

EU warns of deadly risks in rise of U.S. tech giants

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The front desk of the Amazon office is pictured in the Manhattan borough of New York, New York, U.S., May 1, 2019.

REUTERS/Carlo Allegri

WARSAW (Reuters) - The world needs to be wary of the rise of tech giants such as Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon, comparing their powers to those of countries such as China, European Council President Donald Tusk said in Warsaw on Friday.

“In the East, we see the rise of those capable of controlling everyone’s behavior, and in the West we’ve seen the rise of an uncontrolled, spontaneous empire,” Tusk said in Warsaw in reference to the companies during a speech marking Constitution Day.

“Our children are dependent on the internet and everyday will become more dependent on it,” he added.

The European Union has been in the forefront of efforts to tighten control on how social media companies handle the personal data of consumers, with rules introduced last May giving regulators the power to impose fines of up to 4 percent of global revenue for violations.

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Bokhari: Link-banning Is Facebook's Terrifying New Censorship Tool

 Silicon Valley wunderkind Zuckerberg in eye of the storm

[Justin Sullivan/Getty](#)

ALLUM BOKHARI

The banning of multiple political commentators from Facebook and Instagram, including conservatives Paul Joseph Watson and Laura Loomer, is an outrage against the ideals of an open Internet on its own. But beyond the bans on individuals, Facebook has deployed an even more terrifying tool of censorship — link-banning.

The mainstream media were, of course, tipped off about the bans in advance, and the *Atlantic's* report contains the following eye-opening detail. Not only has Alex Jones' personal account now been banned from Facebook, in addition to PrisonPlanet editor-in-chief and YouTube star Paul Joseph Watson, but all links to Infowars sites are now banned across the platform. Share Infowars too often, and you'll be banned too.

Via [*The Atlantic*](#):

Infowars is subject to the strictest ban. Facebook and Instagram will remove any content containing Infowars videos, radio segments, or articles (unless the post is explicitly condemning the content), and Facebook will also remove any groups set up to share Infowars content and events promoting any of the banned extremist figures, according to a company spokesperson. (Twitter, YouTube, and Apple have also banned Jones and Infowars.)

This takes censorship on social media to altogether new levels. If you post Infowars content on Facebook or Facebook-owned Instagram, your post will be removed. If you post it repeatedly, you will be banned.

Note the wording, too — you'll be banned *unless you're condemning Infowars*. Facebook is now brazenly using its power to reward certain political positions and punish others.

This isn't censorship of an individual or a group over a violation of terms of service. It's the wholesale ban of an independent media site, which for all the criticism levied against it, has had a major impact on the politics of the United States.

And Facebook has made no pretense, as it has in other cases where the pages of news sites have been banned, that the ban occurred because of alleged "inauthentic behavior," by which it means the use of multiple pages or automated accounts to promote a site's content.

That Facebook is dispensing with its previous excuses shows that the social network has become emboldened to regulate the flow of news on its platform, knowing that no consequences are headed its way from Republicans on Capitol Hill or in the White House.

Through algorithm changes and the prioritization of so-called "authoritative sources," Facebook has spent the last two years positioning itself to control the news you see on your feed. Now it's taken control of the news you share with your friends too. Post a link to a disapproved website? It'll be deleted. Post it again? You'll likely be banned.

This is a formula not just for banning websites, commentators, and political figures, but for banning all their supporters as well.

And because their bans nearly exclusively target the right, potentially thousands of Republicans and Trump supporters won't be able to use Facebook to encourage their friends to vote on election day 2020 — a massive advantage for the Democrats on one of the internet's most politically influential platforms.

President Donald Trump may have cooled on sources like Infowars (unlike his campaign days, when he appeared on Alex Jones' show). But this isn't just an attack on particular individuals or sources. Whatever your criticisms of Infowars — and there are many — this is an attack on the independent media as a whole. It's an unprecedented tilting of the scales in favor of Democrat-approved media, and it will have an enormous impact on the 2020 election.

That's the point of course. Since Trump won in 2016, Silicon Valley has been animated by a single mission — ensure it never happens again.

