

THE GREAT MISDIRECT

The Trump-Tech Tie-Up Is Now Complete

Convincing those most affected by economic hardship to blame other struggling people rather than the billionaire tech elite hoovering up societal wealth worked, writes **Kyle Taylor**

The US election saw Donald Trump securing a decisive victory – not only through the Electoral College system but, to the shock of many, in the popular vote as well.

In the days that followed, the same pundits who, in the run-up to the election, were praising Kamala Harris' campaign strategy offered supposedly definitive reasons for her defeat. Yet, much of the analysis was based on a troubling assumption: that a shared reality still exists and that Americans made an informed choice at the polls.

Though every citizen has the right to vote as they see fit, in a democracy, we also hope that those choices are based on reliable information. Unfortunately, this does not appear to have been the case.

In a world driven by Big Tech and the billionaires behind it – who operate a web of companies with intersecting, sometimes opaque, agendas – it has become disturbingly apparent that this outcome was what they desired. And they did nearly everything within their power to ensure that it happened.

The unprecedented flood of misinformation, amplified by algorithms designed to keep people engaged rather than informed, created an ecosystem in which reality itself was up for grabs – in which a meaningful, informed, democratic decision became almost impossible.

Polling indicated that the major concerns for voters included democracy, crime, the economy, and immigration. Though other issues resonated within different demographics, these were consistently cited as top priorities, particularly for wavering voters.

The right linked these concerns, claiming that sky-high crime rates were a direct result of illegal immigrants pouring across the border, allegedly committing crimes, taking jobs, and even voting illegally for Democrats. None of this was true, but it didn't matter – Ipsos polling conducted on 1 to 3 November showed that voters with a fact-based understanding of these issues overwhelmingly voted for Harris. Those who believed these falsehoods, however, overwhelmingly opted for Trump.

This confirms the success of the 'Great Misdirect' – convincing those most affected by economic hardship to blame other struggling people rather than the billionaire tech elite hoovering up societal wealth at historic rates.

The big problem is that many people now get their 'news' online.

Although platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok were rife with misinformation during the election campaign, Elon Musk's X (formerly Twitter) remains, despite its shrinking user base and near-bankruptcy, the platform where the political and journalistic elite believe themselves to be tracking the pulse of public opinion. This information then trickles down through other platforms and traditional media.

In reality, the issues affecting people – the cost of living crisis and crumbling public services – stem from the hyper-consolidation of wealth among the billionaire class, and the wealthiest among them, who own tech and media empires, had a significant stake in a Trump victory. Within 24 hours of his win, the personal wealth of the 10 richest people in the world increased by \$64 billion, nine of whom are tech billionaires, according to *Bloomberg*. There's no doubt, then, that Big Tech moguls have a tremendous amount to gain from Trump's return to power.

Amazon boss and *The Washington Post* owner Jeff Bezos – the world's second-wealthiest man behind Musk – added \$7 billion to his fortune overnight. It's little wonder he reportedly instructed the *Post* not to endorse Kamala Harris, just hours after executives from his aerospace company, Blue Origin, met Trump.

But Elon Musk – now Trump's 'government efficiency' advisor – was the biggest winner, seeing his wealth swell by more than \$25 billion as a result of Trump's win.

Buying Twitter, rebranding it as X, and using it as a platform to campaign for Trump appears to have all been part of a strategy to create a world in which Musk's companies – Tesla, SpaceX, and more – can thrive. Just days after the election, Musk reportedly joined Trump on a call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, apparently cementing his role as perhaps the most powerful private citizen in US history.

The result is a perfect marriage of vested interests. The Trump-tech tie-up is complete.

Trump seeks the power to rule as an authoritarian, all while avoiding legal accountability for his many transgressions. Meanwhile, the libertarian-leaning 'Tech Broligarchy', eager to maximise the returns on their monopolistic empires, see Trump's hands-off approach to regulation as the green light to advance their technologies and build unregulated artificial intelligence

infrastructure according to their own tech-driven philosophies. All in the name of profit and ideology, and regardless of the potential threats to society.

For those with a sense of history, these moves carry an unsettling resonance. Until others recognise the stark reality we now face, the architects of this digital dystopia and their enablers will proceed – free from constraints – while the rest of society is left to grapple with the implications.

Kyle Taylor completed a visiting fellowship at the Global Peace Centre in Tokyo, focused on social media's impact on human rights and democratic systems. He is the author of *Byline Books' The Little Black Book of Social Media*

Within 24 hours of his win, the personal wealth of the 10 richest people in the world increased by \$64 billion, nine of whom are tech billionaires

