

WikiLeaks: Back In Business

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Julian Assange back at the frontline

Just a quick note on the [latest WikiLeaks release](#). It's far too early to judge the significance of the content but it's interesting to see how the organisation is shaping up.

This appears to be something of a return to their hacktivist roots in the sense that the information has come from Anonymous hackers, rather than a leaker.

But WikiLeaks has retained its networked journalism mode of operation with partnerships with 'mainstream' media organisations across the globe. None of these are on a par with the big names that collaborated on the 2010 releases, but after the painful conclusion to that process it is impressive that WikiLeaks have managed to put together such a coalition at all.

The target is interesting. Attacking a private intelligence agency is very much in keeping with Assange's philosophy of attempting to undermine the information networks of power. I suspect that even patriotic Americans will feel less offended by this unlawful leak from a corporation compared to the release of military secrets.

Some have suggested that disclosing the information may put some people at risk while [others think](#) that associating so directly with a loose collective of disrupters like Anonymous might end in tears. But Assange has shown before that he has a different risk calculation to most in mainstream media.

It is also interesting that WikiLeaks are making a virtue of their inability to examine all the information by encouraging the public and their media partners to help comb through the data in search of news nuggets.

This is red meat for the conspiracy theorists, so stand by for a series of highly complex assertions based on the email musings of a company that had a lot of intelligence, some dubious motives, but also a propensity to big up its own importance as a way of justifying its fees.

[Some commentary](#) has already played down the significance of these emails. Having heard the press conference and read some of the material I agree, to an extent. Stratfor is clearly not a charity working for peace, love and understanding but I can't see a major, game-changing scandal. It [may not be quite as important](#) as its marketing and Julian Assange think it is.

But, as I said in [my book about WikiLeaks](#), the point of this kind of extensive release is not just to create one Big Bang headline. What is interesting is what it shows us about the routine assumptions, values and processes of those with this power. It makes us ask whether they should be more accountable and to question their relationship with our governments and the corporations that are so powerful in our lives. That's not a bad thing for any kind of journalism to do.

[Commercial break:

[WikiLeaks: News In The Networked Era](#) by Charlie Beckett with James Ball, (Polity)]

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