

# Digital Humanism and Democracy in Geopolitical Context

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15 June 2021



[ COMPLEXITY ECONOMICS ]

DIALOGUES OF THE APPLIED COMPLEXITY NETWORK I

*Proceedings of  
the Santa Fe Institute's  
2019 Fall Symposium*

W. BRIAN ARTHUR  
ERIC D. BEINHOCKER  
ALLISON STANGER

*editors*

# The complexity viewpoint

“The complexity viewpoint has modern roots in pioneering work in the physical sciences conducted decades ago by groups in Brussels, Stuttgart, Ann Arbor, Los Alamos, and elsewhere. But the ideas have even earlier precedents in economics. Adam Smith had a deep, intuitive understanding of emergence and was arguably the first complexity economist. Smith and other early economists were aware that aggregate patterns emerge from individual behavior and interactions, and that individual behavior responds to these aggregate patterns. Smith’s famous metaphor of the “invisible hand” of markets is popularly misinterpreted as a message that “greed is good” (something Smith did not believe), but in reality was a statement about emergence — how individual actions ‘without intending it, without knowing it’ lead to collective outcomes which feedback to influence further actions...”

--Arthur, Beinhocker, and Stanger, 2021

"Superb. . . . Stanger deserves a gold medal for this book."—Boston Globe

# ONE NATION UNDER CONTRACT



THE OUTSOURCING OF  
AMERICAN POWER  
AND THE FUTURE OF  
FOREIGN POLICY

ALLISON  
STANGER

Privatization and globalization have changed the relationship between business and government



Blackwater in post-Katrina New Orleans

ALLISON STANGER

# Whistle blowers



HONESTY IN AMERICA  
FROM WASHINGTON  
TO TRUMP

Yale University Press,  
September 2019/2021

"A stunningly original, deeply insightful, and compelling analysis of the profound conflicts we have faced over whistleblowing, national security, and democracy from our nation's founding to the Age of Trump."

—Geoffrey R. Stone, author of *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime*

"The depth, breadth and power of the national security state should concern every American who cares about our democracy. Allison Stanger has woven interviews, insights, and great stories into a compelling argument for why we must celebrate and protect whistleblowers as the indispensable guardians of our national ideals."

—Anne-Marie Slaughter, author of *The Chessboard and the Web*

"This clear-eyed, sobering book narrates a history of whistle-blowing, from the American Revolution to Snowden to Comey, and delivers the verdict that the republic is at risk—a must read."

—Danielle Allen, author of *Our Declaration*



## VIEWPOINT

## Consumers vs. Citizens in Democracy's Public Sphere

By Allison Stanger

Communications of the ACM, July 2020, Vol. 63 No. 7, Pages 29-31

10.1145/3359553

[Comments \(1\)](#)

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From foreign intervention in free elections to the rise of the American surveillance state, the Internet has transformed the relationship between the public and private sectors, especially democracy's public sphere. The global pandemic only further highlights the extent to which technological innovation is changing how we live, work, and play. What has too often gone unacknowledged is that the same revolution has produced a series of conflicts between our desires as consumers and our duties as citizens. Left unaddressed, the consequence is a moral vacuum that has become a threat to liberal democracy and human values.

Surveillance in the Internet Age, whether by governments or companies, often relies on algorithmic searches of big data

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*“To be fully human in a liberal democracy is to be a citizen first and a consumer second.”*

Cornwall  
Consensus  
June 2021



# Roadmap

- I. Introduction: The Values Alignment Problem
- II. Authoritarianism v. Democracy/Private v. Public Government
- III. Statistical Machine Learning and Individual Rights
- IV. Book Proposal in Progress
- V. Conclusion: Rebooting Public Governance

# I. INTRODUCTION: THE VALUES ALIGNMENT PROBLEM

“The AI competition is also a values competition”.  
--Eric Schmidt (Chair) & Robert Work (Vice Chair)



<https://www.nscai.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Full-Report-Digital-1.pdf>

