

Media Coverage of Edward Snowden in 2013 and 2014

Liputan Media terhadap Edward Snowden pada 2013 dan 2014

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Abstract

Whistleblowing has been acknowledged as an important contributor to government transparency and the watchdog function of the press. However, there has long been a tension between the U.S. government and its employees who decide to blow the whistle. The relationship between the U.S. government and whistleblowers is as complicated as the relationship between national security and the American press. This study explored how the image of Edward Snowden, who revealed the extensive use of Americans' surveillance in National Security Agency, was covered in ten different websites from 2013 to 2014. Snowden's image appeared to be more positively viewed with the passage of time.

Keywords: whistleblowing, national security, Edward Snowden, NSA surveillance programs

Abstrak

Whistleblowing telah lama diakui peran pentingnya dalam mendukung transparansi pemerintah dan fungsi watchdog dari pers. Meski demikian, pemerintah AS telah lama memiliki ketegangan dengan pegawai-pegawainya yang memutuskan untuk meniupkan peluit tentang penyelewengan pemerintah. Hubungan antara pemerintah AS dan whistleblower pun sama rumitnya dengan hubungan antara keamanan nasional dan pers Amerika. Riset ini meneliti bagaimana citra Edward Snowden, yang mengungkap tindakan mata-mata National Security Agency, ditampilkan oleh 10 situs media online dari 2013 hingga 2014. Citra Snowden tampak ditampilkan secara lebih positif seiring berjalannya waktu.

Kata kunci: whistleblowing, keamanan nasional, Edward Snowden, program pengawasan NSA

INTRODUCTION

On April 14, 2014, *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* were awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for their reporting on the National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance. The award recognized Glenn Greenwald and Ewan MacAskill of *The Guardian*, Barton Gellman of *The Washington Post* and independent journalist Laura Poitras for their coverage of the topic. Their work was based on the NSA top secret documents leaked by Edward Joseph Snowden, a former NSA contractor.

The award was seen as unimaginable ten months before when the NSA stories first broke. At that time the stories were highly controversial and Snowden was considered by many in the United States as a traitor. However, over time, there has been a slow but remarkable rehabilitation of Snowden's reputation (Burman, 2014). This study was motivated by the author's observation of the improving image of Snowden in the media from 2013 to 2014.

The NSA controversy, including Snowden as the whistleblower, was started on June 6, 2013 when *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* published the revelations. Since then, it has received intensive coverage in the global media, ranging from *The South China Morning Post*, *The Times of India* to *Russia Today*.

On June 14, 2013, the U.S. government filed criminal charges against Snowden for releasing the top secret documents, which he had acquired while working as a NSA consultant for security contractor Booz Allen Hamilton. Snowden was charged with theft of government property, "unauthorized communication of national defense information" and "willful communication of classified communications intelligence information to an unauthorized person". The last two charges were brought under the 1917 Espionage Act, a World War I-era law

created to punish federal spies. Each charge carries up to 10 years in jail (Hackett, 2013).

Snowden documents uncovered the existence of numerous global surveillance programs, many of them run by the NSA and the Five Eyes, an alliance created during World War II including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Britain and the U.S. with a treaty for joint cooperation in intelligence gathering (Ball, 2013).

Some of the most notable documents were firstly, the PRISM program which gives the NSA access to data held by nine of the world's top technology companies such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft and Skype. Secondly, a topsecret court order requiring Verizon to hand over all telephone calls data in its system. And lastly, a tool called Boundless Informant, designed for cataloging the source and volume of intelligence information from computer and telephone networks globally (Harding, 2014a: 24).

The term whistleblower can be traced back to the Victorian England, where a police officer who spotted a crime in progress would blow his whistle while chasing a criminal in order to warn the public of the crime (Berk, 2011). In today's era, the term whistleblowing has evolved from its origin, as people generally define whistleblower as an employee who exposes any wrongdoing in an organization.

