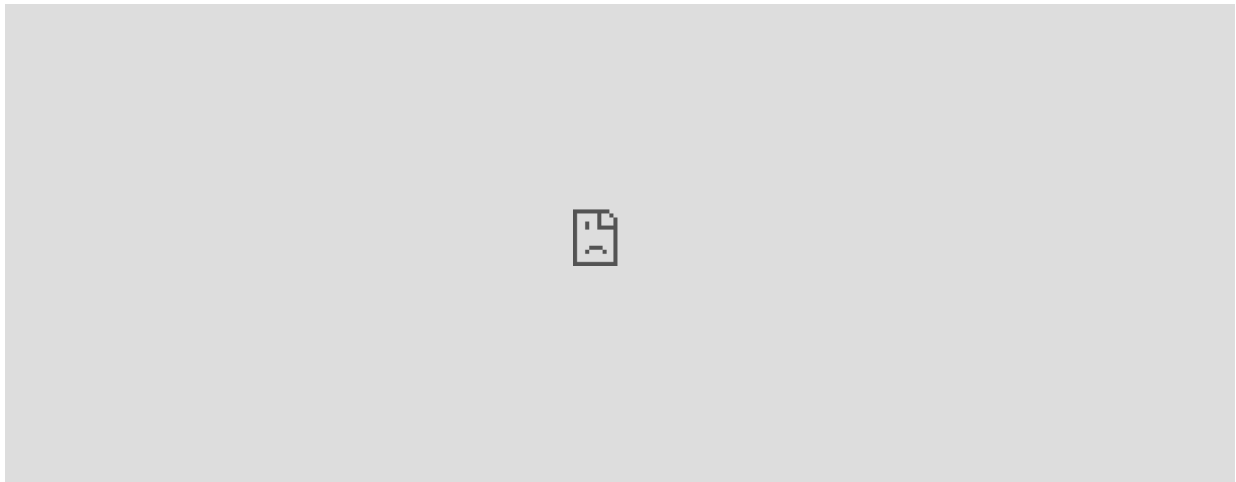




# 'THE GOOD CENSOR': Leaked Google Briefing Admits Abandonment of Free Speech for 'Safety And Civility'



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An internal company briefing produced by Google and leaked exclusively to Breitbart News argues that due to a variety of factors, including the election of President Trump, the “American tradition” of free speech on the internet is no longer viable.

Despite leaked video footage showing top executives declaring their intention to ensure that the rise of Trump and the populist movement is just a “blip” in history, Google has repeatedly [denied](#) that the political bias of its employees filter into its products.

But the 85-page briefing, titled “The Good Censor,” admits that Google and other tech platforms now “control the majority of online conversations” and have undertaken a “shift towards censorship” in response to unwelcome political events around the world.

Examples cited in the document include the 2016 election and the rise of Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) in Germany.

Responding to the leak, an official Google source said the document should be considered internal research, and not an official company position.

The briefing labels the ideal of unfettered free speech on the internet a “utopian narrative” that has been “undermined” by recent global events as well as “bad behavior” on the part of users. It can be read in full below.

It acknowledges that major tech platforms, including Google, Facebook and Twitter initially promised free speech to consumers. “This free speech ideal was instilled in the DNA of the Silicon Valley startups that now control the majority of our online conversations,” says the document.



The briefing argues that Google, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are caught between two incompatible positions, the “unmediated marketplace of ideas” vs. “well-ordered spaces for safety and civility.”



The first approach is described as a product of the “American tradition” which “prioritizes free speech for democracy, not civility.” The second is described as a product of the “European tradition,” which “favors dignity over liberty and civility over freedom.” The briefing claims that all tech platforms are now moving toward the European tradition.

The briefing associates Google’s new role as the guarantor of “civility” with the categories of “editor” and “publisher.” This is significant, given that Google, YouTube, and other tech giants publicly claim they are not publishers but rather neutral platforms — a categorization that grants them special legal immunities under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Elsewhere in the document, Google admits that Section 230 was designed to ensure they can remain neutral platforms for free expression.

### **Trump, Conspiracy Theorist**

One of the reasons Google identifies for allegedly widespread public disillusionment with internet free speech is that it “breeds conspiracy theories.” The example Google uses? A 2016 tweet from then-candidate Donald Trump, alleging that Google search suppressed negative results about Hillary Clinton.



At the time, Google said that it suppressed negative autocomplete suggestions about everybody, not just Clinton. But it was comparatively easy to find such autocomplete results when searching for Bernie Sanders or Donald Trump. Independent research from psychologist Dr. Robert Epstein also [shows](#) that Google search results (if not autocomplete results) did indeed favor Clinton in 2016.

Twice in the document, Google juxtaposes a factoid about “Russian interference” in American elections with pictures of Donald Trump. At one point, the document admits that tech platforms are changing their policies to pre-empt congressional action on foreign interference.

