

Surveillance, Transparency, and Trust in Transatlantic Perspective

Convenors

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Abstract

One of the most pressing issues facing European and American societies today is the apparent trade-off between trust, transparency, and security. Trust in government is at record lows across many countries, demands for government transparency are rising, and governments are under pressure to react to security challenges by increasing surveillance and secrecy. The U.S. National Security Agency's surveillance practices, for example, are widely perceived as having eroded both citizens' trust in the U.S. government and foreign governments' trust in the U.S. Especially in an age of surveillance that puts domestic civil liberties at risk and makes international cooperation precarious, it is necessary to investigate the conditions under which transparency not only monitors but also facilitates surveillance, to understand not only how surveillance can corrode trust but also how high levels of trust can enable surveillance, and to ask when transparency promotes and when undermines it. The workshop is meant as an opportunity to raise and answer such questions and thus stimulate research on the relationship between surveillance, transparency, and trust, specifically at the intersection of foreign security politics, political science, sociology, and legal studies.

The workshop specifically assesses how governments in the United States and European Union states have expanded their state surveillance capabilities with the aim of enhancing their law enforcement, foreign intelligence, and cybersecurity powers—and what implications this has for transatlantic relations. It brings together papers that focus either on country-specific case studies of the U.S. and of E.U. states, such as Germany, Poland, and others, or that take a transatlantic perspective. The papers contribute interdisciplinary perspectives, including international relations, political science, law and sociology. Such an interdisciplinary approach, characteristic for contemporary international studies, allows for a broad analysis of the topic of surveillance, one of the biggest challenges of 21st century societies and governments.

The papers should aim to address questions such as:

- In what ways have contemporary states expanded their security surveillance powers?
- What have the consequences been for the quality of national democracy and/or foreign relations?
- In what ways do private and public actors collaborate in surveillance?
- How do the U.S. and E.U. countries differ in their approach to state-sponsored surveillance practices and policies; what patterns of policy diffusion can we observe?
- How do U.S. and E.U. countries approach the regulation of surveillance practices and what explains the differences we observe?
- To what extent do transparency mechanisms help to regulate the negative effects of state surveillance practices and when might transparency measures actually facilitate state surveillance practices?
- In what ways does surveillance affect trust in institutions and inter-state trust? In what ways is trust an important concept for inter-state cooperation? In what ways might trust promote surveillance practices and hinder regulation?
- What hinders/facilitates international cooperation on surveillance practices? What is the future of international cooperation on cybersecurity?