Due to its big impact on business and government organization, scholars conducted various studies on whistleblowing, resulting in numerous definitions of the act. Jubb's (1999) definition of whistleblowing has been regularly cited by researchers due to its wide scope. He wrote:

Whistleblowing is a deliberate non-obligatory act of public disclosure, which gets onto public record and is made by a person who has or had privileged access to information of an organization, about nontrivial illegality or wrongdoing whether actual, suspected or anticipated, which im-

plicates and is under the control of that organisation, to an external entity having the potential to rectify the wrongdoing.

Kleinhempel (Johnson, 2012: 18) wrote that whistleblowing can be seen as an ethical act or as a betrayal of loyalty. The ethical status of whistleblowing depends mainly on the deed revealed and the whistleblower's motivations, which can be a desire to right a wrong, the desire for financial gain to the desire for revenge. These factors are overlapping in many cases which make the line separating an unethical snitch and a whistleblower is thin and often blurry.

Kleinhempel suggested the meaning of "loyalty towards organization" should be defined more clearly. He cited several authors that have coined the notion of "rational loyalty," where one's faithfulness does not lie with an organization's top management and its employees, but the organization's mission, goals and code of conduct. He also found that many companies are moving to reward whistleblowers themselves, giving whistleblowers an incentive to keep their findings internal rather than going to the government (Johnson, 2003: 18).

In *Whistleblowing*, Johnson (2003: 27-38), a professor of politics, suggested five reasons why there are so many whistleblowers in the U.S. Firstly, changes in the bureaucracy. The most important change, she said, is the increasing educational level and professional training of public officials. She argued that "specially trained experts may feel that they have a distinct perspective on public problems and solutions, one that may be nonnegotiable."

Secondly, laws that encourage whistleblowing, such as the 1978 Ethics in Government Act that requires employees to disclose any fraud and abuse, and the 1980 Code of Ethics for Government Services that requires government employees to "put loyalty to the highest moral principles above

loyalty to persons, party or government department."

Thirdly, the federal and state whistleblower protections. Whistleblower Protection Program of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), an agency of the Department of Labor, provides one of the biggest protections for whistleblowers. OSHA's Whistleblower Protection Program enforces the provisions of more than twenty whistleblower statutes, protecting employees who report violations in various workplaces, ranging from airline, public transportation, consumer product to financial industries (OSHA, n.d.).

For government employees, they are protected by the 1989 Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA). This federal government policy, which is an amendment of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act, aimed to enable employees to disclose evidence of fraud, abuse, mismanagement, or illegal activities taking place in their agencies without fear of reprisal

Fourthly, institutional support for whistleblowers. Media outlets, non-profit organizations and Congress all encourage whistleblowing. Media coverage allows whistleblowers to express their positions and concerns while stimulating public interest. There are various non-profit organizations dedicated to support whistleblowers such as the National Whistleblower Center and the Project on Government Oversight. Regarding Congress, it holds public hearings, getting testimony on any wrongdoing and inefficiency from whistleblowers.

And lastly, a culture that values whistleblowing. Johnson argued that the public's receptivity toward whistleblowing is related to the traditional American value of individualism. She said that whistleblowers themselves relate and connect to the value of individualism--an individual can make a big change. This connection, she argued, is also "stimulated by media coverage and academic studies of whistleblowing that

often emphasized the personal suffering and isolation the whistleblowers experience because of their courageous exposure of wrongdoing” (Johnson, 2003: 38).

Although there are various supports and protections for American whistleblowers, there is a difficulty with the free speech rights for those who work in national defense because their information could have a negative impact on national security. Consequently, civilian employees and military personnel in the intelligence gathering and assessment field are required to sign non-disclosure agreements, prohibiting them to release any classified information or testimony related to their work (Shimabukuro & Whitaker, 2012).

There has long been a tension between the U.S. government and its employees who decide to blow the whistle. U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley, who has secured several legislative protections and financial incentives to encourage whistleblowing that strengthens good governance, wrote, “Inside government, too often, federal agencies try to suppress information, shoot the messenger or stonewall efforts for full disclosure and transparency” (Grassley, 2013).

The American public has increasingly come to recognize whistleblowing as beneficial for democracy as it has been used to uncover corrupt government practices. However, there are remaining concerns about the threat that such acts may pose to national security and individual privacy (Johnson, 2003: 41).

