

Why NSA Snooping Is Bigger Deal in Germany

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Germans like posting baby pictures, party snapshots and witty comments on Facebook just like anyone else. They just do not want to get caught doing it. Many of us use fake names for their profiles – silly puns, movie characters or anagrams and “remixes” of their real names. (Yes, I have one. No I’m not telling you the name.)

We like our privacy (even if fake names might not be the most professional form of encryption). Which is why the revelations about NSA spying have led to a bigger debate in Germany than in the US. It has become the hottest issue [1] during what was poised to become a dull election campaign.

Now there is a James-Bond vibe to pre-election season: Newspapers publish extensive guides [2] on how to encrypt emails. People question whether they should still use U.S.-based social ne be under more pressure over the revelations than the American one.

What makes Germans so sensitive about their data? Many have pointed [3] to Germany’s history the East German Stasi spied extensively on citizens, encouraging snitching among neighbors an
But that’s not the whole story. Politics and the media in Germany today are dominated by (mal who have no personal recollection of either of the Stasi or Gestapo.

Germany lacks the long tradition of strong individual freedoms the state has guaranteed in the because of that, these values, imported from the Western allies after 1945, are not taken for granted.
Indeed, there have been battles about privacy – and against a perceived “surveillance state” – i

While the student rebellion of the late Sixties was partly driven by anger over the Vietnam war, considering emergency laws that would have limited personal freedoms. And in the seventies, a the state ruthlessly, government answered with then-new “dragnet tracing”, identifying suspect extensive computer-based searches in databases.

Many considered this to be unfair profiling. In 1987, authorities wanted to ask Germans about t a widespread boycott because people saw the collection of data as an infringement of their right “glass humans” (“gläserner Mensch”) were a horror scenario in the late and nineties in German and in T.V. shows.

Then, there is also the disappointment of the buddy who realizes he is not, as he

The oft-celebrated partnership with the U.S. served as a pillar of Germany's comeback in intern Holocaust. Now it turns out Germany is not only ally, but also target. According to documents pieces of phone and email metadata from Germany are collected [5] each month by the NSA –

The outrage at the U.S.'s snooping has continued despite a follow-on revelation that it was a that handed over the data to the NSA. (The BND said that no communication by German citizens.

The German debate also has to be understood as being fueled by a widespread but low-level German left as well as the right. The short-lived love for Obama (200,000 people celebrated his exception to the widespread perception of American hubris and imperialism. Germans have made protesting U.S. interventions while embracing Californian culture, rap music and even Tom

Jakob Augstein, columnist for the country's biggest news site Spiegel Online, considers Prism [already includes Abu Ghraib and the drone war: The U.S., Augstein writes, is becoming a count not to be disputable about this statement is the Germans' expertise when it comes to totalitarianism.

While the U.S. has few laws concerning data privacy, Germany has something unknown to America (one national and one for each state), who watch over the compliance of authorities and companies German state Hesse introduced the first of these laws in 1970, strict oversight like this has become

Some of the German data supervisors have been regular talking heads in the media for years, but their alleged violations of privacy of their customers. When Google photographed Germans pushing the company to give citizens the possibility of opting out.

Now the data protection supervisors have an even bigger target: the National Security Agency. discontinued giving out new licenses to companies under the so-called Safe Harbor principles: personal data is only transferred to countries with sufficient data protection, for example when storage space. After the revelations about the Prism program, the supervisors consider user data anymore.

Opposition parties have picked the "NSA scandal" – as German media call it – as the big (and, in all polls, only) chance for

the opposition to turn around the election. Merkel has been accused of the spying before the story broke than she admitted. Since German services are coordinated for to believe her that she did not know about the American spy efforts.

Yet it is unlikely that the revelations will seriously influence the outcome of the election. This is surprisingly immune to the European crisis. It is also because the biggest opposition party, the proximity to power. While smaller left-wing parties such as the former communists or the Green Snowden asylum, Social Democrats have a hard time doing so. One of their heads, Frank-Walter Merckel's predecessor Gerhard Schröder. In that position, Steinmeier was responsible for the intelligence cooperation in the years after 9/11. He later became Secretary of State under Merkel.

But Germans don't trust Merkel. A poll found two-thirds of questioned people voicing discontent hoped for a more forceful reaction, like that from Brazil, another democratic country targeted by NSA. Antonio Patriota publicly found strong words standing next to Secretary of State John Kerry. "The US has not solved in a satisfactory way, and we run the risk of casting a shadow of distrust on our work."

In Germany, the government sounds more apologetic than angry.

In any case, we'll keep on making up fake names on Facebook. Just in case spies are going to keep doing what spies are supposed to do.

Jannis Brühl is an Arthur F. Burns Fellow at ProPublica. In Germany, he works mostly for Sü edition of the national daily Süddeutsche Zeitung.