Beyond the leaks showing that Facebook is [deliberately deboosting](#) conservative figures (when it isn't outright banning them), that [YouTube](#) and [Google](#) are pushing conservative content out of their top search results, just look at the video-recorded [weeping of Google executives](#) on stage after Trump won. They hate him, they hate his supporters, and they will do everything they can to suppress them before election day. The only question is, what's Trump going to do about it?

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Journalism Institute Poynter Tries to 'Blacklist' 29 Conservative Outlets as 'UnNews'

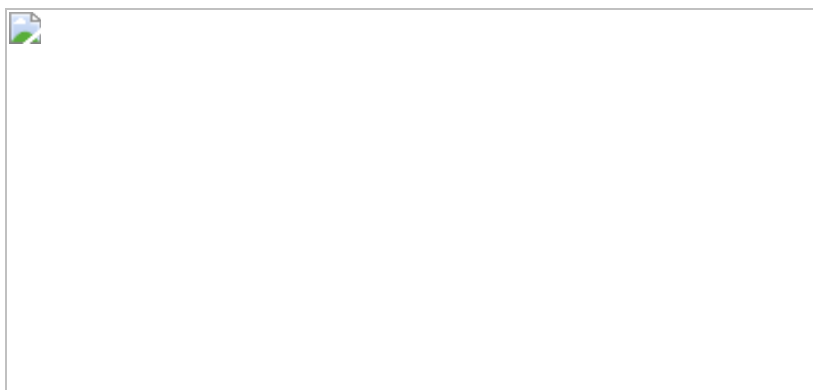
By [Corinne Weaver](#) | May 2, 2019 7:58 AM EDT

The attack on the conservative internet has reached a new low.

[Poynter](#), the journalism institute responsible for

training writers and reporters, decided to promote a left-wing smear of conservative groups online. The result was a hit job written by someone who works for the anti-conservative Southern Poverty Law Center for a journalism organization funded by prominent liberal billionaires such as George Soros and Pierre Omidyar.

Poynter, which has started the International Fact-Checking Network, shared the new report and dataset called "[UnNews](#)," declaring at least 29 right-leaning news outlets and organizations to be "unreliable news websites."



Report author and SPLC producer [Barrett Golding](#) combined five major lists of websites marked “unreliable.” That result, which consisted of 515 names, included many prominent conservative sites — Breitbart, CNSNews.com, Daily Signal, Daily Wire, Drudge Report, Free Beacon, Judicial Watch, LifeNews, LifeSiteNews, LifeZette, LiveAction News, the Media Research Center, PJ Media, Project Veritas, Red State, The Blaze, Twitchy, and the *Washington Examiner*.

These sites stood next to conservative organizations like Alliance Defending Freedom, which represented baker Jack Phillips in the Supreme Court case *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*. While the ADF is not a news site, it was likely targeted because Golding works for the SPLC. The ADF is considered a “hate group” by the SPLC and is marked on the “hate map.” [The Washington Post](#) even questioned SPLC’s “political activism” and “bias.”

SPLC has been dropped by Twitter from its Trust and Safety Council and slammed by the mainstream media after multiple scandals rocked the organization. Its [hate map](#) even helped shooter Floyd Lee Corkins find the location of the Family Research Council, where he shot and wounded five people.

[Poynter](#) is funded by Open Society Foundations, liberal billionaire George Soros’ massive foundations, as well as the Omidyar Network. The two combined for “\$1.3 million in grant funding.” Funds were sent to Poynter specifically to establish the International Fact-Checking Network. The ‘UnNews’ list was started to help fact-checking organizations determine what was “unreliable.”

That anti-conservative mindset was apparent throughout the incoherent and inconsistent report. Conservative organizations were included throughout but liberal groups rarely were. The National Review and Heritage were removed from the list but Heritage's Daily Signal was on it. That combined to create a shameless double-standard. It specifically targeted conservative media watchdog groups and didn't include liberal ones.

The goal of the report is clear. Poynter is recommending that advertisers "who want to stop funding misinformation" should use its list. It stated that while marketers can create their own "blacklists," those lists might be incomplete. Golding wrote that, **"Advertisers don't want to support publishers that might tar their brand with hate speech, falsehoods or some kinds of political messaging."**

Poynter has a longstanding history as an anchor in the journalism business. Its board of trustees includes execs from *The New York Times*, ESPN, Harvard, Vox, CBS, ABC, and *The Washington Post*. Poynter is currently working with Facebook and Google for its fact-checking programs.

