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ECHELON:ESPIONAGE WITHOUT ETHICS



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Abstract

In June 2013, Edward Snowden disclosed the extent of mass surveillance conducted across entire societies by five Western Governments. Snowden apparently hoped to generate a global debate on the appropriateness of these activities and the risk /reward trade-offs that society was being asked to make. Snowden seems to have either overestimated the concern of the average person or misunderstood their current level of understanding and acceptance of surveillance. Either way, the debate was short. In general, society seemed to register a level of disquiet but no specific concern. This paper seeks to determine if the disquiet is a consequence of human morality and to identify any specific moral concern.

Introduction

Throughout history, the value of having the right information at the appropriate time has always been given the holder an advantage. It is therefore not a surprise that information gathering has always played a significant role in society. The art of attaining information via espionage is an age old human endeavour. Since early civilisation, people have accepted that espionage should be conducted on their neighbouring states and that anyone attempting to steal the secrets from their society should be deemed a traitor and either imprisoned or executed.