

The TTIP Leaks. The 248 Pages Reveal a Hidden Economic, Social and Environmental Agenda

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The monstrous Siamese twin of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), has been in a growing puddle of dispute after 248 pages of its content were leaked.[1]

The organisation behind the measure, Greenpeace Netherlands, had done its best to shed light on a document that remains obscured, clandestine and hidden. The TTIP leaks were initiated prior to the commencement of the 13th round of TTIP negotiations between the EU and the US held in New York (Apr 25-29). According to the organisation, the final document will consist of 25 to 30 chapters with extensive annexes.

The leaked and hefty portion constitutes roughly half to two-thirds of the text under negotiation, providing more than a decent snifter as to what European and US diplomats are up to. They have met 13 times over three years in situations that were far from transparent.[2] Topics traversed are bound to worry any individuals with even the slightest leanings to democratic representativeness. “Whether you care about environmental issues, animal welfare, labour rights or internet privacy, you should be concerned about what is in these leaked documents.”[3]

A few pointers from the leaks are worth noting. None of the chapters in the released portions make reference to the principle of General Exceptions permitting states to regulate trade “to protect human, animal and plant life or health” for “the conservation of exhaustible natural resources”. The omission suggests who, and what the negotiators are really barracking for.

Similarly to the TPPA, matters of climate change get short shrift, notably in the chapter covering National Treatment and Market Access for Goods. Showing yet again that a privileged corporate interest is inherently hostile to the commonweal, trade is deemed a domain outside the impact of climate change.

Overwhelming floor room is given to corporate agents who are noted in the negotiations as important partners in the determination of foreign policy. While that position has been clearly articulated by US negotiators, the EU remains coy about industry influence. The strongmen and women of capitalism are never far away. Little wonder, then, that popularity for such an arrangement is as low as 39 per cent in Germany and 50 per cent in France.

Those at the European Commission, a body that has been historically indifferent to concepts of sovereignty, has taken the view that they were open all along, the true doyens of transparency. EU trade commissioner Cecelia Malmström seemed to find the fuss over the

leaks amusing. “In the past year, the European Commission has opened up the negotiations to make our positions on all matters in the negotiations public. After each negotiation round, we publish round reports as well as our position papers and textual proposals. So the positions of the EU are well-known and nothing new.”[4]

Malmström is certainly right in so far as the Commission has been spouting fact sheets, making assumptions that these are perfect in conveying pictures of accuracy to constituents across Europe. As aspirational as they are, such publications only give a sense about some of the essential fault lines in the negotiations. For one, they show that Malmström’s stance that no “EU trade agreement will ever lower our level of protection of consumers, or food safety, or of the environment” seems unduly confident.

The leaks sent ripples through various parliaments in Europe. France’s François Hollande decided on Tuesday to make his opposition clear. “We will never accept questioning essential principles for our agriculture, our culture and for the reciprocity of access to public [procurement] markets.” France’s trade secretary, Matthias Fekl, even went so far as to suggest that the agreement, in its current form “would be a bad deal,” one which needed to be suspended.[5] Even prior to the release by Greenpeace, German Deputy Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel had suggested that negotiations had moved into a glacial state.

Such sentiments do little to deflate such ideologues as US Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker, who puts such suspicions down to matters of misunderstanding. “I think,” she explained to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, “we have to do a better job of educating our peoples about the importance of trade.”[6] In this cosy universe of commercial dealing, trade is all, trade is good – why fight it?

The “TTIP,” pushes Pritzker, “is a geostrategic choice to strengthen the trans-Atlantic bonds between two regions that share the same values and standards.” She proves deaf to questions about concerns of re-enforcing corporate market power at the expense of accountability, insisting on altering “rules and regulations that are standing in the way of doing more business together.” US President Barack Obama similarly intoned on his recent visit to the UK that the TTIP would eliminate “regulatory and bureaucratic irritants and blockages to trade”.[7]

To that end, the Commission has attempted to give the impression that pitfalls can, in

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/wp-admin/post.php?post=5523792&action=edit&message=10ime>, be papered over with the good sense of compromise.

As diversely opposed as the parties are, movement, of the negative sort, is possible. Positions can, as was all too evident in the TPPA negotiations, bend. In some cases, they can be abandoned altogether. That remains the greatest danger: the document continues to flicker, and it will take more than Gallic opposition, Germanic scepticism, and general European stubbornness, to sink it.

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[1] <https://www.ttip-leaks.org/>

[2] <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/03/french-president-says-non-to-ttip/>

[3] <https://www.ttip-leaks.org/>

[4]

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/ttip-leak-trade-deal-greenpeace-eu-us-tpp-is-this-the-end-a7012976.html>

[5] <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36191577>

[6]

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/ttip-interview-with-us-commerce-secretary-penny-pritzker-a-1089072.html>

[7]

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/ttip-leak-greenpeace-trade-deal-eu-us-tpp-ceta-health-environment-a7014731.html>

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