



Facebook's Analytica Data Scandal Is Only Tip Of The Iceberg

Analytica was actually a minor deal. Facebook prostituted user data - including friends names, genders and birthdates - all over the world, even as far as the Chinese government-connected firm, Huawei. With Technocracy, its 'Follow the data, follow the power.' □ TN Editor

[Facebook](#) has admitted providing dozens of tech companies with special access to user data after publicly saying it restricted such access in 2015.

Facebook continued sharing information with 61 hardware and software makers after it said it discontinued the practice in May 2015, the social networking giant acknowledged in [747 pages of documents](#) delivered to Congress late Friday. The documents were in response to hundreds of questions posed to Facebook CEO [Mark Zuckerberg](#) by members of Congress in April.

Facebook said it granted a special "one-time" six-month extension to companies that ranged from [AOL](#) to package-delivery service United

Parcel Service to dating app Hinge so they could come into compliance with the social network's new privacy policy and create their own versions of Facebook for their devices. Data shared without users' knowledge included friends' names, genders and birth dates.

"We engaged companies to build integrations for a variety of devices, [operating systems](#) and other products where we and our partners wanted to offer people a way to receive Facebook or Facebook experiences," the company said in the documents. "These integrations were built by our partners, for our users, but approved by Facebook."

Facebook's documents also said it had discovered that five other companies "theoretically could have accessed limited friends' data" as a result of a beta test.

Facebook said in the documents it has ended 38 of the partnerships and plans to discontinue seven more by the end of July.

he disclosure was part of Facebook's second attempt to address questions posed to Zuckerberg in April by members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. In June, the social network [released its written responses](#) to some of the committee's questions, many of which Zuckerberg responded to during that hearing by saying he'd have his team "get back to" lawmakers with answers.

Zuckerberg's testimony before both the Senate and House in April came as the social network deal with a [scandal involving Cambridge Analytica](#), a digital consultancy that had ties to the Trump presidential campaign. Cambridge Analytica improperly accessed personal information on up to 87 million Facebook users, prompting [a backlash that raised questions](#) about whether Facebook can be trusted to protect the personal information of its 2 billion users.

The company has also been in the hot seat for not doing enough to prevent abuse from Russian trolls that posted misinformation and divisive content on the platform. The Russian activity was part of a program to meddle in the US presidential election and sow discord among voters.

Lawmakers in particular raised concerns over [Facebook giving Huawei special access to user data](#), particularly with Huawei, a company perennially in the crosshairs of the US government for security reasons.

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Technocracy In Europe Argues That Citizens Should Not Have A Say

In the face of populism and decline of Democracy, Technocrats argue that the population should not have its say because they fear their capacity for action will be frozen. □ TN Editor

IM/HD: We are today witnessing the advance of nationalist, xenophobic and extreme-right groups in every successive European election. They have even managed to enter government, for instance, in Italy. What's going on?

Etienne Balibar (EB): This trend has been ongoing for years and

reveals a crisis in the current form of European construction, which is probably irreversible. It is moving from one country to another, but the formula is the same: the effects of austerity measures on the poor and middle classes as well as the development of social and territorial inequalities are the logical result of so-called free and undistorted competition. These elements crystallise within the malaise created by the technocratic government of the EU and its member states. They foster nationalism, xenophobia and a loathing for democracy.

But ever since the Greek crisis and Brexit, it has also become clear that it is neither possible to leave the EU, nor to expel a member state. Obviously, some political forces believe in an exit from Europe, but no government can impose it. I think the situation will further deteriorate as we head towards a mutual neutralisation of hegemonic forces in Europe due to the lack of an alternative project on the part of new individuals, emergent groups or political movements. The consequences of this development are unpredictable.

IM/HD: Will we see an EU showdown with Italy, similar to the one in 2015?

EB: The statements of the president of the EU Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, are revealing. He has said that he wanted to avoid the errors made in 2015. But what errors is he referring to? Is he talking about the content, about the wilful destruction of an economy and a society? Or is he merely talking about the form this took, which hadn't respected the procedures? The European leaders know that they cannot show the same open contempt towards the choice made by the Italians with which they treated that of the Greeks. But I do find it telling that they want to avoid a conflict with the extreme-right while they deliberately sought it with the left-wing government.

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IM/HD: Do the suggestions for an overhaul of Europe put forward by French president Emmanuel Macron during his speech at the Sorbonne or the plans laid out by German Chancellor Angela Merkel really take

into account the full extent of the crisis that Europe is undergoing?

EB: What plan? It's mere window dressing. Of course cultural exchanges are important. But it won't take us very far if it's only to proclaim once again the common destiny of the European peoples. The crux of the matter is the EU economic and financial structures. Banks have already been consolidated. The project to transform the European solidarity mechanism into a monetary fund was inspired by the rules of the IMF. And Germany and the Netherlands still don't accept a common budget without guarantees against transfers.

Ever since the crisis of 2008, economists have repeatedly said that a single currency cannot work without a common budget. But Germany only accepts minor adjustments, and it is likely that the French government will head in the same direction. This will seal the sovereignty of financial institutions instead of limiting competition between European states and producers and thereby strengthening solidarity.

The project that is here outlined certainly doesn't attempt to ward off the splitting of Europe into hierarchical economic zones: attractive zones for foreign capital, subcontracting zones, zones for the supply of a cheap workforce and holiday zones for the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. What happens in Greece today is striking. The salaries and pensions have collapsed, current accounts are picking up, and the tourism industry is running at full capacity. The environmental and sociological consequences are terrifying.

IM/HD: Macron's Sorbonne speech at least mentioned the necessity to fight against the rise of the extreme right. Does nothing in the project that is currently under discussion pick up on this dimension?

