc.

Military or Defence: Issues that concern the US defence supplies to Pakistan, US-Iraq confrontation on nuclear deals, India-US nuclear deals, India-US defence deals, US military or defence in Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.

Business: Issues deal with starting new units such as Dow at Pune etc, or expanding business and trade between India-US, India and its neighbours, India-UK etc.

Corruption: Issues concerning cash for vote in India during UPA I, corruption involving MPs demanding money to set up Dow Unit at Pune, etc.

Others: A variety of issues including the speculation concerning the possible crumbling of Bollywood, etc.

2.2.2. B. Under the second treatment the following countries categories in relation to the above subject have emerged:

Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka, West Asia, US, Pakistan, Italy, Bangladesh, Israel, Vatican, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Turkey, UK and Russia.

Skewed distribution and finalizing new categories

It is on these broad subjects that the WikiLeaks have been sent by the US embassy from India. Some of them have even dealt with the political situation and the views of the political leaders on various subjects like '**Hindutva**' or the involvement of certain political leaders in the scams associated with the **UPA I trust vote** during its first term when the leftists group withdrew their support on the controversial nuclear deal between India and the US. Some have dealt with the corruption the political leaders in India resorted to for setting up of a Dow's Unit in Pune or about the alleged illegally stashed money in Swiss banks.

After the distribution of 168 items into these categories (see Table 3c and 3d) with respect to their relationship with India directly, and the interlinking of some of these between India and other countries, we noticed an uneven/highly skewed distribution of items under certain categories (See Tables 3b, 3c and 3d). The WikiLeaks have repeatedly reported more number of times on certain defence/military /corruption issues rather than on all the issues that they reported earlier.

Alternative Categories on the principle of response to WikiLeaks from the Indian Political establishment (as it was the main target in the content of WikiLeaks):

At this time to arrive at the possible consequence of WikiLeaks in Indian context, we had to make some hard choice. Either to look at the WikiLeaks arrayed directly against Indian political establishment and the kind of response it had from political establishment to these items of WikiLeaks both from India and from the other countries or take the whole spectrum of WikiLeaks however skewed the distribution of categories were. We had preferred the former and dropped the later (Tables 3c and 3d) from the study as in our view except Indian political establishment, no other country in the region-Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan-- including the countries like the US or the UK reacted to these WikiLeaks.

As most of the stories published in the WikiLeaks on India involved the political establishment of the UPA or the State Governments such as Maharashtra, the response of the major political parties/the UPA government has been finally taken into consideration as 'response of the political establishment' (see Table 3b). In a way, we perceived that the publication of these stories in the WikiLeaks also was with the intent to

get the reaction/response of the political establishment, be it US or India or any other country for that matter. Hence we were of the view that in the circumstances explained above we had chosen a right approach for content analysis of this kind.

2.2.2. C. Final categories taken for analysis:

Therefore, the following **three categories** have been finally developed for the content analysis:

Category I. WikiLeaks eliciting **serious reaction** from the political establishment in India:

The term **Serious reaction** is defined by us using the following criteria:

i. Parliament taking cognizance of WikiLeaks, ii. Parliament debating the concerned WikiLeaks threadbare and iii. Heated exchanges such as challenges and counter challenges, including stalling the proceedings of the Parliament, occurring between the ruling and the opposition, even demanding the resignation of UPA II and its cabinet.

Category II. WikiLeaks receiving **moderate response** from the political establishment in India:

The term moderate response has been defined by us using the following criteria:

i. There will be no discussion in the Parliament, ii. There will be only statements from the party spokespersons from the main ruling UPA II and the opposition leaders, iii. There will be challenges and counter challenges or allegations and counter allegations using WikiLeaks out side on their respective party platforms, and iv. There will be debates live (on line) or inside media channels on the issues raised in the WikiLeaks between different political ideologues/spokespersons.

Category III. WikiLeaks drawing almost **nil/zero response** from the political establishment in India:

Nil/Zero response from the political establishment is defined by us using the following criteria: i. There will be no taking cognizance of any issue raised in the WikiLeaks by any political group or leaders. ii. There will be no reference to the WikiLeaks at other forums such as media channels, elections, or public addresses by the political establishment.