Similarly, the relationship between the federal government and whistleblowers is as complicated as the relationship between national security and the American press. Derigan Silver, a journalism professor at University of Denver, wrote that the federal government’s prosecution of two former lobbyists for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in 2004 for possessing and disseminating national secu-

rity information can be called an attempt by the government to prosecute individuals who behave like journalists (Silver, 2008).

Silver argued there are numerous existing laws under which the press could be criminally prosecuted for the possession and/or publication of national security information. Although federal prosecutors finally dropped the Espionage Act case against the two former lobbyists in 2009, it is argued that the 1917 Act still threatens journalists when related to national security (Markon, 2009).

The U.S. government has never successfully prosecuted anyone other than a government employee for disseminating illegally leaked secret information. The closest the Supreme Court has come to examining the issue is the famous 1971 Pentagon Papers case, *New York Times v. United States*, when the Court rejected the government’s attempt to stop *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* publications of the top secret documents.

Geoffrey Stone, a law professor focusing on First Amendment issues, in his testimony before Congress in the wake of the WikiLeaks’ disclosures, argued that the Pentagon case applies to any potential prosecution of journalists. “In the Pentagon Papers case, the Court held that, although elected officials have broad authority to keep classified information secret, once that information gets into other hands, the government has only very limited authority to prevent its further dissemination,” Stone said. He argued that prosecuting journalists under the Espionage Act would violate the First Amendment (Peterson, 2011).

One main reason for those controversies could be the wording of the Espionage Act. Federal Judge Learned Hand wrote that the Espionage Act is so vague (Wolf, 2010), and Steven Aftergood, director of the Project on Government Secrecy for the Federation of American Scientists, said the act is “so poorly defined in its terms, that

it's hard to say exactly what it does and does not cover" (Peterson, 2011).

Whistleblowers have a complex relationship with journalists which can be both symbiotic and adversarial. On one hand, they serve as sources of stories which sometimes end up as high-profile exposes. Media exposure often empowers whistleblowers to pursue justice in cases of institutional wrongdoing. On the other hand, journalists are often suspicious of the whistleblowers' claims, aims and self-interest, while whistleblowers are concerned about how revelations might affect their personal and professional lives (Lewis, 2001: 8).

In a content analysis of the British newspapers coverage of whistleblowers between 1997 and 2009, Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt found that whistleblowing is taken seriously by journalists, who mostly cover whistleblowers in neutral or positive ways. Their research also suggests "journalistic storytelling constructs narratives of whistleblowers as heroic, selfless individuals to establish the legitimacy of their claims of systemic wrongdoing in the public interest" (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hunt, 2012).

Their finding is supported by a study of the media coverage of WikiLeaks' Julian Assange in 2012. In a content analysis of how 380 English and Spanish language newspapers around the world framed Assange, Meylin Andrade found that generally the tone toward Assange was mostly neutral or positive in all continents. Furthermore, European media gave more attention to Julian Assange than did media from North America or other continents (Andrade, 2013: 7).

Scholars see recent whistleblowing cases of Chelsea Manning with the U.S. military and Edward Snowden with the NSA as a response to traditional media's failure to perform its fourth-estate role. Christian Christensen, a journalism professor at Stockholm University, said, "Without whistleblowers it is hard to imagine how corporate or political crimes would ever come to light,

given the power of governments and large corporations to suppress information" (Mazumdar, 2013).

In regards to leaked documents related to national security, journalists often claim the decision to publish is made according to the accepted journalistic balance between the public's right to know and avoidance of causing harm. One big problem is, as executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors Mark Horvit put it, the government's definition of what constitutes a national security threat is generally far broader than a reporter's (Hackett, 2013).

METHOD

This study explored how 10 major news websites in six different countries portrayed Edward Snowden, both his actions and personal life. This study of media coverage in various countries merits attention because the NSA story is a global issue involving multiple parties such as foreign spy agencies, world leaders, international terrorism and global Internet freedom.