EB: Frankly, I find it astonishing that no debate on the crisis besetting European construction is taking place in the European Parliament. Maybe it would be a cacophony, speeches with fascist leanings would be delivered by populist forces, some of which are already in power or about to enter government. But we can't ignore the fact that the crisis of the system is also its lack of democracy. The more profound it gets, the

more technocrats will argue that the population should not have its say. They fear that their capacity for action will be paralysed.

But what *are* they doing about it? I wonder when the time will be ripe for public debates about the problems of Europe on a European level and not in a small committee of the Commission or of the heads of states. The situation is certainly worrying enough for a debate to take place in the European Parliament without waiting for a common agreement between Macron and Merkel on a minimum programme.

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Flashback: Democracy Is Dying As Technocrats Watch

Discussing political philosophy, values, ethics and morality leave Technocrats out in the cold because all they can talk about is 10-point solutions to definable problems. Even global Technocracy, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, is a list of 17 goals and 169 targets. □
TN Editor

On Nov. 29, three weeks after Donald Trump's victory in the U.S. presidential election, the following chart, showing a precipitous decline in support for democracy around the world, went viral after [appearing](#) in the *New York Times*:

Plenty of public argument ensued about the validity of the underlying data. But there was hardly any comprehension among experts about why moral support for democracy might be eroding — in part, because there's good reason to think that experts are themselves to blame.

This is most obvious in the case of Trump, who devoted a large share of his presidential campaign not just to attacking democratic norms but also to attacking the technocratic experts who have come to symbolize democracy in the United States.

I have no sympathy for Trump's repulsive disregard for facts, truth, and legitimate expertise. Yet he was canny in identifying how both parties' technocratic mindset — their approaching every problem with a five-point plan designed to produce evidence-based deliverables — had left democracy vulnerable. Trump knew that if he waged a war on democratic values, the technocrats who now monopolize the country's political elite would be incapable of fighting back.

Technocrats have always shown little interest in fights over fundamental values. Their work proceeds from the assumption that everyone — or at least all the people who truly matter — already share the same enlightened commitment to democratic values. The only debate they are concerned about is over evidence on “what works” among policy inputs to produce the desired measurable outputs, like higher wages and GDP, less poverty, less crime and terrorism, or less war.

The problem occurs when some people turn out not to share those enlightened values and insist on challenging them. Technocrats, in these situations, don't know what to say because they can't rely on evidence to make their case. So when technocrats are all we have to defend democracy, fights over fundamental values become embarrassingly one-sided.

Hillary Clinton was the perfect case in point, a politician so technocratic

that she even embarrassed other technocrats. Her campaign website listed bullet-point plans to solve 41 different measurable problems, each one containing multiple sub-plans to solve multiple sub-problems. There was even a plan to protect the interests of dogs, cats, and horses. She almost reached the level of that *reductio ad absurdum* of global technocracy, the widely ridiculed [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) with their 17 goals and 169 targets.

Maybe Clinton's website shouldn't matter that much, but her speeches often read off the same long list of planned solutions to many different problems. Mario Cuomo's dictum was to campaign in poetry and to govern in prose. Clinton's campaign wonkiness didn't even reach prose.

So Clinton was not the best candidate possible to answer Trump's terrifying frontal assault on the core enlightenment value that all are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Trump called Mexicans rapists and demanded a ban on Muslims entering the country. Clinton countered with plans for a "comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to full and equal citizenship," including measures to "fix the family visa backlog," to "end the three- and 10-year bars," and have "targeted" immigration enforcement.

Trump bragged about grabbing women by the "pussy." Clinton planned to address "issues that affect women's lives," such as "family issues, economic issues" that affect "our future competitiveness," promoting "pay transparency across the economy," granting "paid leave," and ensuring "quality, affordable child care."

Trump threatened to put more black people in jail with "law and order." Clinton's plan for racial justice was to "[r]eform our broken criminal justice system by reforming sentencing laws and policies" — thereby "strengthening the bonds of trust between communities and police, and more" — and to "develop greener and more resilient infrastructure," as well as to "double America's investment in Early Head Start."

If Americans listening to the yearlong debate between Trump and Clinton felt less moral devotion to democracy, could you blame them? Clinton's answer to Trump's assault on democratic values had about as

much moral grandeur as the rhetoric of the ethanol lobby. And Clinton's constant targeted appeals to women, gays, blacks, and Hispanics sounded more like an alliance of interest groups rather than a defense of equality for all and was thus vulnerable to Trump's insinuations to white audiences that Democrats didn't care about them. The Clinton campaign's rhetoric was a long way from "*all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing ... 'Free at Last!'*"

Technocrats do not even have a good answer for technocratic-sounding attacks on democracy. Technocrats' defense of democracy on the basis of "what works" was always vulnerable because the anti-democratic side was not going to be maximally scrupulous about the evidence in any case. It also makes liberal values hostages to fortune. Whether because of the incompetence of experts or just a string of bad luck, democracies haven't been performing very well lately. The foreign-policy experts guided wars on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq that seemingly made terrorism worse. Domestic economists gave us the 2008 financial crisis — and a response afterward that bailed out banks too big to fail but treated families losing homes as too small to care about. Dictator-run China is taking over ever larger chunks of the world economy while U.S. wages stagnate.

Experts often cannot agree on "what works" or even what already happened. Some experts could still credibly argue that in the long run democracies worldwide outperform dictatorships on average, but there is disagreement, and few have the patience to wait for long-run world averages to reassert themselves. Which is why the principal defense of democratic values must be that they are desirable in themselves as values — something technocrats are not trained to do.

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