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Q7

Case study. Edward Snowden, a computer expert, and former CIA administrator, released confidential Government documents to the press about the existence of Government surveillance programmes. According to many legal experts and the US Government, his action violated the Espionage act of 1971, which identified the leak of State secrets as an act of treason. Yet, despite the fact that he broke the law, Snowden argued that he had a moral obligation to act. He gave a justification for his "whistleblowing" by stating that he had a duty "to inform the public as to that which is done in their name and that which is done against them." According to Snowden, the Government's violation of privacy had to be exposed regardless of legality since more substantive issues of social action and public morality were involved here. Many agreed with Snowden. Few argued that he broke the law and compromised national security, for which he should be held accountable. Do you agree that Snowden's actions were ethically justified even if legally prohibited? Why or why not? Make an argument by weighing the competing values in this case. (250 words).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Facts & figures for this PYQ only.

Numbers move. Confirm the latest Budget, Economic Survey or census round. This sheet is for revision, not a substitute for the model answer.

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Edward Snowden, 2013

A former CIA and contractor insider who disclosed documents on United States and partner surveillance programmes to journalists.

Espionage Act (US)

The United States statute used to treat unauthorised disclosure of national-defence information as a serious crime; the paper's 1971 wording refers to that secrecy-criminal frame as used in debate.

Whistle-blowing ethics

Standard tests: grave wrong, evidence, failed internal channels, proportionate disclosure, and willingness to face lawful process.

Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014

India's statute for disclosing corruption in public bodies through prescribed channels; it is the first door for a similar Indian officer.

Right to privacy

In India, Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v. **Union of India (2017)** recognised privacy as a fundamental right, which is the value bulk surveillance must answer.

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