The study focused on online media due to their advantages compared to traditional print or broadcast media. Online media are regarded as the most free-wheeling in their coverage, offering critical reports and debate on many social issues. They also offer the most comprehensive platforms where news can be presented in combination of text, audio, video and interactive forms (Herbert, 2000). News websites are considered to be more capable of presenting various aspects of news stories than print or broadcast media (Kawamoto, 2003).

As the NSA issue has been dynamic since the first day it broke, this quantitative analysis compared how each online media outlet portrayed Snowden in two periods of

time. The first period is the first 30 days after Snowden revealed himself as the whistleblower (June 9 - July 8, 2013) and the second is seven months after (January 1 - January 30, 2014).

This study applied quantitative analysis aimed to identify “the tone” of the media portrayal of Edward Snowden. The hypothesis in this study is that the media portrayed Snowden more negatively during the first period and adopted a more positive tone during the second period.

This study quantified the number of positive and negative words used by media outlets in their Snowden stories.

Firstly, the author established a set of positive and negative words, with each set containing 10 positive and 10 negative words.

The following are the positive words with their defined contexts: 1. Reform: Reform of the NSA surveillance programs. 2. Freedom: Internet and cyber freedom, freedom of privacy, freedom from intrusion and so on. 3. Whistleblower: Snowden as a whistleblower, instead of a leaker. In the early coverage of Snowden, the Associated Press warned its employees against calling him a whistleblower until it can be confirmed

that he revealed wrongdoing on the part of the government. 4. Clemency: Clemency for Snowden. 5. Amnesty: Amnesty for Snowden. 6. Support: Support for Snowden. 7. Liberty: Civil liberties. 8. Inspire: Snowden inspires other people, Snowden as a source of inspiration. 9. Privacy: Individual privacy, information privacy. 10. Transparency: Government transparency.

The following are the negative words with their defined contexts: 1. Criminal: Snowden is a criminal. 2. Treason: The leaking is an act of treason. 3. Violate/violating: Snowden violates the Espionage Act of 1917 and his company’s ethics code. 4. Felony: The leaking is an act of felony. 5. Betray/betrayal: Snowden betrays his country. 6. Theft: Theft of government property. 7. Illegal: Illegal leaks of Snowden. 8. Crime: The leaking is a crime. 9. Traitor: Snowden is a traitor. 10. Defect/defector: Snowden defects to another country.

The unit of analysis in this study is any of the positive and negative words used in the defined context in a story about Snowden--both his actions and personal life. A story about Snowden is any news article, not an opinion piece, written by the media’s

Table 1. The Usage of Positive and Negative Words in the First Period

Media Outlets	Number of Snowden Stories	Number of Positive words	Average number of positive words per story	Number of Negative words	Average number of negative words per story
<i>The New York Times</i>	56	70	1.25	32	0.57
<i>USA Today</i>	94	31	0.33	56	0.61
<i>BBC</i>	134	166	1.23	46	0.34
<i>The Guardian</i>	180	341	1.89	108	0.60
<i>The South China Morning Post</i>	162	262	1.62	90	0.55
<i>The People’s Daily</i>	19	18	0.95	7	0.36
<i>Russia Today</i>	91	258	2.84	40	0.44
<i>The Moscow Times</i>	17	11	0.65	6	0.35
<i>News Corp</i>	46	71	1.54	25	0.54
<i>The Times of India</i>	41	62	1.51	21	0.51
Total	840	1290	1.53	431	0.51

reporter itself, not by a news agency or another outlet.

Secondly, the author used Google search engine to find stories about Snowden in news outlets in two time periods. The first period is from June 9 to July 8, 2013 and the second period is from January 1 to January 30, 2014.

Thirdly, the author quantified the numbers of Snowden stories in 10 news outlets during both periods. Next, the author quantified the numbers of positive and negative words used in those stories during both periods. In this step, the author also determined the average numbers of positive and negative words per story during both periods.

Lastly, the author made comparisons of changes of the average numbers of positive and negative words usage in news outlets between the first and second period.