A sum of 168 WikiLeaks items published since March 15-April 30, 2011 have been coded against the above three categories by two doctoral students who were given a previous training in coding using a sample of 30% of the WikiLeaks items first. After satisfying with the coders' performance, all the 168 items have been given to them for coding.

2.2.3. Inter-coder reliability-Scot's Pi & Cohen's Kappa

An inter-coder reliability of 0.460 has been obtained using Scott's *Pi*. 0.470 has been obtained by the Cohen's *Kappa*. As per Banerjee et al (1999) 0.40 to 0.75 indicates a fair to good agreement beyond chance in Cohen's *kappa* (see Table 3a). Some argue that this value is very less and demand a Scott's *pie* as high as 0.70-0.80. However, given the nature of unstructured content which runs like official briefs and meanders through various issues in a single cable of WikiLeaks, there is no way we could have got a higher Scott's *pie* for we are not coding apparently a structured print media report published in news papers, etc. *There are many WikiLeaks with overlapping contents, yet dealing with other issues, making it formidably difficult to bring them under one category.* We have however conducted a co-variation test and found the variance between the two coders. The best situation in co-variation would be one in which coded scores are shown to have both high agreement and high co-variation (Tinsley & Weiss 1975). Results of Inter-Coder reliability tests have been furnished in Table 3a.

2.2.4. Political establishment represented the popular view of the public: no need of a separate survey

Further we have considered the response of the political establishment represented by the representatives elected by the people as a democratic response. Hence, we were of the view that there is no need to conduct a parallel survey of the public separately. It is our considered view that where the elected representatives'

views are available on the issues of importance/public debate forming 'public sphere' in the media (Habermas J 1989), no separate public survey is necessary to support the findings of the content analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Out of 168 items coded by both the coder A and Coder B, N=12 items were found by both the coders to have actually elicited a serious response from the government (Category I). WikiLeaks confirming that the then UPA I survived trust-vote by paying cash for vote in the aftermath of Leftists parting ways with the then UPA I coalition government (as a protest against the nuclear deal that the UPA-I signed with the US) had created a storm in the Parliament. The entire opposition had come together in hanging the present government on fire. Firstly the Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee refused to yield to the WikiLeaks on this issue (<http://www.timesnow.tv/Cannot-confirm-or-deny-Wikileaks-Pranab/articleshow/4368006.cms>). He only said that what ever happened in the earlier Parliament cannot be discussed in the current dispensation of UPA II. However, the opposition was unrelenting and demanded an explanation of the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on this issue.

After a few days of freezing the parliamentary proceedings at last the Prime Minister Singh made a statement on the floor of the Parliament that the 'cash for vote' charges have been thoroughly investigated by the then Parliamentary Committee headed by Kishore Chandra Deo who submitted a report that the UPA I leadership was in no way connected with the episode. It also recommended for further investigation in to the episode by the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation). Singh also supported the statement of Pranab Mukherjee that what transpired between the US officials and the White House in the US was entirely a consular correspondence that did not fall within the purview of the government of India for scrutiny. Hence the government of India can neither confirm nor deny those reports. (<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/debate-on-cashforvotes-pm-to-face-the-heat/146831-37-64.html>)

Like wise, the rantings about BJP leader Arun Jaitley's statement in confidence with the US consular officials that the 'Hindutva card' is a façade and not a real issue at the heart of the BJP party agenda or leadership. (<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/wikileaks-congress-slams-jaitley-for-remarks-on-hindutva/1/133574.html>) Further issues like how inconveniencing the Indo-US nuclear deal became to the Prime Minister, the US preferences of Indian cabinet, denial to issue visa to Narendra Modi, the CM of Gujarat in the aftermath of Godhra communal riots in Gujarat, Dow Chemicals seeking space to set up a new factory near Pune and the demands of bribe from a Member of Parliament, etc have elicited moderate responses (both coders have agreed that N=22 items have elicited moderate responses).

Both coders found that N=99 items which were reported in WikiLeaks running into long pages both in the front, open edit pages or edit pages in *The Hindu* hardly elicited any response from the Indian political establishment. Regarding the remaining 35 items both the coders could not come to any agreement on the state of the response they elicited from the political establishment.

