

# US Congress holds anti-China witch-hunt at TikTok hearing

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On Thursday, the US House Energy and Commerce Committee put on a five-hour spectacle of xenophobia, anticommunism and anti-Chinese invective, focused on demands to ban TikTok, the sixth most popular social network in the world.

During the hearing, China was repeatedly presented as a “threat,” an “adversary” and a “danger.” The hearing capped a month in which the US made major steps to provoke a war with China by moving to abandon the one-China policy and “strategic ambiguity” that have governed Sino-American relations for decades.

Committee Chairman Cathy McMorris Rodgers began the hearing with an unhinged, John Birch Society-style rant, recalling General Jack D. Ripper’s ravings about “our precious bodily fluids” in Stanley Kubrick’s film, *Dr. Strangelove*.

“TikTok is a weapon by the Chinese Communist Party to spy on you, manipulate what you see, and exploit your future generation,” she said. “From the data it collects to the content it controls, TikTok is a grave threat of foreign influence in American life.... Banning your platform will address the immediate threats.”

Rodgers added, “We do not trust TikTok will ever embrace American values, values for freedom, human rights and innovation.”

The statements by Rodgers, an anti-abortion fanatic who supported the effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election, were warmly greeted by the committee’s Democrats.

“I agree with much of what you just said,” declared the committee’s ranking member, Democrat Frank Pallone. TikTok is “controlled by its Beijing communist-based parent company ByteDance.” He added, “Now the combination of TikTok’s Beijing

communist [sic] based China ownership and its popularity exacerbates its danger to our country.”

Rodgers and other members accused China, without substantiation, of using TikTok as a means of surveilling the US public on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party.

They did not evince the slightest self-awareness that they represent a government that operates the world’s largest warrantless surveillance system. The US National Security Agency’s explicit goal is “total information awareness,” to “collect it all, know it all, process it all and exploit it all.”

By contrast, the members of the committee could not demonstrate a single instance of the Chinese government using TikTok to do anything remotely like what the US government is demonstrably proven to do every single day.

In the course of the five-hour hearing, in which dozens of members of Congress ranted and talked over Chew, there was no actual examination of what a ban on TikTok would look like, or the mechanics thereof.

At a separate hearing Thursday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged to “end” TikTok. During testimony to the House Appropriations Committee, Blinken was asked by Republican Congressman Ken Buck whether TikTok posed “a threat to United States security.”

Blinken replied in the affirmative. Buck added, “Shouldn’t a threat to US security be banned?” To this, Blinken replied, “It should be ended one way or another. And there are different ways of doing that.”

Given that TikTok is freely accessible on any computer or mobile device with a web browser, banning the service would require either criminally prosecuting people who use it or the creation of a national firewall that prevents users from accessing

websites by government fiat.

These actions would be an unprecedented attack on the freedom of expression. They would make reading or listening to certain content illegal, create a national list of censored websites, or both.

Earlier this month, the White House endorsed the RESTRICT Act, passed by a group of bipartisan senators led by Mark Warner, a leading advocate of internet censorship, which would create mechanisms for the Commerce Department to ban websites and other services in the name of national security.

There are two aims of the US drive to destroy TikTok. First, the United States is seeking to undermine China's economic development, which threatens the United States' global economic hegemony.

To this end, the Trump and then Biden administrations have sought, with significant success, to cripple the international operations of Chinese corporations Huawei, ZTE and now, TikTok.

But the attack on the freedom of expression of the American population is an equally significant goal of the campaign against TikTok.

The Trump administration's 2018 National Security Strategy, which proclaimed the doctrine of "great power conflict," asserted that the US conflict with China requires "the seamless integration of multiple elements of national power—diplomacy, information, economics, finance, intelligence, law enforcement and military."

This totalitarian integration of the "law enforcement and military" and the information sphere forms the framework of the US effort to ban TikTok. All aspects of social and economic life are to be brought under state control in the name of "great-power competition."

Thursday's spectacle is a warning of just how committed the entire US political establishment is toward escalating the US conflict with China, and using this conflict as a framework to attack fundamental democratic rights.



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