The online media outlets being studied are *The New York Times* (www.nytimes.com), *USAToday* (www.usatoday.com), *BBC* (www.bbc.co.uk), *The Guardian* (www.theguardian.com), *The South China Morning Post* (www.scmp.com, Hong Kong), *The People's Daily* (<http://english.people-daily.com.cn/>, China), *Russia Today* (www.rt.com), *The Moscow Times* (www.themoscow-times.com), *News Corp Australia* (www.news.com.au) and *The Times of India* (www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com).

news.com.au) and *The Times of India* (www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

During the first period, there were 840 Snowden stories examined, involving 1,290 positive words and 431 negative words. The average number of positive words per story was 1.53, while the average number of negative words per story was 0.51. (See Table 1.)

During the second period, there were 246 Snowden stories examined, involving 636 positive words and 98 negative words (see Table 2). The average number of positive words per story was 2.58, while the average number of negative words per story was 0.39. This study also found that, in each outlet except *Russia Today* (see Table 3), the average number of positive words per story in the second period was bigger than that in the first period. It means that almost all outlets portrayed Snowden more positively in the second period. *Russia Today* did not share the trend because it always portrayed Snowden very positively in both periods. Compared to other outlets, *Russia Today* had the highest average number of positive words usage in the first period (2.84) and ranked third from the top for the positive words usage (2.74) in the second period.

Table 2. The Usage of Positive and Negative Words in the Second Period

Media Outlets	Number of Snowden Stories	Number of Positive words	Average number of positive words per story	Number of Negative words	Average number of negative words per story
<i>The New York Times</i>	16	48	3.00	8	0.50
<i>USA Today</i>	19	35	1.84	1	0.05
<i>BBC</i>	51	111	2.17	10	0.20
<i>The Guardian</i>	47	184	3.91	28	0.59
<i>The South China Morning Post</i>	11	23	2.09	19	1.73
<i>The People's Daily</i>	7	15	2.14	0	0.00
<i>Russia Today</i>	54	148	2.74	16	0.29
<i>The Moscow Times</i>	10	11	1.10	3	0.30
<i>News Corp</i>	20	33	1.65	7	0.35
<i>The Times of India</i>	11	28	2.54	6	0.54
Total	246	636	2.58	98	0.39

Table 3. Change of the Average Number of Positive Words Usage from the First to Second Period

Media Outlets	First Period	Second Period	Change
	Average number of positive words per story	Average number of positive words per story	
<i>The New York Times</i>	1.25	3.00	2.40
<i>USA Today</i>	0.33	1.84	5.57
<i>BBC</i>	1.23	2.17	1.76
<i>The Guardian</i>	1.89	3.91	2.07
<i>The South China Morning Post</i>	1.62	2.09	1.29
<i>The People's Daily</i>	0.95	2.14	2.25
<i>Russia Today</i>	2.84	2.74	0.96
<i>The Moscow Times</i>	0.65	1.10	1.69
<i>News Corp</i>	1.54	1.65	1.07
<i>The Times of India</i>	1.51	2.54	1.68
Total	1.53	2.58	1.69

This study found that, in each outlet except *The South China Morning Post* and *The Times of India*(see Table 4), the average number of negative words per story in the second period was smaller than that in the first period. It means that almost all outlets portrayed Snowden more positively in the second period.

This study also combined the average numbers of positive and negative words usage per story in both periods. The result of this measurement, called "balance index," indicated the impartiality or neutrality of media outlets in portraying Snowden (See Table 5). The fewer the "loaded" words used, the closer the story is to a "balanced" image

Table 4. Change of the Average Number of Negative Words Usage from the First to Second Period

Media Outlets	First Period	Second Period	Change
	Average number of negative words per story	Average number of negative words per story	
<i>The New York Times</i>	0.57	0.50	0.88
<i>USA Today</i>	0.61	0.05	0.08
<i>BBC</i>	0.34	0.20	0.59
<i>The Guardian</i>	0.60	0.59	0.98
<i>The South China Morning Post</i>	0.55	1.73	3.14
<i>The People's Daily</i>	0.36	0.00	0
<i>Russia Today</i>	0.44	0.29	0.66
<i>The Moscow Times</i>	0.35	0.30	0.86
<i>News Corp</i>	0.54	0.35	0.65
<i>The Times of India</i>	0.51	0.54	1.06
Total	0.51	0.39	0.76