The announcement mentioned that some sites, while initially on the list, were taken off, including the far left conspiracy site [Alternet](#). Alternet has been rated by Media Bias Fact Check as being biased, especially since it refers to the GOP periodically as "craven." Several other liberal sites were excluded from this list, such as ThinkProgress and Splinter, which doxxed Trump's senior policy advisor Stephen Miller.

The report marked sites as "unreliable," "biased," "clickbait," or "fake." Breitbart, Alliance Defending Freedom, CNSNews.com, Project Veritas, and the Washington Examiner were all marked

“unreliable.” Unreliable was defined as “websites that have posted deceptive content,” “sources that actively promote racism, misogyny, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination,” “sites that contain some fake news,” and “sources that may be reliable but whose contents require further verification.”

The Heritage Foundation’s The Daily Signal, Ben Shapiro’s The Daily Wire, Drudge Report, Free Beacon, Judicial Watch, LiveAction, MRC, and PJ Media were tagged as “biased.” The tag was explained as “sources that come from a particular point of view and may rely on propaganda, decontextualized information, and opinions distorted as facts.”

LifeNews, LifeSiteNews, LifeZette, RedState, The Blaze, and Twitchy were marked as “clickbait.” This tag was defined as “sources that provide generally credible content, but use exaggerated, misleading, or questionable headlines, social media descriptions, and/or images.”

The list clearly reflects the biases of the liberal organizations that compiled its component parts. Poynter listed the organizations that contributed to the dataset in an attached document. These included FactCheck.org, Fake News Codex, MetaCert Protocol, OpenSources, Politifact, Snopes, and the disgraced SPLC.

Ultimately, the list and the agenda showed how far Poynter has fallen from its role as “the world’s most influential school for journalists” to a far-left censor of conservatives online. You can call a Chevy Nova a Ferrari but it’s still a Chevy Nova.

The Poynter Institute, a journalism nonprofit organization, has completely disabled a list of what they labeled as an extensive list of “unreliable” news websites on Thursday night after facing scrutiny in the days since its publication.

A litany of conservative publications, including The Washington Free Beacon and The Washington Examiner, were lumped into the list of “unreliable” publications and it received nearly instantaneous condemnation from them.

“Soon after we published, we received complaints from those on the list and readers who objected to the inclusion of certain sites, and the exclusion of others. We began an audit to test the accuracy and veracity of the list, and while we feel that many of the sites did have a track record of publishing unreliable information, our review found weaknesses in the methodology,” Poynter’s managing editor [Barbara Allen said in a statement on their website](#). “We detected inconsistencies between the findings of the original databases that were the sources for the list and our own rendering of the final report.”

[@Poynter](#) has corrected its fake news list: “This index previously listed The Washington Examiner and FirstPost as unreliable news sources. After reviewing our methodology, we found that neither met the criteria for inclusion, so both were removed.” <https://t.co/gV15lO6gRQ>

— Philip Klein (@philipaklein) [May 1, 2019](#)

She went on, “We are removing this unreliable sites list until we are able to provide our audience a more consistent and rigorous set of criteria.”

Aside from the list of “unreliable” news outlets, the initial publication included an accompanying article that called for advertisers to use the list in an effort to “blacklist” these websites. That language was deleted from the story and an update went along with it.

Busted: George Soros is the man behind a “journalism institute” that is blacklisting conservative media organizations. Typical radical left dishonesty. Fake media rides again! <https://t.co/InIgwEpS>

— Brent Bozell (@BrentBozell) [May 2, 2019](#)

Baybars Orsek, the director of the International Fact-Checking Network, told the Washington Examiner that they would be “evaluating all removal requests on a case by case basis,” and adding that “the total number of complaints is less than 2% of the whole database.”

I see the [@FreeBeacon](#) is still included in [@Poynter](#)’s list. I know for a fact that their staff shares my reporting so I’d love to hear any explanation for why my work and the work of my colleagues is now being deemed unreliable without so much as a single accusation of inaccuracy.

<https://t.co/xAraEbctfy>

— Stephen Gutowski (@StephenGutowski) [May 2, 2019](#)