## II. Authoritarianism v. Democracy/Private v. Public Government

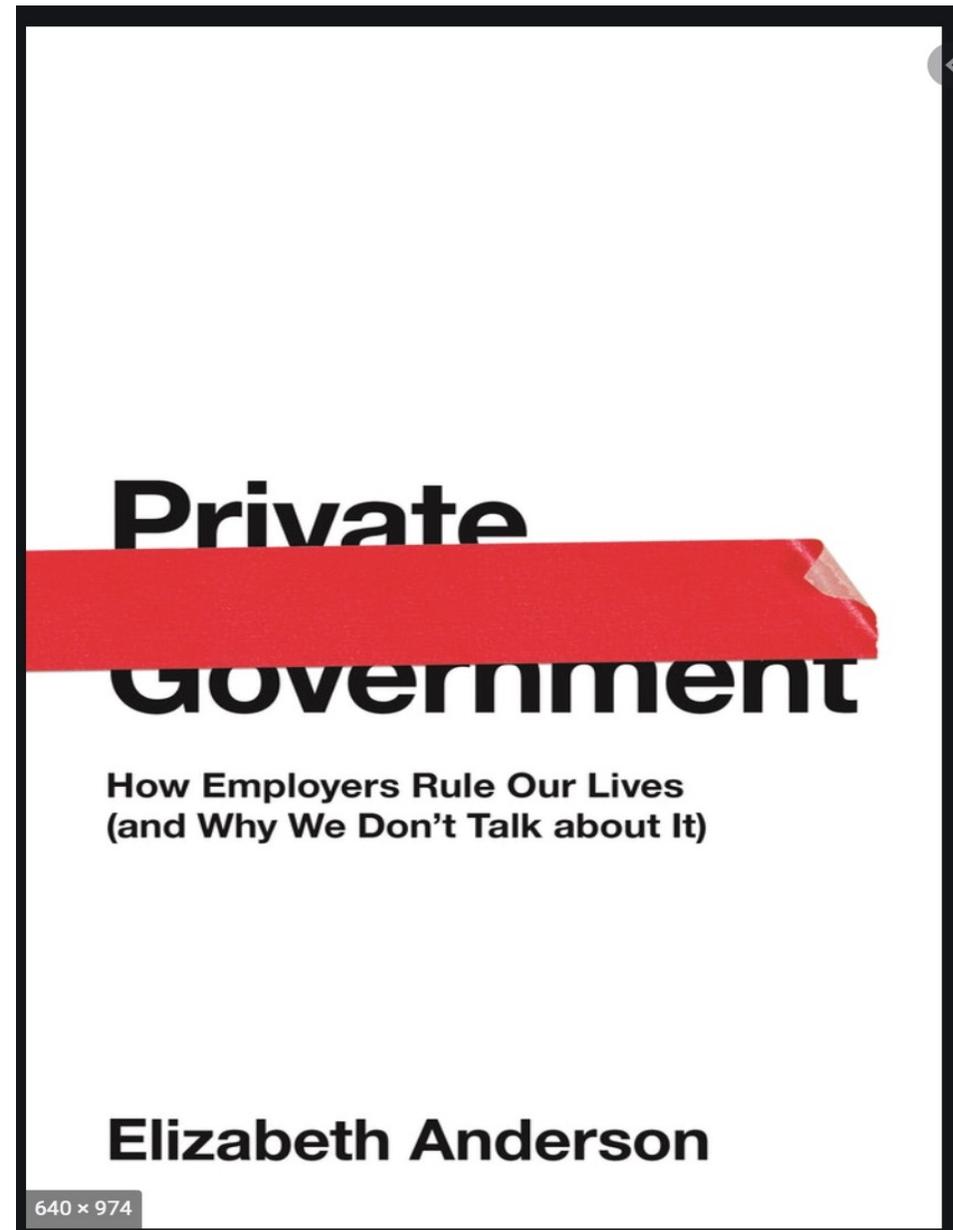
# Private Government is not Public Government

“Private government is government that has arbitrary, unaccountable power over those it governs.” Anderson, p. 45

