

US-EU Spy Scandal Challenges Transatlantic Trade Talks

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Photo: Protest in Germany against PRISM. Banner: "Against state surveillance".

Snowden's revelations have put a deep freeze on US-EU relations. Diplomats in Europe are searching for (and [finding](#)) bugs in their embassies. Influential politicians speak about this unprecedented betrayal of the transatlantic partnership. The popular German magazine SPIEGEL [has published](#) its bitter conclusion: «Berlin is a third-class ally». Can this super-scandal doom the trade talks with the US?

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) may be the first victim of this colossal spy scandal. The TIPP talks were scheduled to begin in Washington next week. Now they face a serious challenge from the spy scandal that is heating up in Europe - French Minister of Foreign Trade Nicole Bricq said the talks could be jeopardized. The [PRISM](#) surveillance program disclosed to the US all European industrial, commercial, and banking secrets. This type of overwhelming advantage is a real plot twist in any possible future agreement between these «partners». Washington has clearly shown its [«third-class ally»](#) who is in control, and now it is attempting to downplay the scandalous revelations and the extent of disclosure.

In fact, American corporations have direct access to all the business intelligence of any EU company that carelessly relied on «convenient», proprietary software solutions from Microsoft, Apple, Google, and other [NSA](#) confidants. Boeing may have obtained insider details about Airbus. The problems in the European agricultural sector are no secret to the state of Iowa. In foreign trade and disputes over WTO rules and procedures Washington is well informed about EU protectionism and indirect subsidies to lame-duck industries. The US government sees French filmmakers, German industrialists, and Italian designers as a potential threat. In light of this information, for the European Union, the transatlantic negotiations will be like playing poker with an open hand. «It may be that American citizens can defend themselves under the US Constitution. But that doesn't apply to foreigners», [concludes](#) «Die Süddeutsche Zeitung».

The EU justice commissioner, Viviane Reding, [has been talking](#) about privacy violations in business since 2011 but no one was interested. Who opposed Ms. Reding in her quest for privacy and *stonewalled* the issue in the European Parliament two years ago? Naturally, they were the UK representatives. Sometimes «special relations» with Washington are very useful: Snowden claims that British officials have illegally used PRISM surveillance on over 200 occasions.

Germany, Europe's largest economy, chided the US ambassador about these

issues. Unfortunately, diplomacy always lags behind the harsh reality of economic competition. German innovations are target no. 1 for US spying, believes Lode Vanoost, the former deputy speaker of the Belgian parliament. Recently published data [proves](#) it: the NSA obtained data on more than 60 million telephone calls made daily in Germany (the US government registered only two million calls made each day in France). Although transatlantic relations cannot break down entirely for many reasons, European officials should at least insist on a set of clear rules and new UN-approved digital certificates about data protection and control. For example, the victims of this blatanteavesdropping may support the [UN initiative](#) to create an International Code of Conduct for Information Security. The scope of this human-rights violation committed by the United States government proves that national solutions will most certainly not solve the problem. This case will be a clear benchmark of the real economic sovereignty of the European Union on a global scale. Will Berlin once again believe in such lofty «transatlantic» assurances and promises?

The TTPI talks would provide an excellent opportunity to introduce a new model for positioning Europe in its [relations with the US](#), a model that would eventually benefit both sides as they strive to regain their leadership in the global economy. It would also help European leaders to regain their political and economic sovereignty, which has been fading away since the Internet became the dominant technology in business and governance.

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