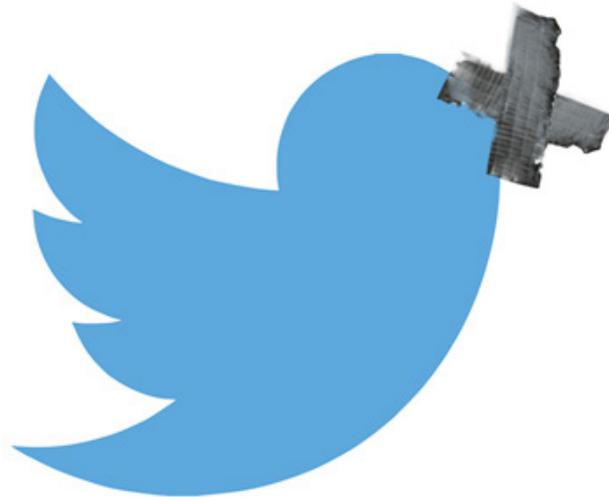


Twitter's Merkel Tactics or Merkel's Twitter Tactics?

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Is Twitter cooperating with Germany's new crackdown on social-media speech because otherwise it risks steep penalties? Or is Twitter just doing what it would do anyway?

When Germany's new law against unwelcome speech went into effect this year, many Germans protested. "Please spare us the



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thought police!" was the headline in one top-selling paper, *Bild*.

The law requires social-media sites to block unapproved content — which includes "hate speech" and "fake news" — within 24 hours or face exorbitant fines. (Of course, every piece of news, no matter how well or shabbily reported, gets decried as hateful "fake news" by somebody.) Under the new law, Twitter suspended the accounts of two officials of

the political party Alternative for Germany who tweeted that Muslim men have violent proclivities. Hateful, fake, inexact, whatever, such tweets by themselves threaten nobody and violate nobody's rights.

Did Twitter act only under duress here?

Well, in the U.S., the company is not ordered by our government to muzzle anybody except perhaps terrorists or persons directly instigating a crime. Yet Twitter regularly suspends or bans users whose speech it considers objectionable. Moreover, it has become notorious for especially targeting speech that can be regarded as on the right end of the political spectrum — while leaving intact the tweet-speech of left-wing micro-bloggers no matter how threatening or abusive.

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Instead, it is Twitter itself that should become involved . . . and drop its double standard.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.