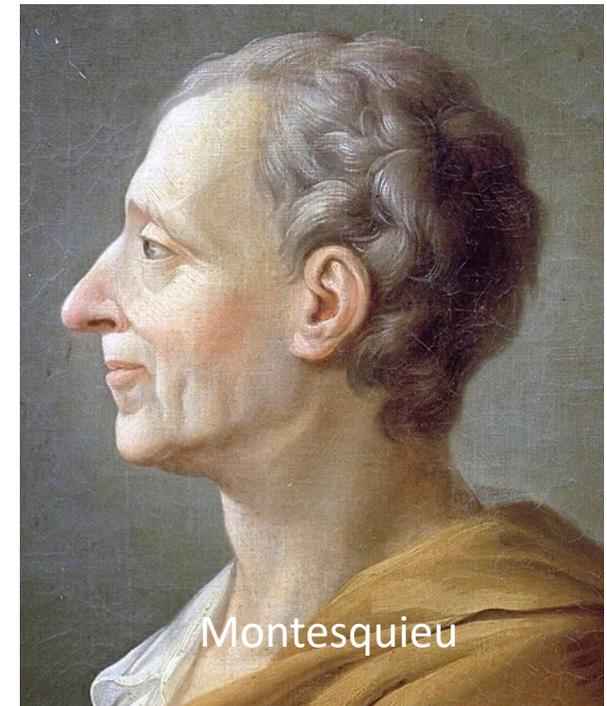
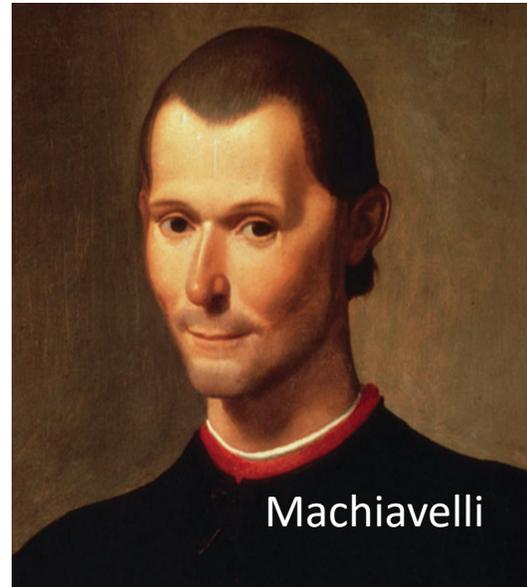
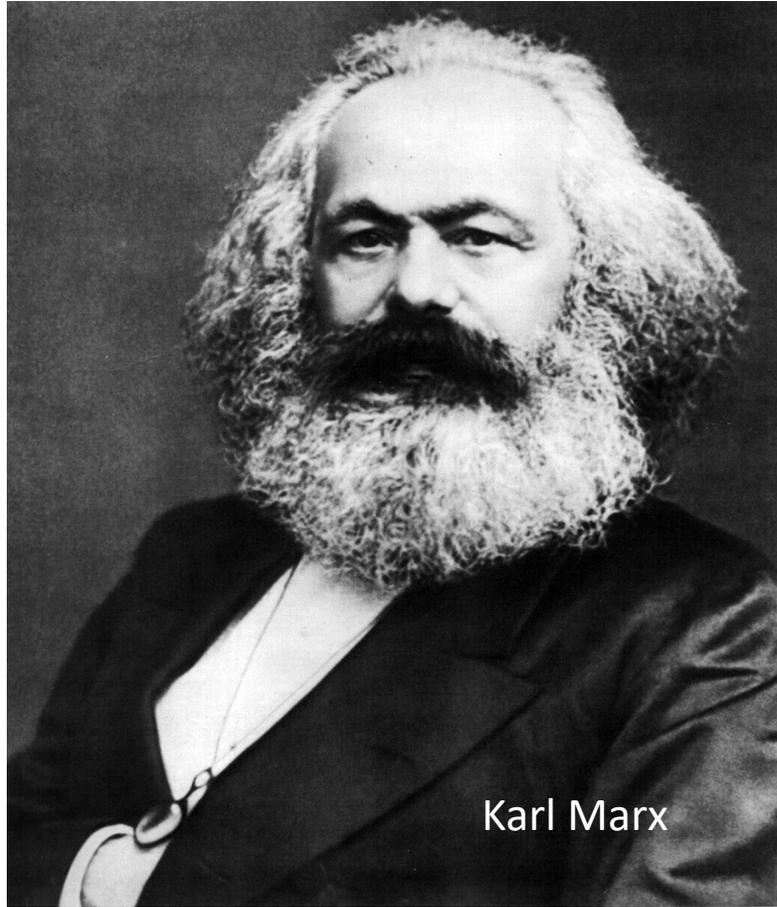
“...state communists looked to ideals of neither liberty nor equality, but rather to utilitarian progress and the perfectibility of human beings under the force of private government.” Anderson, 45.

Opposition to economic monarchies “was part of a broader agenda of dismantling monopolies across all domains of social life.”

Anderson, 62.



