

Biden-Harris tech policy: militarism and censorship

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1 December 2020

In the three weeks since former Vice President Joseph Biden and Senator Kamala Harris declared victory in the 2020 presidential election, it has become clear that the Democrats are assembling a right-wing administration that represents the interests of corporate America, the financial elite and US military-intelligence.

The truth of this assessment is demonstrated by the tech policy of the president-elect, which has been articulated in policy statements, media reports and comments made by Biden himself prior to the November 3 elections.

Although tech policy is not identified as a top priority on the Biden-Harris transition website, it is evident that the relationship of the new administration with Silicon Valley is a critical element of the overall of strategy of the Democrats.

According to a report by CBS News on November 11, the Biden transition team is being advised by a “cadre of tech industry types, including executives with political data company Alloy, formed by LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman, and Google chairperson Eric Schmidt’s firm Rebellion Defense.”

After leaving Google in 2019, the multi-billionaire Eric Schmidt has become an evangelist for the integration of big tech with the US military. Schmidt sits on at least two government advisory boards that promote the use of artificial intelligence technologies by the Defense Department and he has invested in military tech startups such as Rebellion Defense.

Rebellion Defense is a Pentagon contractor that specializes in analyzing video filmed by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The company website says, “Artificial Intelligence is redefining the art of the possible. Consumers worldwide benefit from it—but our adversaries are using it against us. Our national defense

urgently needs to harness Silicon Valley’s best technologies and talent to address this challenge. We help our defense and national security agencies unlock the power of data across all domains. ... Rebellion Defense builds for the warfighter.”

Meanwhile, members of the incoming Biden-Harris cabinet are being drawn from private consulting and investment firms with deep ties to the technology sector and the military. According to a report in the *New York Times* on Sunday, both Biden’s choice for Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, and one of the leading candidates for defense secretary, Michele Flournoy, are co-founders of WestExec Advisors.

The *Times* report says that among WestExec’s clients is a firm called Shield AI, “a San Diego-based company that makes surveillance drones and signed a contract worth as much as \$7.2 million with the Air Force this year to deliver artificial intelligence tools to help drones operate in combat missions.”

Meanwhile, it is clear that a Biden-Harris administration will be committed to a further suppression of online speech through various forms of censorship. On multiple occasions during the 2020 elections, the Biden campaign demanded the social media platforms use censorship against the Trump campaign.

A three-page open letter from Biden-Harris campaign manager Jen O’Malley Dillon on September 28 to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg demanded the world’s largest social media platform “protect our democracy” by removing “disinformation” and taking down “Mr. Trump’s posts.”

As we have explained on the *World Socialist Web Site*, the use of censorship against the far right is part of the preparations by big tech and the state to censor socialists and the working class as a whole.

Throughout the 2020 elections, the Democratic Party-backed campaign by the tech monopolies against “disinformation” was used to block online political discussion about the socialist alternative to the two parties of American capitalism, the campaign of the Socialist Equality Party candidates Joseph Kishore for US President and Norissa Santa Cruz for US Vice President.

According to a report in the *New York Times* on November 10, the Democrats are pursuing the regulatory and legal offensive against big tech that was launched by the Trump administration and has been underway for the past year or more. The *Times* noted that bipartisan support for government control of the tech industry “has grown sharply during the Trump administration, and shows no signs of going away as Democrats regain control of the White House.”

Reflecting a shift within the entire ruling elite regarding state control of big tech, the *Times* writes, “Mr. Biden is expected to take on the Silicon Valley giants on misinformation, privacy and antitrust, in a sharp departure from the policies pursued while he was vice president under Mr. Obama.”

Among the initiatives that a Biden-Harris administration will pursue, according to the *Times*, are the antitrust lawsuit against Google announced by Trump’s Attorney General William Barr on October 20, and the efforts by President Trump, the Department of Justice and leading Republicans to overturn the Section 230 immunity from prosecution provisions for online service providers.

While Biden was careful not to discuss his tech policy during the election campaign—lest he might reveal that it was indistinguishable from Trump’s—the candidate did let on that he was for abolishing the Section 230 protections that prevent prosecution of tech companies for content posted on their platforms by users, a core provision that protects online free speech.

In an interview with the *New York Times* in January, Biden said that the Section 230 protections “should immediately be revoked” for Facebook and “other platforms.” He went on, “It should be revoked because it is not merely an internet company. It is propagating falsehoods they know to be false.”

As for Vice President-elect Harris, having come from California’s Bay Area, she has longstanding connections with Silicon Valley powerbrokers,

including Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and Sean Parker, the cofounder of Napster and the first president of Facebook. Harris has raised campaign funds from tech billionaires for her previous campaigns for office and she has family members, friends and former staff members who are “part of the revolving door between government and the tech industry,” according to a recent report in the *New York Times*.

With a combination of government regulation of big tech and close connections with the financial elite of Silicon Valley, the Biden-Harris team will be able to pursue a strategy of undermining the ability of the public to utilize the platforms to organize its struggles, while protecting the vast fortunes being generated on Wall Street by the trillion dollar corporations.



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