Indeed there was no any kind of discussion even among academics/media institutions in the aftermath of the WikiLeaks. In fact in an interview to the editor of *The Hindu* Julian Assange deplored the attitude shown by the Indian Prime Minister and his cabinet over the significance of WikiLeaks (*The Hindu*, April 12, 2011). He (Assange) objected to the Prime Minister's insinuation that they need not be taken as true interpretations of what transpired between the officials/political ideologues of the UPA and the US consular officials. He said that the credibility of WikiLeaks have not been questioned ever even by the US/any other nation in the world except India. But, people of India and many academics across the country had a number of doubts over the ambitions of the Julian Assange in trying to irk both the opposition and the ruling front in India by blowing hot and cold alternatively. Some of the WikiLeaks published in *The Hindu* were destabilizing India in Asia as they portend to disturb the relations between India and Bangladesh, India and Nepal, etc. It is our reasoning that like any citizen of US no Indian perhaps would have liked any disturbance in the relationships between India and its neighbouring countries.

In short the WikiLeaks has failed to 'set an agenda' for a third world country like India despite the hype notwithstanding. The ability of conventional media to set the agenda for the country was witnessed by one billion Indian population over several decades on issues such as emergency excesses (1975-79) committed

by Indira Gandhi and Bofors scandal (1984-89) which involved Rajiv Gandhi. However, WikiLeaks, despite its revelations being much deeper in their complexities and magnitude (such as stashing in Swiss banks etc), the Indian society did not take them seriously. Even in the just concluded elections to five regional states (Assam, Pondicherry, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala), neither the opposition nor the ruling UPA II had any mention of the WikiLeaks during the election campaigns anywhere.

3.1. Did anti US-Centric WikiLeaks reveal anything new?

Academics and media professionals like the editor of *The Hindu* seemed to be carried away by the simple notion that WikiLeaks symbolized the 'absolute freedom of expression' and 'the internet is becoming a metaphor to the fourth estate' than the conventional media (Sifry M 2011; Leigh and Harding, 2011). From the beginning of this paper, our discussion pondered over the fact that how far such encomiums on the WikiLeaks are really based on any informed discourse/discussion that assure us that the cables leaked by the WikiLeaks were indeed in the interest of global peace and order?

The world and its citizens were never unaware of the espionage activities and strategies the world countries indulge in for several reasons. Some of these are survival strategies for countries like India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka as they live in the neighbourhood of much larger nations like China or militancy pervaded nations like Bangladesh or Pakistan. But for nations like the US and the Britain, these strategies may be of immense importance to retain their global hegemony.

The world's conventional media had exposed enough of the US strategies both in terms of its hegemonic and imperialistic pursuits/interests prior to the crumbling of the USSR and after wards. There is nothing new in the WikiLeaks exposure of the US which can be described as a big sensation or discovery of a new face that the world is unaware of the US or Britain. Nor was there anything which WikiLeaks have exposed about India or its corrupt politics that an average Indian was not aware of. In fact long before WikiLeaks, the conventional media exposed the large scale corruption involved in Commonwealth Games recently held in Delhi or about the massive corruption that took place through lobbying for telecom companies in the 2G scam by the disclosure of Neera Radia tapes.

3.2. What are they (WikiLeaks) consequential?

Absolute transparency and free flow of information that WikiLeaks flaunts as its sole aim and objective, which the world mediocre academics and professionals boast of as a great step forward alone cannot, establish the order and tranquility that the world citizenry has been looking forward to. If information flow results in a chaos or collapse of the world order, perhaps what we mean is even worse than what it is now. Further will it help the world citizenry in any way is the moot question many of us including the editor of *The Hindu* is over looking. One question that stared in to all our face was what was the motive behind publishing US centric WikiLeaks? Would this bring an end to the US hegemony in the global policing and monitoring? But, the world is never so innocent of these disgusting questions. A quite effective answer one would surely hasten to offer is that if the US hegemony/imperialistic pursuits end, then it might be the beginning of China's hegemony and its global pursuit to hunt for its market. If not China for that matter some other nation like Japan or Germany would rush forward. So, the anti-US sentiment of WikiLeaks might not be of much consequence to the world order for now at least.

