

Paranoid Groundings and Technocratic States: Hillary Clinton versus Mark Zuckerberg

By [Dr. Binoy Kampmark](#)

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*It is another one of those contests and disagreements where the contestants should all loose, or at the very least, be subjected to a torturous stalemate. **Hillary Clinton** remains the nasty sprinkle on the Democratic Party in the United States, ever hopeful that some door might open to enable her to come sliding in, taking the reins to what she regards as her possession: the White House.*

Not winning in 2016 against **Donald Trump**, a person considered less electable than most cartoon characters, requires more than sessions of therapy and good dozes of mind numbing medication. Clinton's therapy has been one of self-denial and accusation of others, strained through a device that gives her miraculous exoneration for her own failings. That device lies in the realm of information, because this individual, renowned for her own sharp slant on it (remember those [fictional sniper bullets she apparently dodged](#) during a visit to Bosnia in 1996?), feels she has been terribly hard done by. The US may have attempted to throw off aristocracy in becoming a republic, but it has done a good job of finding sawdust substitutes.

The dish served up to interviewers and journalists regarding Clinton's defeat is always the same: I would have won had I not encountered the roadblocks of that impossible **James B. Comey** and "Russian WikiLeaks". She remains obsessed by rites of self-purification that ignore the inner workings of the parasitic machine she and her husband created, marked by an inability to understand the blue collar revolt that fell into Trump's lap.

Having isolated the cause of defeat as mind controlling "fake news" and "misinformation", a seedy strategy that ignores the information that was uncomfortably accurate in a populist election (in bed with Wall Street profiteers, the problems with free trade, foreign interventions), she sees the enemy as those who dish out information she does not like. Those who provide such material must be motivated. They must have an agenda against her, however mummified she seems to be. More to the point, having such an agenda miraculously dispenses with the need to confront the details.

This leads to her latest splenetic spray. Her claim made in an interview with *The Atlantic* sounds like a lingering old home rant, somewhat demented, totally resentful. **Mark Zuckerberg** and Facebook are in Trump's pocket, she claims. This is far from a useful designation, because the only pocket Zuckerberg has ever been in is his own, and my does it go deep. She claims to have a ring side seat to reading his mind, suggesting "that it's to his and Facebook's advantage not to cross Trump. That's what I believe. And it just gives me a pit in my stomach."

The approach is very much in the mould of Clinton, and builds upon the idea that facts are

supposedly immutable, accept when they apply to you. But the failed candidate insists that she has found this one fact: that Facebook is “not just *going* to re-elect Trump, but *intend[s]* to re-elect Trump.” *The Atlantic* is [thrilled to suggest](#) a scoop on the Zuckerberg view on this. Senator Elizabeth Warren, for instance, is not favoured because she nurses notions of regulating Facebook. What a stunner of a revelation!

The tech behemoths have been besieged by opponents who insist they are anti-democratic and authoritarian. There are neither, being shallow information streams that merely reflect the corrugated perversions of their users, the voyagers on the Internet who do not seek to be enlightened so much as reassured. More importantly, much of that material is generated by users themselves. “Facebook is, in a sense, the world’s first technocratic nation-state,” [argues](#) Adrienne LaFrance. Missing here is the understanding that it is more akin to a city-state of information, having monetised it for use and encouraged citizen users to participate. It is of little concern to FB where such material goes; the quality of merchandise might be shonky, yet still find a buyer or user.

What Zuckerberg’s opponents never supply is a way of circumventing the tendency inherent in such companies: that they feed instinct, desire and interest. In doing so, a confusion arises; entertainment is muddled with political sensibility; information that is merely opinion serving as engagement. It has nothing to do with reasoned debate, whatever the utopians might have thought.

What is popular is what is extreme; what ranks in searches and information is what is controversial not necessarily what is accurate. Facebook merely performs a role Roman emperors were familiar with and what the dark lord of the press world Rupert Murdoch always practised: give the people what they want, because their self-respect only rises as far as the next supplement will take them. Do readers of trashy but election turning paper *The Sun* wish for a critical debate format on political candidates? Does the consumer of the Facebook “feed” desire counter-narratives and a range of sources to reach a decision? The answer to both is a resounding no. The decisions are already made, prejudices merely re-enforced.

Zuckerberg, like Clinton, has his own confusions about democratic practice. He is only to be trusted the way a press mogul should be. “In general, in a democracy, I think people should be able to hear for themselves what politicians are saying,” [suggests the billionaire sociopath](#). The principle, for all that wimpy enthusiasm, is a hard one to dismiss. But he confuses how his platform, through its algorithmic bazaar, has become the means to merely reassure people about their set views rather than change them. Facts have nothing do with it.

There are others, of course, that also exercise Clinton’s concerns. This is a person filled with vengeful regret, and it shows. She has taken against Democratic Presidential contender Tulsi Gabbard, accusing her, in the very counterfeit news she despises, of being a “Russian asset”. Gabbard has returned the serve in the way that public figures in the US love: through the courts. A defamation suit [has been filed](#). Clinton also keeps the dagger sharp for Bernie Sanders, [suggesting](#) that “nobody likes him” (old habits die hard for Clinton) for being something she knows all too well: a career politician.

Such ruminations are not helpful for either Clinton or the Democrats. They are, however, most useful for Trump, who has, better than his opponents, found the means to deploy the mechanisms of information, accurate or otherwise, in his favour. The issue is not

Zuckerberg, however attractive he seems as a target. What social media has done is provide the mass dissemination tool that makes distraction the norm and correction impossible. There is no dialogue in such a debate, because the debate has changed within a matter of hours, if not minutes. Either ban Facebook and its emissaries, or let it be. The path to regulation is already proving hopelessly messy and will, in time, prove dangerous.

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Dr. Binoy Kampmark was a Commonwealth Scholar at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He lectures at RMIT University, Melbourne. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research and Asia-Pacific Research. Email: bkampmark@gmail.com

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