



# PERSPECTIVES

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## How Democracy Dies: Big Tech Becomes Big Brother

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BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 1,972, March 17, 2021

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** The willingness of the US federal government to share power with Big Tech is a recipe for unharnessed power and corruption. Democracy cannot survive in a country where a handful of technocrats and oligarchs can choose to deny access to information or platforms to political candidates.

On January 27, 2021, Russian president Vladimir Putin [posed](#) these questions at the Davos World Economic Forum:

Digital giants have been playing an increasingly significant role in wider society... How well does this monopolism correlate with the public interest? Where is the distinction between successful global businesses, sought-after services, and big data consolidation on the one hand, and efforts to rule society[...] by [overturning] legitimate democratic institutions by restricting the natural right of people to decide how to live and what view to express freely on the other hand?

Putin was not defending democracy with these words. What worries him is that Big Tech might gain the power to control society at the expense of his government. The fact that the tech giants were able to censor news favorable to a sitting US president and then censor the president himself is a nightmare scenario for a man like Putin, as indeed it is for many Americans.

Putin shared the Davos stage with Chinese president Xi Jinping, who cautioned attendees “to adapt to and guide globalization, cushion its negative impact, and deliver its benefits to all countries and all nations.”

In March 2019, Putin signed a [law](#) "imposing penalties for Russian internet users caught spreading 'fake news' and information that presents clear disrespect for society, government, state symbols, the constitution, and government institutions." Punishments were made more severe with new laws passed in December.

The willingness of the US federal government to share power with Big Tech is a recipe for unharnessed corruption. Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny [caught on](#) to this danger right away: "This precedent will be exploited by the enemies of freedom of speech around the world, [and] in Russia as well. Every time they need to silence someone, they will say: 'This is just common practice. Even Trump was blocked on Twitter.'"

Navalny has been sentenced to prison for more than three years (minus one year for time served), in part because he published photos of a lavish Russian palace allegedly belonging to Putin on the coast of the Black Sea. Its accoutrements supposedly [include an \\$824 toilet brush](#). Many of the thousands protesting Navalny's imprisonment have waved gold-painted toilet brushes at demonstrations.

American Big Tech companies [push democracy in Russia](#) even as they take it upon themselves to deny it at home. This is analogous to the way many European leaders condemn censorship in America while censoring their own citizens. Like Putin, they do not want Big Tech competing with their own governments.

Big Tech censorship may well have cost Trump the 2020 election, even if election fraud did not. Big Tech took it upon itself to censor an [exposé](#) published by the *New York Post* on October 24, 2020 (as well as [follow-up exposés](#)) reporting that Hunter Biden, the son of then presidential candidate and now president Joe Biden, had engaged in influence-peddling to China and Ukraine, raking in millions in the process. The Media Research Center (MRC) [found](#) that "One of every six Biden voters we surveyed (17%) said they would have abandoned the Democratic candidate had they known the facts about one or more of these news stories." That information might have changed the outcome in all six of the swing states Biden won.

Last August, Twitter [censored the trailer](#) of an explosive documentary entitled "[The Plot Against the President](#)." The film, narrated by Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA), purported to expose leading members of the Democratic Party and their "deep state" allies, many of whom [knowingly](#) used phony evidence to frame President Trump and convince Americans that he and his campaign had colluded with the Russian government to win the 2016 election.

Using recently declassified information, the film claims that former president [Barack Obama](#) as well as [Hillary Clinton](#) were involved in an almost four-year attempted

coup—an effort incomparably more undemocratic than the riot at the Capitol Building on January 6.

According to the *Washington Times*, the Twitter account of the film, which debuted in October 2020, [attracted 30,000 followers](#). Twitter blacklisted it for a day, but put it back up again after a public uproar. How many blacklistings did Twitter fail to rescind?

Nunes, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, [claimed](#) in August 2020 that Biden knew of the efforts to unseat Trump. Trump did not target those participating in those efforts, perhaps to avoid dividing the country even further.

The January 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol was a pivotal event for Trump and the Republican Party. Prior to that date, President Trump had offered to deploy 10,000 troops at the Capitol, according to former Chief of Staff Mark Meadows. The Pentagon and the Department of Justice also offered help, but were reportedly [turned down](#) by the US Capitol Police. The problem, apparently, was the “[optics](#)” of a Capitol surrounded by barbed wire and thousands of troops—an image that the current administration seems to [like](#).