# BOURGEOIS MAN V. CITIZEN MAN (Hannah Arendt)



# Former FBI Director James Comey February 2020





# Creating Capabilities

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM

# DEVELOPMENT AS FREEDOM



AMARTYA SEN

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS

# DIFFERENCE WITHOUT DOMINATION

PURSuing JUSTICE  
IN DIVERSE  
DEMOCRACIES

EDITED BY

*Danielle Allen*  
*Rohini Somanathan*

# THE IMPERATIVE OF INTEGRATION



ELIZABETH ANDERSON

## III. Statistical Machine Learning and Individual Rights

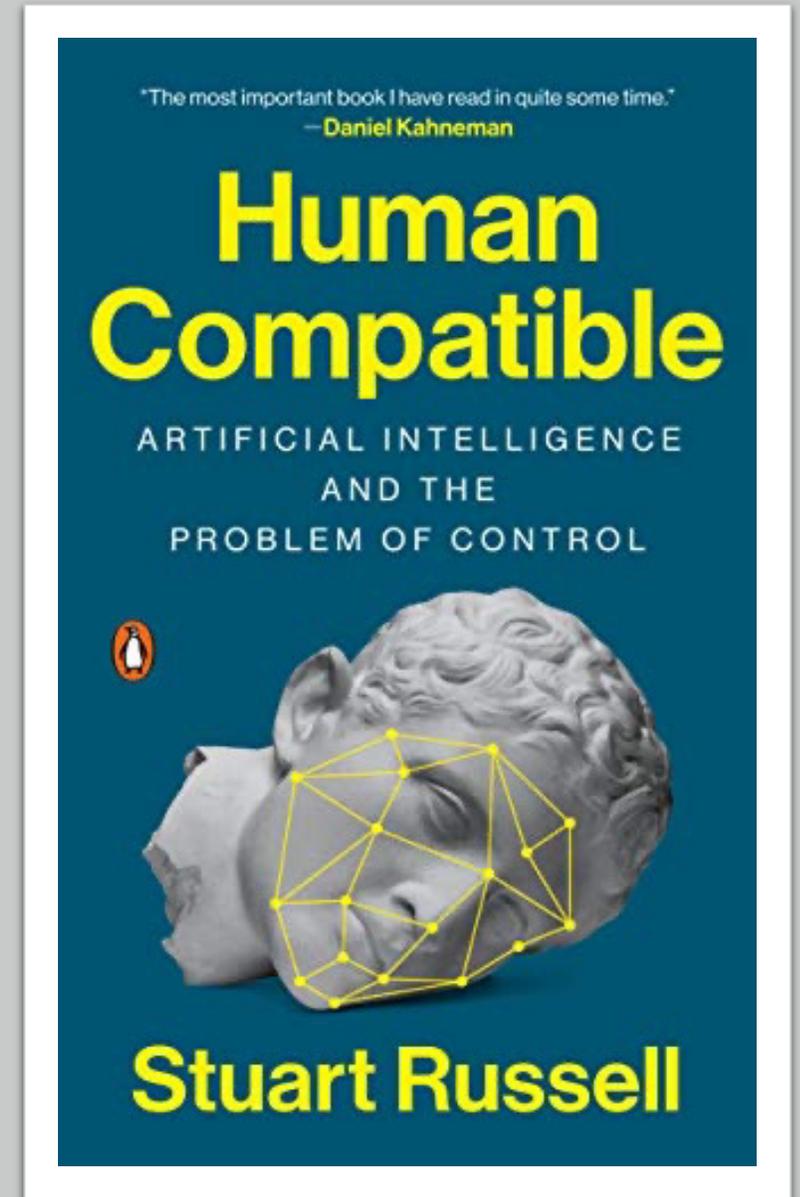


- **Overreliance on machine learning has potentially destructive political ramifications for public government:**

- Machine learning can be unreliable
- Machine learning can be opaque
- Machine learning can be vulnerable to attack

# Safeguard against tyranny of the majority?

- Three principles for beneficial machines:
  - The machine's only objective is to maximize the realization of human preferences
  - The machine is initially uncertain about what those preferences are
  - The ultimate source of information about human preferences is human behavior