Table 5. The “Balance Index” of Media Outlets

Media Outlets	Average Number of Positive Words per story in both periods	Average Number of Negative Words per story in both periods	
<i>The New York Times</i>	2.10	0.53	1.31
<i>USA Today</i>	1.08	0.33	0.70
<i>BBC</i>	1.70	0.27	0.98
<i>The Guardian</i>	2.90	0.59	1.49
<i>The South China Morning Post</i>	1.85	1.14	1.49
<i>The People's Daily</i>	1.54	0.18	0.86
<i>Russia Today</i>	2.79	0.36	1.57
<i>The Moscow Times</i>	0.87	0.32	0.59
<i>News Corp</i>	1.59	0.44	1.01
<i>The Times of India</i>	2.02	0.52	1.27
Total	1.84	0.47	1.15

of Snowden.

The “balance index” was used to measure the impartiality or neutrality of each outlet in portraying Snowden. The outlet that had the biggest index was the one that had the biggest average number of positive and negative words usage in both periods. It was considered as the least neutral news outlet in portraying Snowden because it used the largest amount of “loaded” words, both positive and negative, in its coverage.

On the other hand, the outlet that had the smallest index was the one that had the smallest average number of positive and negative words usage in both periods. It was considered as the most neutral news outlet in portraying Snowden because it used the least amount of “loaded” words, both positive and negative, in its coverage.

The Moscow Times had the smallest “balance index” (0.59). *Russia Today* had the largest (1.57), followed by *The Guardian* and *The South China Morning Post* (1.49), *The New York Times* (1.31), *The Times of India* (1.27), *News Corp* (1.01), *BBC* (0.98), and *USA Today* (0.70).

The first period had many more stories (840) than the second period (246), almost four times more than the second. This fact could be attributed to the timeliness and the controversy of the issue in the first period. Snowden stories were highly controversial in the beginning since many people did not know about Snowden, his motives and the impacts of his leaks to the U.S and global citizens. The number of stories in the second period had decreased since there was already much information about Snowden and his actions. Stories in this period mostly discussed the U.S. policy toward him and the reforms of the NSA programs.

In the first period, there were 1,290 positive words and 431 negative words involved. The average number of positive words per story was 1.53, while the average number of negative words per story was 0.51.

In the second period, there were 636 positive words and 98 negative words involved. The average number of positive words per story was 2.58, while the average number of negative words per story was 0.39.

Based on those key findings, this study concluded that in overall the media outlets consistently portrayed Snowden positively during both periods because the average numbers of positive words usage (1.53 and 2.58) were always bigger than those of negative words (0.51 and 0.39) in each period.

It was also concluded that the media outlets portrayed Snowden more positively in the second period because the average number of positive words usage in the second period (2.58) was bigger than that of the first period (1.53), and the average number of negative words usage in the second period (0.51) was smaller than that of the first period (0.39). So the hypothesis of the study is supported.

This study also supported previous studies' findings (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hunt, 2012) that the Western media outlets tend to view whistleblowers positively. One prime finding from this study is that non-Western media also consistently portrayed Snowden positively in 2013 and 2014, including the government-controlled media outlets in China and Russia.

A major shortcoming of this study is that the number of Snowden stories between the first and second period are disproportionate in some of the media outlets discussed. The most telling example, *The South China Morning Post* of Hong Kong, had 162 stories in the first period but only reported 11 stories during the second. This could be related to the fact that during the second period, Snowden was no longer in Hong Kong, so its coverage relied on wire agencies' stories, which are not included in the study. This disproportion could also be related to the result of *The South China Morning Post* showing the biggest change of negative words usage (3.14) from the first to second period.

The South China Morning Post extensively reported the story in the first period (second most stories after *The Guardian*)

using various local sources, mainly Snowden's lawyer and freedom activists in the city. Its massive news coverage was frequently quoted by international media outlets during those days. Its own reporting stopped on June 23, when Snowden departed for Russia. Then, *Russia Today* took over the role. As a result, *Russia Today* had the highest number of Snowden stories (54) in the second period.