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for details about the event were rejected. It is ridiculous, therefore, for anyone to frame the riot, ugly as it was, as an “insurrection,” particularly in light of what appears to have been a massive security failure that could have averted the violence. One thing is certain: the timing of the event could not have been more perfect for opposition groups, which is probably why it was planned for January 6.

These efforts, supported by the media, succeeded in ending all attempts at ascertaining election fraud at the time when VP Mike Pence was counting Electoral College ballots. Some politicians even [called](#) for the resignations of Senators Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley and referred them to the [Ethics Committee](#) for even suggesting that audits be held of the election results in battleground states, despite [questions](#) having been asked—with no objections—concerning the results of the 2000, 2004, and 2016 presidential elections.

The last stage of the “witch hunt” against President Trump, as it has been [called](#), was a contrived attempt to use impeachment to bar him from a future presidential bid. This proceeding was a kangaroo court devoid of due process, hearings, witnesses, and evidence. The prosecution was eloquent in its evocations of “democracy” as the impetus for a totally undemocratic procedure. The impeachment resulted, inevitably, in Trump’s acquittal.

While all this was going on, Facebook and Twitter locked Trump and some of his supporters out of their domains. An alternative social media platform, Parler, was

[banned](#) from the Apple and Google app stores and then completely [shut down by Amazon](#).

Mainstream social media platforms were [reportedly](#) used to organize [riots in American cities](#) last year. No one was penalized. But do not expect such slackness now. [According](#) to Fox News,

People like Obama-era CIA Director John Brennan and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-NY, have made various public statements labeling Republicans as extremists—with Ocasio-Cortez claiming the GOP has “white supremacist sympathizers” within its ranks, and Brennan claiming “domestic violent extremists” in the form of far-right supporters of President Trump are more dangerous than al-Qaeda.

Columnist and radio host Jeffrey Kuhner [warns](#) that a new bill, HR 350, “is the liberals’ equivalent of the Patriot Act. This version is not aimed at Islamic jihadists. Rather, it directly targets Trump patriots.” Kuhner writes that the bill “has the full backing of the Democratic congressional leadership, the Biden administration... Big Media and Big Tech.”

The bill empowers the Deep State to monitor, surveil and spy on American citizens’ social media accounts, phone calls, [and] political meetings and even infiltrate pro-Trump or “Stop the Steal” rallies.

Conservatives who are deemed potentially “seditious” or “treasonous” can be arrested and jailed, fined, and/or lose their employment. The goal is simple: to crush all dissent to the Biden regime.

Last month, new Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [ordered](#) a “stand down” of the entire military for 60 days “so each service, each command and each unit can have a deeper conversation about this issue [extremism].” Stand downs normally last only a few hours or days and do not involve the entire military.

Austin also pledged to “rid our ranks of racists and extremists.” These words can be applied to anyone and are based on nothing but propaganda.

Austin’s plan is needless, divisive, and dangerous, considering the foreign dangers circling their prey. The prospective punishment of regime “foes” makes one wonder what’s next.

The way to unite and strengthen the US is not through suppression and punishment but through political power managed by checks and balances, a free press, and closer adherence to the Constitution.

But here too there is a problem. *The Federalist* [wrote](#) in July:

According to a new Quillette survey [released](#) last month, 70 percent of self-identifying liberals want to rewrite the US Constitution ‘to a new American constitution that better reflects our diversity as a people.’”

So that is what the US lacks: diversity!

The US is at a tipping point. Communist China is focused on global domination and is working hard to achieve that goal. In an increasingly digital world, the war against the infringement on freedoms needs to be fought largely in cyberspace. This is why ending censorship in both traditional and new media is so important.

The Big Tech companies should be broken up. Let them become the utilities they originally claimed to be or be liable to lawsuits, as other publishers are.

Dictatorships in authoritarian countries such as China and Russia are run from the top down. In America, the central government shares power with the states from the bottom up, and political power is divided among an executive, a judiciary, and a legislature. Fortunately, governors such as Ron DeSantis in Florida, Greg Abbott in Texas, and Kevin Stitt in Oklahoma are moving [legislatively](#) to counter federal laws that may have adverse effects on freedom of speech, jobs, election integrity, the energy industry, the first or second amendments, and general constitutional rights.

This does not speak, however, to the major issue: that democracy cannot survive in a country where a handful of technocrats and oligarchs can act at will to deny access to information or platforms to political candidates. It is unacceptable that a few unelected, unappointed, untransparent, and unaccountable individuals can decide what is “harmful” to society. If this trend is not checked, the US is on a slow path toward tyranny.

*This is an edited version of an [article](#) that appeared in Gatestone Institute on March 3, 2021.*

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