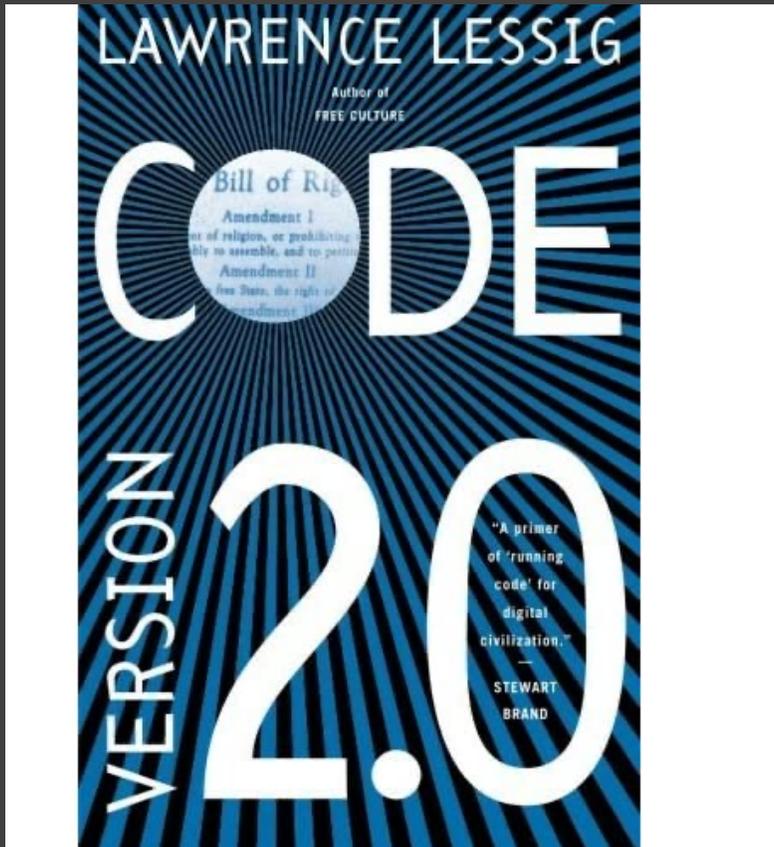


## IV. Book Proposal in Progress

How and why did  
America reach the point  
where multinational Big  
Tech is making decisions  
about the common good  
rather than the US  
government?

Coinbase's mission: "to use cryptocurrency to bring economic freedom to people all over the world."





