

# Why is Amazon deleting negative reviews of Hillary Clinton's new book?

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15 September 2017

Amazon, the world's largest online reseller, has deleted over 1,000 negative comments on Hillary Clinton's newly-released book, *What Happened*, to give the book a five-star rating.

The book's Amazon user rating is higher than the most popular editions of *War and Peace* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, widely considered to be among the greatest books ever written.

Early on Wednesday, the day of its release, the book had an extremely low rating of two and a half stars, based on nearly 1,700 reviews. But that figure was slashed to just over 500 later in the day, and stands at 623 at the time of this writing. The rating shot up to 4.9, rounded up to five stars in the graphic shown to users.

Amazon sought to justify this blatant act of mass censorship. "We do however have mechanisms in place to ensure that the voices of many do not drown out the voices of a few and we remove customer reviews that violate our community guidelines," an Amazon spokesperson told *Fortune* magazine.

As a result of these actions, the book has just 21 "critical" reviews and 602 "positive" ones. This is despite the fact that the top seven most popular customer reviews gave it one or two stars.

As a work of political writing, Clinton's book does not deserve the perfect score that Amazon gives it.

Leaving aside interpretation and opinion, its description of the key events of the 2016 election presents a level of selectiveness that borders on falsification. It ignores the widely-documented bias inside the Democratic National Committee toward the Clinton campaign, including the rigging of several debates, which led to the resignation of Debbie Wasserman Schultz as the head of the DNC, and engages in wild conspiracy theories about Russian

intervention into the election campaign that it does not substantiate.

About half the book is filler, reading as though it was culled by speechwriters from recycled campaign rhetoric. The only parts that the reader can reliably infer were written by the candidate herself are the barbs of vitriol scattered throughout denouncing political allies and enemies alike.

Why, then, has Amazon intervened so aggressively to promote it? While commercial aims cannot be ruled out, Amazon's concerns are primarily political, and its removal of the critical comments constitute an act of political censorship.

Clinton's book is a manifesto for the growing drive by major corporations, working with the intelligence agencies and governments, to censor free speech on the Internet.

It provides the most comprehensive account to date of the narrative that Donald Trump's victory was the result of a nefarious "Russian plot to sabotage my campaign and help elect Trump," which she referred to as "the political equivalent of 9/11."

This "attack" took the form of the propagation of "fake news," which is a term bestowed by Clinton upon any fact that she deems embarrassing to her campaign. To prevent the propagation of such "fake news," corporations must be empowered to block it.

She writes, "Much of what we see online is governed by a series of algorithms that determine what content appears in our Facebook and Twitter feeds, Google search results, and so on. One factor for these algorithms is popularity. If lots of users share the same post or click on the same link—and if key 'influencers' with large personal networks do as well—then it's more likely to pop up on your screen."

She adds, "Companies such as Facebook, Twitter,

and Google have already begun taking steps—adjusting algorithms, deactivating bot networks, and partnering with fact-checkers—but they must do more.”

Those particularly susceptible to “fake news,” she writes, are those who opposed her on the left. “The Russians made a particular effort to target voters who had supported Bernie Sanders in the primaries,” Clinton writes, “including by planting fake news on pro-Sanders message boards and Facebook groups and amplifying attacks by so-called Bernie Bros.”

Clinton warns, ominously, “This can all happen again if we don’t stop it,” urging politicians to push harder on the “Russia investigation.”

Since the election, Facebook and Google (whose former CEO she praises as a key ally of her campaign) have both published documents stating their intent to crack down on “fake news.” Google has demonstratively acted on these intentions, slashing the traffic of left-wing, progressive, and anti-war websites, including the WSWS, whose traffic from the search engine has fallen by two-thirds.

Clinton’s book, aside from constituting a bitter and subjective rant, is a key component in the drive to censor free speech on the Internet. It has been carefully choreographed with statements by the intelligence agencies, high-ranking members of Congress such as Democratic Senator Mark Warner, the ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, and “investigations” by the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

This is why Amazon, a giant monopoly that fears growing discontent among its own highly-exploited workforce as much as it does the broader disaffection with the right-wing politics of the Democratic Party, is censoring criticism of Clinton’s book.



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