The matter of fact that everyone has to ponder over is whether the 'free information flow' has the potential to change the global order or ability to set an agenda so drastically different from what it is now by generating an anti US attitude homogeneously across the globe. Every government in the world will run with certain amount of privacy and secrecy concerning its own national policies/people safety. Leaking out such documents might put every country's safety in jeopardy and tilts its delicate balances in the region. Due to WikiLeaks, a government which is already vulnerable to an attack from its neighbours may be put to further risk of escalations of tensions/more espionage both from within and out or may face economic and otherwise sanctions. How far WikiLeaks helps checking such imbalances that creep into the world order due to its publications?

Especially a country like India facing a number of threats both from Pakistan, Bangladesh and China could hardly ignore national interests. It might as well have its own espionage links with some officials in Pakistan, Bangladesh and China. By leaking out such documents, is WikiLeaks doing a good service to India and its people?—is a moot question for all of us. Another question that haunts all of us is how far the drafts done by the US embassy officials are objective. It is difficult to assume that the US is biased/hegemonic but its officials are sacred and objective. There is every reason to believe that the cables which the US officials send to the White house from any country might be subjective, doctored and may be equally biased in keeping with the thinking at the Whitehouse.

It is this which had been reflected in the political discourse resorted to both by the Prime Minister and Finance Minister to defend the actions of the UPA II and UPA I in various deals including ‘cash for vote’ or signing a nuclear deal against India’s own interests with the US. Even the Indian opposition voiced the same with regard to the ‘objectivity’ of the WikiLeaks. There is no way the WikiLeaks could over come/confront this counter of political discourse. It is at this crucial failure of the WikiLeaks that India succeeded in overcoming the sensation and hype the WikiLeaks created in the sub-continent. If WikiLeaks is a failure both in India and in the US equally, the two important democracies in the world, its success elsewhere may not be solely due to the WikiLeaks or just due to the free information flow. One has to examine other reasons for the revolutions that were witnessed in Tunisia, Egypt, etc. We are not inclined to give credits to WikiLeaks for the success of public rebellions in Egypt and Tunisia. Stolberg traced the success of the Egyptian revolution to a face book revolution created by Gene Sharp from US (*The Hindu*, Feb 18, 2011). The exact reasons for these revolutions have to be studied in the context of ethnographi and anthropological posits (<http://mediasocialchange.net/2011/05/03/egypts-experimental-moment-contingent-thoughts-on-media-and-social-change/> and personal communication between Mark Allen Peterson and the author on May 3, 2011).

As Micha Sifry (2011) pointed out that the good thing with the WikiLeaks is that it does not add or deduct anything from the free information flow it does in the form of leaking of the US cables in original. Such a free flow of information might serve no purpose.

4. Conclusions

A critical examination of WikiLeaks in the context of India has revealed nothing very useful and purposeful, though new, for a nation or its citizenry or for that matter for the entire world. Revealing the US strategies and its espionage activities among its allied nations, its hegemonic policies and its pursuit of global policing, etc are not adding any thing new to what the conventional media had meticulously achieved so far by contributing investigative reports in its own way to enhance the global citizen’s knowledge of the world affairs. Nor did the WikiLeaks bring any new glory to the ability of Internet to act as a world champion of freedom of expression. The freedom of expression gained in the countries like Egypt and Tunisia, and the revolutions some African and Middle East countries are facing from their citizenry were not apparently because of WikiLeaks.

Lack of objectivity in the US cables, which WikiLeaks published as ‘sensational flow of information’, adds little to the discourse of objectivity that the information flow should reflect. Further the motives behind leaking the US cables against India or its allied nations or against India and its neighbours only suggest that WikiLeaks is looking for a global disorder or chaos rather a new means of global order. Further exposing the dubious faces of Indian politicians, a fact which is known to every Indian, however illiterate one maybe, has taken away the little enthusiasm that ushered in initially with the WikiLeaks for people began sceptical about the purpose of the WikiLeaks.

