

The global NSA spying scandal

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Over the course of the past week, the Obama administration has been rocked by an escalating international diplomatic scandal sparked by a new series of leaks from Edward Snowden, the former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor-turned whistleblower.

At the heart of the crisis is the exposure of an American intelligence apparatus that operates without any legal constraints, international or domestic. Thanks to these and previous revelations from Snowden, the world now has concrete evidence that the NSA sweeps up communications records—including telephone calls and emails—of hundreds of millions of people all over the world.

While European governments have shown little concern about NSA spying on their own populations—and, indeed, have collaborated with the US in this—reports that the NSA has been wiretapping German Chancellor Angela Merkel's personal cell phone have produced warnings of a rupture in US-German relations. The monitoring began in 2002, when Merkel was still in the opposition as the chairperson of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

At least 34 other international leaders have been similarly targeted. German newspapers have reported that this list includes Merkel's predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, who was monitored after his government came out in 2002 against the planned US invasion of Iraq.

Once again, top officials in the US government have been caught in blatant lies, including the president himself. Obama has declared that he was unaware that his administration's own spy agencies were monitoring the communications of Merkel and other foreign leaders. An article Tuesday in the *Los Angeles Times*, however, cites sources within the NSA who insist that reports of any such wiretapping had to have been submitted directly to the White House and the National

Security Council.

The entire policy of the American ruling class, at home and abroad, is based on a mountain of lies. It is involved in a permanent conspiracy against the democratic rights of the population. The exposure of these lies has the most far-reaching political implications.

An article appearing in the latest edition of *Foreign Affairs*, one of the major journals of the foreign policy establishment, suggests that the pervasiveness of leaks is undermining a central premise of Washington's "soft power"—namely, "its ability to act hypocritically and get away with it."

In order for the international political system to function under the domination of the US, George Washington University political science professors Henry Farrell and Martha Finnemore argue, "US officials must regularly promote and claim fealty to its core liberal principles... But as the recent leaks have shown, Washington is also unable to consistently abide by the values that it trumpets."

The leaks from Snowden and Chelsea (Bradley) Manning are, they write, part of "an accelerating hypocrisy collapse—a dramatic narrowing of the country's room to maneuver between its stated aspirations and its sometimes sordid pursuit of self-interests."

Farrell and Finnemore conclude with the hope that the political crisis created by the leaks will persuade the American government to bring its policies closer into line with its rhetoric, including a reversal in the expansion of the "national security state."

Yet the fundamental source of the hypocrisy of the American government lies not in subjective policy decisions, but in the objective conflict between the interests that this government represents—namely, those of a small and fantastically wealthy layer of the corporate and financial elite—and the interests of the

vast majority of the population, within and outside the United States.

Democracy is not compatible with a policy of world domination through military violence and the unprecedented levels of social inequality that prevail within the United States. The American ruling class spies on everyone because it sees everyone as a potential enemy. Abroad, it is determined to assert control over every region of the world and undermine every potential competitor. Within the United States, it is well aware that its policies of war and social counterrevolution are creating the conditions for mass social opposition.

There is no constituency within the American political establishment or military-intelligence apparatus that retains any commitment to democratic rights. Amidst the various proposals from the Obama administration and Democratic and Republican politicians for “reviews” of the spying programs—including from the likes of Senator Dianne Feinstein, a staunch defender of the NSA who has denounced Snowden as a “traitor”—there is no suggestion that the spying programs be dismantled, or that those responsible for the systematic violation of the constitutionally enumerated rights of the population be prosecuted.

Meanwhile, those who have exposed government crimes have been hounded and persecuted. Manning is in prison, after having been detained and subjected to abuse amounting to torture by the Obama administration. Snowden is in exile in Russia. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is trapped in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, the target of a secret grand jury indictment. *Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald faces threats and denunciations, while his partner has been seized and interrogated at a British airport.

The mentality of a police state pervades official political circles, in the US and internationally. The statement of NSA Director Gen. Keith Alexander that “we ought to come up with a way of stopping” press reports was echoed Monday by British Prime Minister David Cameron, who declared before parliament that the press must demonstrate “social responsibility” or “it will be very difficult for government to stand back and not act.”

Such reactions are born out of the well-reasoned fear

that the exposures by Snowden and others have fatally undermined the credibility of the ruling class and its state. Unable to defend its social system through persuasion, the ruling class resorts to lies, threats and violence.

The social constituency for the defense of democratic rights is the working class. The exposures have done much to raise popular awareness and harden opposition. This sentiment must be turned into a conscious political movement of the American and international working class against the capitalist system, the source of war, social inequality and dictatorship.



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