As one of the Kremlin's propaganda machines, *Russia Today* consistently portrayed Snowden as a hero and represented the U.S. government as a villain that conducted illegal spying activities. In its stories, *Russia Today* mostly quoted sources who opposed the surveillance programs, who ranged from Internet activists, privacy lawyers and advocacy groups to European Union politicians. It was notable that, compared to other outlets, *Russia Today* had the highest average number of positive words usage in the first period (2.84) and ranked third from the top for the positive words usage (2.74) in the second period. *Russia Today* also had the smallest average number of negative words usage in the first period (0.44). Regarding the "balance index," *Russia Today* had the highest number (1.57), indicating that it was the least neutral outlet in covering Snowden stories.

The Russian media in general, which is highly controlled by the government, has been making him a hero. On television programs broadcast by the two largest federal channels, Snowden was described as "the man who declared war on Big Brother" and as "a soldier in the information war, who fights, of course, on the side of Russia, or maybe the side of China" (Barry, 2013).

The tendency of *Russia Today* and other Russian news outlets was not shared by *The Moscow Times*, whose political stand has been seen to be the opposite of *Russia Today*. *The Moscow Times* took more neutral position in portraying Snowden and the U.S. government. *The Moscow Times*, owned by a

Finnish company, is one of a few media outlets in Russia that takes critical positions towards Kremlin. This political stand could be related to the finding that it had the smallest number (0.59) of “balance index,” indicating that it was the most impartial outlet in reporting Snowden stories.

During both periods, *the People’s Daily* had the least amount of Snowden stories (26 in total) compared to other media outlets being studied. As an organ of the Communist Party of China, *the People’s Daily* presented its viewpoints on the NSA issue through its editorials and opinion pieces, not news stories. Its editorials showed strong criticism towards the U.S. government, particularly after Snowden revealed that the NSA spied on Chinese universities and companies. This strong political stand could be the reason behind the finding in the second period, where *the People’s Daily* did not use any of the negative words in its stories about Snowden, lowest than other outlets.

In the U.K., *BBC* took less critical approach than *The Guardian* in reporting the surveillance scandal. This could be attributed to the *BBC’s* relationship with the government. There were some controversial stories related to the British spying agency that were not reported by *BBC*. One of them was the revelation on September 20 that GCHQ had hacked into the Belgian telecom operator, Belgacom, to spy on EU institutions. This issue was reported by *The Guardian* and some international outlets, but *BBC* did not mention it at all. This more neutral approach could be related to the findings that *BBC* had the smallest average number of negative words usage (0.34) and the third smallest average number of positive words usage (1.23) in the first period

During both periods, *The Guardian* had the most Snowden stories (227) and most diverse multimedia elements, especially in form of infographics. In fact, it is the only outlet that has a special section,

called NSA Files, offering virtually all NSA files leaked by Snowden and their related stories including an essential guide to the issue. Its support towards Snowden was reflected in the findings that it had the second highest average number of positive words usage in the first period (1.89) and the highest of that in the second (3.91).

In the U.S., the two outlets being studied had relatively small amount of coverage as *USA Today* had total 113 stories and *The New York Times* had total 72 stories. It was also found that, in the first period, *USA Today* had the smallest average number of positive words usage (0.33) and the biggest average number of negative words usage (0.61). In the same period, *The New York Times* had the second biggest average number of negative words usage (0.57).

One possible explanation for those findings could be attributed to the nature of the Snowden files. These are the documents that the U.S. government wanted to keep secret and its officials had said that the government will do anything in its power to prevent any further leaks (MacAskill, 2013). A precedent was set in England when the British cabinet secretary threatened *The Guardian* with an injunction, forcing its editors to stop publishing the leaks and to destroy hard drives used to store Snowden files (Harding, 2014b).

While the current U.S. government has not taken any such action, its policies have put pressure to the media. This pressure was addressed by *The New York Times* executive editor Jill Abramson in an interview, saying the Obama administration is the most secretive White House that she has ever dealt with during her career of 22 years. She said she dealt directly with the George W. Bush White House when they were concerned stories the Times would run put the national security under threat, but the Bush administration did not pursue criminal leak investigations. The Obama administration has had seven criminal leak

investigations, which is more than all previous presidents combined. She said this makes it more difficult for *The New York Times* to do its job (Seigenthaler, 2014).

