



Technocensorship: When Corporations Serve as a Front for Government Censors



John Whitehead

Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates [a country where everyone lives in fear](#). — *Harry S. Truman*

Nothing good can come from allowing the government to sidestep the Constitution.

Unfortunately, the government has become an expert at disregarding constitutional roadblocks intended to protect the rights of the citizenry.

When these end-runs don't suffice, the government hides behind the covert, clandestine, classified language of national security; or obfuscates, complicates, stymies, and bamboozles; or creates manufactured diversions to keep the citizenry in the dark; or *works through private third parties not traditionally bound by the Constitution*.

This last tactic is increasingly how the government gets away with butchering our freedoms, by having its corporate partners serve as a front for its nefarious deeds.

This is how the police state has managed to carry out an illegal [secret dragnet surveillance](#) program on the American people over the course of multiple presidential administrations.

Relying on a set of privacy loopholes, the White House (under Presidents



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Obama, Trump and now Biden) has been sidestepping the Fourth Amendment by paying AT&T to allow federal, state, and local law enforcement to access—without a warrant—the [phone records of Americans who are not suspected of a crime](#).

The government used a similar playbook to get around the First Amendment, packaged as an effort to control the spread of speculative or false information in the name of national security.

As the House Judiciary Select Subcommittee on Weaponization of the Federal Government [revealed](#), the Biden administration worked in tandem with social media companies to censor content related to COVID-19, [including humorous jokes](#), credible information and so-called disinformation.

Likening the government's heavy-handed attempts to pressure social media companies to suppress content critical of COVID vaccines or the election to "an almost dystopian scenario," Judge Terry Doughty warned that "[the United States Government seems to have assumed a role similar to an Orwellian 'Ministry of Truth.'](#)"

Restricting access to social media has become a popular means of internet censorship.

Dare to voice politically incorrect views in anything louder than a whisper on social media and you might find yourself suspended on Twitter, shut out of Facebook, and banned across various social media platforms. This authoritarian intolerance



masquerading as tolerance, civility and love is what comedian George Carlin referred to as “fascism pretending to be manners.”

Social media censorship runs the gamut from content blocking, throttling, and filtering to lockouts, shutdowns, shadow banning and de-platforming.

In fact, these tactics are at the heart of [several critical cases before the U.S. Supreme Court](#) over who gets to control, regulate or remove what content is shared on the internet: the individual, corporate censors or the government.

Yet what those who typically champion the right of corporations to be free from government meddling get wrong about these cases is that there can be no free speech when corporations such as Facebook, Google or YouTube become a front for—or extensions of—government censors.

This is the very definition of technocensorship.

On paper—under the First Amendment, at least—we are technically free to speak.

In reality, however, we are now only as free to speak as a government official—or corporate entities such as Facebook, Google or YouTube—may allow.

Clothed in tyrannical self-righteousness, technocensorship is powered by technological behemoths (both corporate and governmental) working in tandem to achieve a common goal: to muzzle, silence and altogether eradicate any speech that runs afoul of the government’s own



approved narrative.

Thus far, the tech giants have been able to sidestep the First Amendment by virtue of their non-governmental status, but it's a dubious distinction at best when they are marching in lockstep with the government's dictates.

As Philip Hamburger and Jenin Younes write for *The Wall Street Journal*: “The First Amendment prohibits the government from ‘abridging the freedom of speech.’ Supreme Court doctrine makes clear that [government can’t constitutionally evade the amendment by working through private companies.](#)”

It remains to be seen whether the Supreme Court can see itself clear to recognizing that censorship by social media companies *acting at the behest of the government* runs afoul of the First Amendment.

Bottom line: either we believe in free speech or we don't.

The answer to the political, legal and moral challenges of our day should always be more speech, not less.

That's why James Madison, the author of the Bill of Rights, fought for a First Amendment that protected the “minority” against the majority, ensuring that even in the face of overwhelming pressure, a minority of one—even one who espouses distasteful viewpoints—would still have the right to speak freely, pray freely, assemble freely, challenge the government freely, and broadcast his views in the press freely. He understood that freedom for those in the unpopular minority constitutes the ultimate tolerance in a free society.



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The government has no tolerance for freedom or free speech of any kind that challenges its chokehold on power.

At some point or another, depending on how the government and its corporate allies define what constitutes “disinformation,” “hate” or “extremism, “we the people” might *all* be considered guilty of some thought crime or speech transgression or other.

Yet as I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), it’s a slippery slope from censoring so-called illegitimate ideas to silencing truth.

Eventually, as George Orwell predicted, telling the truth will become a revolutionary act.

Ultimately, the government’s war on free speech—and that’s exactly what it is—is a war that is driven by a government fearful of its people.

As President John F. Kennedy observed, “[A] nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is [a nation that is afraid of its people.](#)”

ABOUT JOHN & NISHA WHITEHEAD:

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His latest books [The Erik Blair Diaries](#) and [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) are available at www.amazon.com. Whitehead can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute.



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