The content analysis of WikiLeaks published in *The Hindu* (15 March-30 April 2011) only revealed that Indian political establishment successfully manoeuvred the ripples the WikiLeaks initially created in India for the simple reasons that the US cables themselves do not confirm either the US government position or the Indian government position on the issues the cables reported. Except creating a short term disturbance among Indian populace and its political leaders, not much has been the outcome of the WikiLeaks published in *The Hindu* so far. The embarrassment notwithstanding, people of India represented by its

political leadership began to look at the WikiLeaks as a destructive force operating in the guise of freedom of expression. Given some sensational stories on India's delicate relationships with its neighbours such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, China and Nepal, the intentions of WikiLeaks have become all the more threatening to destabilize India or this region of Asia. Therefore the authors of this paper are not in a position to agree with the Editorial of *The Hindu* that WikiLeaks championed the cause of freedom of expression through the Internet as much as the Facebook, or Twitter achieved independently in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, etc. To equate both of these at the level of Internet as a platform may be a homological outlook but analogically it fails to stand the course.

Until the motives of such information flow and its sources of funding become clearer to the world citizenry, the WikiLeaks is not going to form a useful or purposeful dominant discourse of freedom of expression or agenda setting that a conventional media perform at the level of 'public sphere'.

References

- Agarwal, P. (2011), "Now that is not understandable to me: Prashant Agarwal" April 29, 2011
<http://indianfusion.aglasem.com/?p=6820> [accessed 9 Sept 2011]
- Blanton, A. (2011). Book Review of *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* by David Leigh and Luke Harding. *January Magazine*. April 6, 2011.
- The Times of India (March 11, 2011), "Cannot Confirm or deny WikiLeaks: Pranab"
<http://www.timesnow.tv/Cannot-confirm-or-deny-Wikileaks-Pranab/articleshow/4368006.cms> [accessed 9 Sept 2011]
- David, L. & Harding, L. (2011), *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy*, United States: Guardian Books.
- Mediasocialchange (2011), "Egypt's Experimental Moment: Contingent Thoughts on Media and Social Change", <http://mediasocialchange.net/2011/05/03/egypts-experimental-moment-contingent-thoughts-on-media-and-social-change/> [accessed 7 May 2011]
- Ram, N. (2011), "Fascinating Insights-5,100 cables, six million worlds; what they are about & what is in store", 15 March 2011, Front Page Editorial Note, *The Hindu*.
- Ram, N. (2011), "On Real Internet Freedom", Editorial, *The Hindu*, 23 Feb.
- Peterson, M. A. (2011). *Connected in Cairo: Growing up Cosmopolitan in the Middle East*. Indiana University Press.
- Postill, J. (2009), "What is the point of media anthropology?" *Social Anthropology* 17(3), 334-337, 340-342.
- Sifry, L. M. (2011), *WikiLeaks and the Age of Transparency*, United Kingdom: OR Books.
- Stolberg, S. G. (2011), "Intellectual Created Playbook used in a revolution", *The Hindu*, 1 Feb
- "WikiLeaks hold a lesson for India: The Asian Age", *The Asian Age*, 30 Nov 2011,
<http://www.asianage.com/editorial/wikileaks-hold-lesson-india-084> [accessed 9 Sept 2011]
- "WikiLeaks cables cannot be verified: PM", *The IBN News Live*, 24 March 2011,
<http://ibnlive.in.com/news/debate-on-cashforvotes-pm-to-face-the-heat/146831-37-64.html> [accessed 9 Sept 2011]
- "WikiLeaks: Congress slams Jaitley for 'remarks' on Hindutva", *India Today*, 27 March 2011.
<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/wikileaks-congress-slams-jaitley-for-remarks-on-hindutva/1/133574.html> [accessed 9 Sept 2011]

C.S.H.N.Murthy Ph.D (1957-) is an Associate Professor in Mass Communication and Journalism and SiRC Associate of NTU, Singapore. His articles have been published in International journals such as

Journal of Adult and Continuing Education, Educational Media International, Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education and Journal of Communication Studies. He has presented papers at numerous International Conferences, including the Pan Commonwealth Forum 5 (2008), the 'End of Journalism, Technology, Education, Ethics' Conference (2008), AMIC (2009), IAMCR (2009), the Change of Progress Conference (2009), the Community Broadcasters Association of Australia Conference(2009), the 3rd ICT and Social Network Meeting(2010), Barcelona (Spain) and the World Internet Project(2010), Lisbon (Portugal), and Pan Commonwealth Forum 6 (2010).