However difficult it was, the two American media outlets moved toward a much less critical image of Snowden. In fact, *USA Today* and *The New York Times* had the biggest changes of the average number of positive words usage from the first to second period. *USA Today* ranked first (5.57), followed by *The New York Times* (2.40).

This shift of Snowden's image, which was shared by other media outlets, could be attributed to the increasing support for Snowden. The tide started in December 2013, when a panel set up by Obama in the wake of the leaks released its report (Baker, 2014).

The panel, officially named The Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technology, published its 46 recommendations. The three most important recommendations were "the NSA should be banned from attempting to undermine the security of the Internet," "the NSA should be stripped of its power to collect telephone records in bulk" and "the authority for spying on foreign leaders should be granted at a higher level than at present" (Roberts and Ackerman, 2013).

A week before the report release, a federal district judge ruled that the NSA's daily collection of virtually all Americans' phone records is almost certainly unconstitutional, describing its technology as "almost Orwellian" and suggesting that James Madison would be "aghast" to learn that the government was invading liberty in this way (Savage, 2013).

In a response to the public pressure and panel's recommendations, Obama announced a set of NSA reforms on January 17. Acknowledging the difficulty of the issue, he said, "We have to make some important decisions about how to protect ourselves and sustain our leadership in the world,

while upholding the civil liberties and privacy protections that our ideals--and our Constitution--require" (Sledge, 2014).

Among the most important changes he announced were firstly, whenever NSA analysts want to pull information from the phone records database, they have to get permission from the FISC first. Secondly, when NSA officials do query the database, they can not go as far as they did. Previously they were allowed to look at any phone number that is connected to the first, any number that is connected to *that* number, and any number that is connected to *that* number ("three hops"). Now, they are limited to making just two hops. Thirdly, the phone records database will be moved away from government control to a third party. Finally, Obama will ask Congress to convene a panel of public advocates to represent consumers before the FISA court (Fung, 2014).

However, Obama did not accept some major recommendations of his own advisory panel, such as requiring the FBI to obtain judicial approval before it can issue national security letters, a kind of subpoena allowing the agency to get information about people from their banks, telecommunication providers and other companies (Landler & Savage, 2014). All the reforms Obama announced apply only to telephone messages, not email, social media, and Internet searches.

As a result, critics and freedom activists were not convinced that Obama's speech will make much difference. Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, said, "Most of the protections Obama announced today apply only to how and when the NSA and others can look at the data. What's the guarantee that U.S. snooping on those communications will be limited to real national security concerns? It's not clear from Obama's speech" (Knickerbocker, 2014).

Also in January, journalists and

observers started talking about clemency for Snowden. This idea of amnesty was first mentioned by Richard Ledgett, who led an NSA task force evaluating damage from the Snowden disclosures. On the CBS "60 Minutes," Ledgett argued for the amnesty in exchange for the return of the remaining classified documents still in Snowden's possession (Ackerman, 2013). Jesselyn Radack, a legal adviser to Snowden and the homeland security director at the Government Accountability Project, said that if the NSA programs are so debatable, then Snowden should not be punished for bringing them to light. "I absolutely think the tide has changed for Snowden," she said (Baker, 2014).

CLOSING

All those developments, including international criticism of the NSA surveillance programs, contributed to the improving image of Snowden in the media, both American and non-American. In American journalism, the most important recognition of the coverage took place in April 2014 when *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian* were awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. The award was seen by many as an indirect vindication of the Snowden disclosures (Dyer, 2014; Burman, 2014; Greenslade, 2014).

However, media outlets also presented criticisms toward Snowden and Greenwald, such as questioning their motives and condemning their actions, mainly in their editorials and opinion pieces. Similar criticisms also arose when Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange published classified documents related to the American military and diplomatic affair in 2010.

The coverage of the NSA affair was a reminder of the important role investigative journalism plays in society and demonstrated the watchdog role of the fourth estate. As a

result, the U.S. government was held accountable for its policies and then forced to change some of them.

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