The document did not address the fact that, according to [leading psychologists](#), the impact of foreign “bots” and propaganda on social media has a negligible impact on voters.

### **From Suggestions to Company Policy**

It is unclear for whom the “Good Censor” was intended. What is clear, however, is that Google spent (or paid someone to spend) significant time and effort to produce it.



According to the briefing itself, it was the product of an extensive process involving “several layers of research,” including expert interviews with MIT Tech Review editor-in-chief Jason Pontin, *Atlantic* staff writer Franklin Foer, and academic Kalev Leetaru. 35 cultural observers and 7 cultural leaders from seven countries on five continents were also consulted to produce it.

What is also clear is that many of the briefing’s recommendations are now reflected in the policy of Google and its sibling companies.

For example, the briefing argues that tech companies will have to censor their platforms if they want to “expand globally.” Google is now **constructing** a censored search engine to gain access to the Chinese market.

The document also bemoans that the internet allows “have a go commenters” (in other words, ordinary people) to compete on a level playing field with “authoritative sources” like the *New York Times*. Google-owned YouTube now **promotes** so-called “authoritative sources” in its algorithm. The company did not specifically name which sources it would promote.

Key points in the briefing can be found at the following page numbers:

- P2 – The briefing states that “users are asking if the openness of the internet should be celebrated after all” and that “free speech has become a social, economic, and political weapon.”
- P11 – The briefing identifies Breitbart News as the media publication most interested in the topic of free speech.
- P12 – The briefing says the early free-speech ideals of the internet were “utopian.”
- P14 – The briefing admits that Google, along with Twitter and Facebook, now “control the majority of online conversations.”

- P15 – Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act is linked to Google’s position as a platform for free expression. Elsewhere in the document (p68), Google and other platforms’ move towards moderation and censorship is associated with the role of “publisher” – which would not be subject to Section 230’s legal protections.
- PP19-21 – The briefing identifies several factors that allegedly eroded faith in free speech. The election of Donald Trump and alleged Russian involvement is identified as one such factor. The rise of the populist Alternative fur Deutschland (Alternative for Germany) party in Germany – which the briefing falsely smears as “alt-right” – is another.
- PP26-34 – The briefing explains how “users behaving badly” undermines free speech on the internet and allows “crummy politicians to expand their influence.” The briefing bemoans that “racists, misogynists, and oppressors” are allowed a voice alongside “revolutionaries, whistleblowers, and campaigners.” It warns that users are “keener to transgress moral norms” behind the protection of anonymity.
- P37 – The briefing acknowledges that China – for which Google has developed a censored search engine – has the worst track record on internet freedom.
- P45 – After warning about the rise of online hate speech, the briefing approvingly cites Sarah Jeong, infamous for her hate speech against white males (Google is currently facing a lawsuit alleging it discriminates against white males, among other categories).
- P45 – The briefing bemoans the fact that the internet has until recently been a level playing field, warning that “rational debate is damaged when authoritative voices and ‘have a go’ commentators receive equal weighting.”
- P49 – The document accuses President Trump of spreading the “conspiracy theory” that Google autocomplete suggestions unfairly favored Hillary Clinton in 2016. (Trump’s suspicions were actually correct – independent research has [shown](#) that Google did favor Clinton in 2016).
- P53 – Free speech platform Gab is identified as a major destination for users who are dissatisfied with censorship on other platforms.
- P54 – After warning about “harassment” earlier in the document, the briefing approvingly describes a 27,000-strong left-wing social media campaign as a “digital flash mob” engaged in “friendly counter-commenting.”
- P57 – The document juxtaposes a factoid about Russian election interference with a picture of Donald Trump.
- P63 – The briefing admits that when Google, GoDaddy and CloudFlare simultaneously withdrew service from website The Daily Stormer, they were “effectively booting it off the internet,” a point also made by the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the FCC in their subsequent warnings about online censorship.
- P66-68 – The briefing argues that Google, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are caught between two incompatible positions, the “unmediated marketplace of ideas” vs. “well-ordered spaces for safety and civility.” The first is described as a product of the “American tradition” which “prioritizes free speech for democracy, not civility.” The second is described as a product of the “European tradition,” which “favors dignity over liberty and civility over freedom.” The briefing claims that all tech platforms are now moving toward the European tradition.
- P70 – The briefing sums up the reasons for big tech’s “shift towards censorship,” including the need to respond to regulatory demands and “expand globally,” to “monetize content through its organization,” and to “protect advertisers from controversial content, [and] increase revenues.”
- P74-76 – The briefing warns that concerns about censorship from major tech platforms have spread beyond the right-wing media into the mainstream.

Read The Good Censor in full below:

[The Good Censor – GOOGLE LEAK](#) by on Scribd



***Allum Bokhari is the senior technology correspondent at Breitbart News. You can follow him on [Twitter](#), [Gab.ai](#) and [add him on Facebook](#). Email tips and suggestions to [allumbokhari@protonmail.com](mailto:allumbokhari@protonmail.com).***

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