Correspondence: cshnmurthy@yahoo.co.in or cshnmurthy@gmail.com.

Reetamoni Das and Oinam Bedajit Meitei are Research Scholars in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University, Napaam, Tezpur, Assam, India.

Table 1. WikiLeaks on India with tie-up with *The Hindu* (March 2011 to April 2011)

March 2011						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

April 2011						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Notes: --- starting date of The Hindu's tie-up with WikiLeaks
 ----- days on which articles or news on Wikileaks appeared on the newspaper pages.

Table 2. Distribution of WikiLeaks on India in the pages of *The Hindu*

Sl no.	Month	No. Of articles	No. Of Editorials	No. of Op-Ed page articles	No. of Edit page articles	No. of Front page coverage	No. Of items in news pages
2	March	128	0	71	6	22	29
3	April	40	2	33	0	3	2
	Total	168	2	104	6	25	31

Table 3a: Inter-Coder Reliability of Categorization of WikiLeaks Content based on Response of Political Establishment in India

Total content	Percentage Agreement (PA _o)	Scott's <i>pi</i>	Cohen's <i>kappa</i>	Standard Deviation for Coder A	Standard Deviation for Coder B	Coefficient of Variation for Coder A (V ₁)	Coefficient of Variation for Coder B (V ₂)
168	.738	.460	.47	31.016 <i>M</i> =56	29.87 <i>M</i> =56	55.38	53.33

Table 3b: Categorization of WikiLeaks Content based on Response of Political Establishment in India

S.No.	Categories I (eliciting serious response) As agreed between two coders	Categories II (eliciting Moderate response) As agreed between two coders	Categories III (eliciting low or nil response) As agreed between two coders	Categories that both coders failed to agree upon	Total
1.	12	22	99	35	168

Table 3c: Categorization based on the Subject of the WikiLeaks with Reference to India

S.No.	Diplomatic	Military	Defence	Business	Corruption	Others	Total
1.	59	7	6	7	22	33	134

Table 3d: Categorization based on the Country of Focus In the WikiLeaks

S.No.	Countries of Focus in WikiLeaks	Diplomatic	Military	Defence	Business	Corruption	Others	Total
1	Iran	--	--	--	1	--	--	1
2.	Nepal	2	--	--	---	--	--	2
3.	Sri Lanka	1	2	--	--	--	--	3
4.	West Asia	1	--	--	--	---	---	1
5.	US	7	1	--	--	---	---	8
6.	Pakistan	3	1	--	--	---	---	4
7.	Italy	1	--	--	--	--	---	1
8	Bangladesh	2	----	----	----	-----	1	3
9.	Israel	1	---	---	---	---	---	1
10.	Vatican	5	---	---	---	----	----	5
11.	Saudi Arabia	1	---	---	---	----	--	1
12.	Australia	1	--	---	---	---	--	1
13.	Turkey	1	---	----	---	---	---	1
14.	UK	--	1	---	---	---	---	1
15.	Russia	---	----	---	--	--	1	1
Total		26	5	--	1	--	--	2
34								

Table 4. ¹Top ten English News papers in India (These are all readership figures (in lakhs) and not circulation numbers).

TOP 10 ENGLISH DAILIES

Rank	Newspaper	IRS 2009 R2	IRS 2010 Q1
1	The Times Of India	71.42	70.35
2	Hindustan Times	33.47	34.67
3	¹The Hindu	21.69	21.59
4	The Telegraph	11.5	12.04
5	Deccan Chronicle	11.52	11.24
6	Mumbai Mirror	8.1	8.31
7	The Economic Times	7.57	7.6
8	Daily News & Analysis	7.36	7.17
9	The Tribune	5.96	6
10	The New Indian Express	5.63	5.37

(All figures are in lakhs; IRS 2009 R2: IRS 2009 Round 2; IRS 2010 Q1: IRS 2010 Quarter 1)

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:**

<http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a fast manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