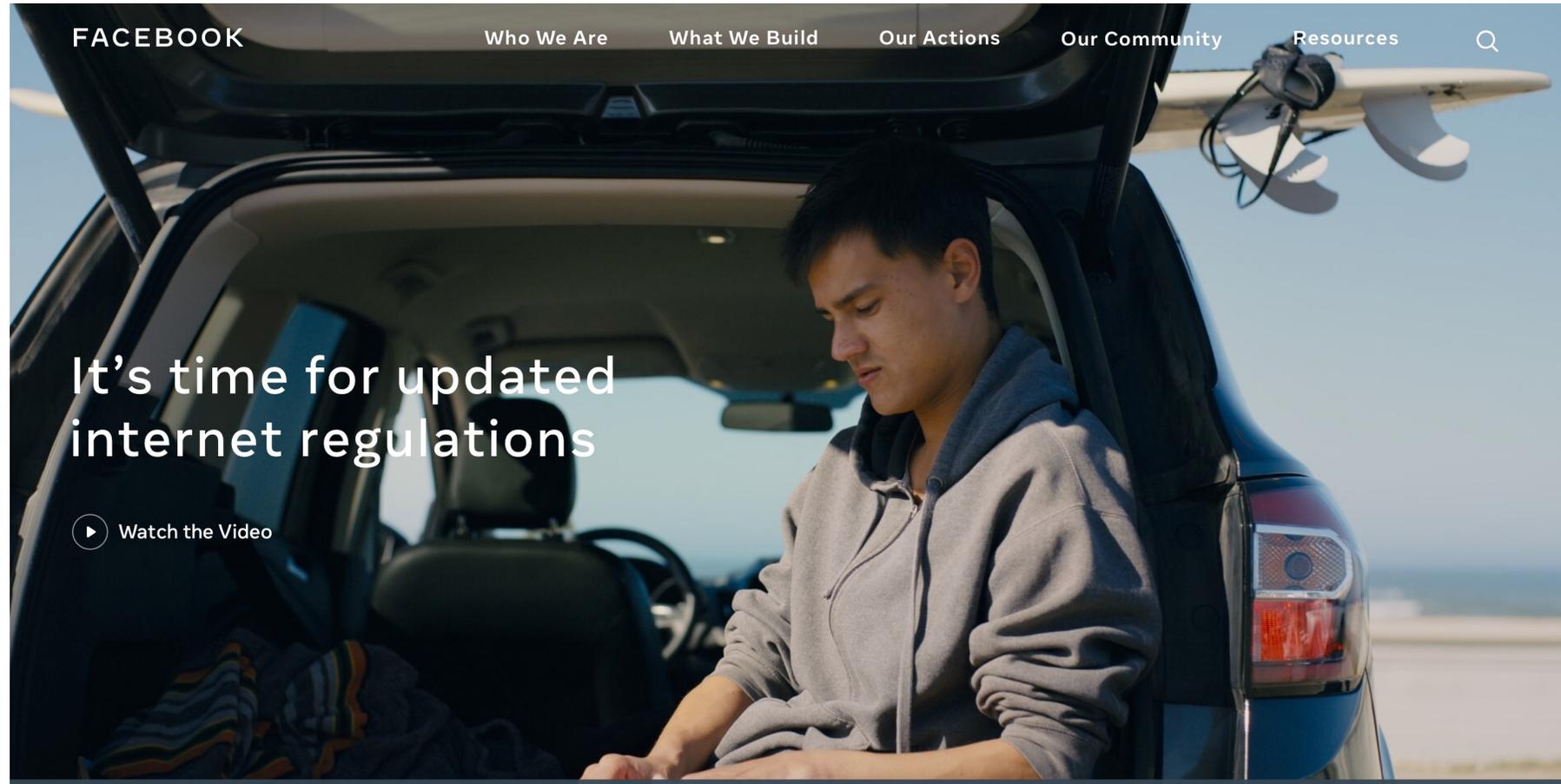
“CODE IS LAW”  
--Larry Lessig

“The key is to recognize that this change in the code is (unlike the laws of nature) crafted to reflect choices and values of the coders.” p. 110 (2006)

# Why the Second Gilded Age is not the First

- 1. Big Tech is global.**
- 2. The price of the product is zero.**
- 3. Physical space no longer matters.**

[https://about.fb.com/regulations/?utm\\_source=Newsletter&utm\\_medium=WashingtonPost&utm\\_campaign=USPublicAffairs&utm\\_content=Daily202Newsletter-OldPhone/Camera](https://about.fb.com/regulations/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=WashingtonPost&utm_campaign=USPublicAffairs&utm_content=Daily202Newsletter-OldPhone/Camera)



# Facebook Global Oversight Board



**Tawakkol Karman**

Nobel Peace Prize laureate who promoted non-violent Change in Yemen during the Arab Spring, co-founded the non profit Women Journalist Without Chains to promote freedom of expression and democratic rights, and was named one of Time's Most Rebellious Women in History

## Meet the Board

The Oversight Board is made up of independent Members from around the world who make binding decisions on what content Facebook and Instagram should allow or remove, based on respect for freedom of expression and human rights.

This first set of 20 members, rising to 40 over time, have experience in press freedom, digital rights, religious freedom, content moderation, online safety, internet censorship, platform transparency and technology.



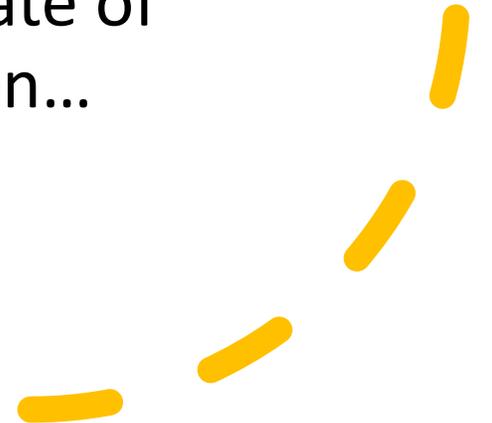
# Current Status of Trump's Megaphones May 2021

- Twitter and Google's YouTube followed Facebook in suspending Trump's account after the January 6 insurrection.

\*Twitter's ban is permanent.

\*YouTube's is indefinite.

\*Facebook's is in a state of suspended animation...



# Why does Big Tech have so much power?

The Big Five (Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Microsoft) control the platforms and infrastructure of daily business AND government.

The power of Big Tech is concentrated, whereas government power is diffuse due both to federalism and the degree to which government functions have been privatized.

Big Tech now has strong incentives to engage politically, both because their customers AND their employees do not want to be partners to social injustice and are using their voice to influence corporate as well as government policy.

# Will the new US Industrial Policy Bill Change the balance of power between Tech and Gov?

## *Senate Overwhelmingly Passes Bill to Bolster Competitiveness With China*

The wide margin of support reflected a sense of urgency among lawmakers in both parties about shoring up the technological and industrial capacity of the United States to counter Beijing.



New York Times, 10 June 2021

Conclusion: Rebooting Public Governance

Bottom line: This is a moment for new political thought unmatched since the age of liberal democratic and communist revolutions.

