



The Fakery That Is the War on Fake News

Is it true that one man's misinformation is another man's salvation?

Or is it actually true that what man censors is sometimes God's sublimity?

Author and university lecturer Nolan Higdon may not be pondering anything so ethereal. What he is sure of is that, as he wrote Sunday at Salon, the "war on fake news has backfired." As to his meaning, his subtitle tells the tale and the Truth. To wit:

"Content moderation was never about eradicating fake news."

No, this isn't news to readers of *The New American*. But then there are the deeper issues Higdon doesn't address. For example, he opens [writing](#), "Brian Stelter, CNN's chief media analyst, recently tweeted that 'fact-check' had become a dirty word." It shouldn't be. But here's what should be considered not only dirty but eradication-worthy: the professional "fact-checking organization," elevated to "democracy"-defending demigod status, that sits in judgment of us mere mortals. (More on that later.)

Misinformation Misdirection

To be clear, it's perhaps encouraging that a left-wing outlet such as Salon is editorializing against Big Tech truth police. It's also suspicious that this has only happened now that an apparent anti-wokeness cultural shift has occurred. Regardless, it is in this area that Higdon shines, writing that

content moderation was never about eradicating fake news. Rather, it's a tool wielded by those in power to shape narratives and consolidate influence. ...What this means for users is that the platform is always biased, showing you what they want you to see, nothing more, and nothing less.

Higdon has in the past pointed out, wisely, that "fake news" is not a new problem. (Why, "Thou shalt not bear false witness" is a Commandment precisely because lies have ever plagued man.) And he concludes his piece stating:

Trusting billionaires and tech companies to act as gatekeepers of truth has not protected democracy; it has endangered it. Instead of empowering the public to critically engage with



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information, these efforts have built stronger tools for controlling and distorting narratives. The war on fake news has backfired, entrenching the systems it sought to dismantle and deepening public skepticism of information. The lesson is clear: in a democracy, real resistance to fake news comes from a critically media literate citizenry, not the power of billionaire gatekeepers.

A Bipartisan Problem?

Higdon's above observation is largely accurate. Nonetheless, he himself then, unwittingly it seems, peddles what could be called misinformation (or at least poor reasoning). That is, he speaks as if the censorship cartel is a bipartisan effort, an assertion curiously contrary to the facts. He also claims, or at least strongly implies, that now we must fear pro-Trump Big Tech bias.

Odd here is that Higdon confesses that the censorship he warns of was born "post-2016." And what, pray tell, happened then?

Donald Trump took (executive branch) power.

Despite this, the censorship was *not in his favor*. Rather, it was quite explicitly designed to combat what were, supposedly, his pernicious lies. So, question:

If pro-Trump Big Tech censorship wasn't a problem when he was in power then, why should we think it would be a problem when he's in power now?

Of course, there may be a good answer to this question. But Higdon doesn't provide it.

In reality, it was Biden officials who pressured Big Tech entities to censor Americans, using them as proxies to do what it would be illegal for the government to do directly. Trump officials didn't do this during his first term and won't likely attempt it now. And if they do, the media will be all over it.

Higdon may disagree. But this is only because he believes, as he puts it, that "many former critics of fake news have curiously dropped their concerns over disinformation and aligned with [Trump]." Many? Higdon only names one or, maybe, two: Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg — and entrepreneur Elon Musk. He further claims that Musk entered the political fray and then, ultimately, hitched himself to Trump's wagon for personal gain. This is an odd conclusion.

How to Lose Friends and Alienate People

Here's Higdon's thesis, translated: You're the world's richest man, helming successful businesses and enjoying mainly good press. You're feted by the Establishment because you're the "electric car guy" and SpaceX visionary. You're respected by most Americans, left, right, and center. Then you have a capital idea:

"Hey, I'll wade into politics and inveigh against the Establishment and wokeness. I'll completely alienate the party in power and a good percentage of the population. I'll lose money buying a social media platform (X) and use it to express sentiments that further enrage the powers-that-be. Then, finally, I'll go all in supporting the politician (Trump) who's the Devil incarnate to the Establishment the world over."

"That'll really boost my business fortunes!"

Is that your theory, Mr. Higdon?



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Musk could've stayed politically neutral and remained palatable to the Bidenites yesterday and the Trumpists today. Instead, he chose conviction over cash.

As for Zuckerberg, there's no sign he's going to censor for Trump. He has simply resolved (hopefully) to *stop* censoring for the Left. In fact, he has said he'll replicate X's "community notes" system which, far from billionaire control, is [informational democracy](#).

None of this means that some powerful figures haven't seen the writing on the wall. But the difference wouldn't be Trump's rise. Rather, they may perceive a cultural shift wherein Americans — aka the market — are finally rebelling against woke tyranny (for now) and the political party enabling it.

Just the Facts, Ma'am?

Speaking of wokeness brings us to that aforementioned beast, the professional fact-checking outfit. The normalization of these entities carries the implication that only they care about facts. Us benighted plebs are satisfied with our fictions, apparently. But question:

Do you say, or know anyone who asserts, "I don't care about facts; my business is lies"?

I'm a fact-checker. You, if you research claims you hear, are a fact-checker. Many Americans are fact-checkers, and all people of good will care about learning the facts. Oh, we're not all equally good at discerning them. Human beings often rationalize them away, too, being the flawed creatures we are.

But this can apply to anyone — including, and maybe especially, "professional fact-checking-org" hires. And everyone has a bias; it's just question of whether we're biased in favor of the Truth or a lie.

The professional fact-checkers are too often just fact-wreckers, a de facto Ministry of Truth doing the bidding of powerful deniers of Truth. That's the problem, too, with "content moderation." As Professor Thomas Sowell has observed about life, speaking generally, "There are no solutions ... only trade-offs." The fake news *sometimes* spread via open-social-media-platform [informational democracy](#) is a problem. But would we rather have today's alternative: fake news that's consistently enforced by a government-approved informational oligarchy?



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