

TikTok and Journalism

•A thorough report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/how-publishers-are-learning-create-and-distribute-news-tiktok>

See also:

<https://digitalmediaknowledge.com/medias/tiktok-un-nouveau-terrain-dexperimentation-pour-le-journalisme-dinformation/>

<https://pressgazette.co.uk/news/journalism-on-tiktok/>

Document 1 - News enthusiasts turn to TikTok to chart new paths in media

Reporting and writing by Sheila Dang, Reuters, June 15, 2023

<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/tiktok-journalism/>

To make sense of the unprecedented events of Jan. 6, 2021, Vitus “V” Spehar did what no traditional journalist would do - crawl under a desk and begin recording a video for TikTok.

Like others who watched on TV as the storming of the U.S. Capitol unfolded, Spehar, who uses the pronoun they, felt the need to talk about it. However, “I didn’t want to make people think that I was an expert,” said Spehar, who filmed the TikTok video from their home in Rochester, New York. “So I thought, where’s a safe place to have a conversation?”

Two years later, the “Under the Desk News” TikTok account attracts nearly 3 million followers, who appreciate Spehar’s gentler take on the news of the day. The show avoids true crime, while focusing on subjects in which people can take action. Spehar tries to end each video on a lighter note.

Since the surge in popularity of the short-form video app at the start of the pandemic, people like Spehar have flocked to the platform to discuss, document and share what’s happening in the world. Many call themselves creators or influencers. They do not aspire to be traditional journalists.

What unites these news creators is a desire to talk about their world in an authentic way. That has resonated with millions of young followers, the elusive but highly sought-after next generation of media consumers who are unlikely to watch cable news or read a newspaper.

By shunning convention, these news creators are attempting to craft a new narrative for journalism at a time of blistering decline for a business in dire need of reinvention. Rather than regurgitate a rundown of daily headlines, some choose to connect with their audience directly in the comment section of videos, and others wear their viewpoints like a badge.

Josh Helfgott, a TikTok user with 5.5 million followers, posts a recurring series of videos called “Gay News” discussing current events relevant to LGBTQ viewers. His inspiration for his account is his 13-year-old self, who felt isolated growing up as gay teen. “I want to inspire people or just make anyone feel less alone,” Helfgott said. His news videos, which routinely receive upward of 1 million views, have covered everything from U.S. President Joe Biden hosting a Pride celebration at the White House to the Human Rights Campaign declaring a state of emergency for LGBTQ Americans. “There are very few stories centered around LGBTQ issues that are heard by general society,” Helfgott said.

Fighting feelings of helplessness and isolation has inspired other channels. Kristy Drutman launched climate change-focused “Brown Girl Green” and said she began posting on TikTok and Instagram because people of color are rarely represented in discussions about the environment.

“I try to keep up with climate news and news that can give people hope,” she said. “I think about solutions.” One of Drutman’s TikTok videos explained how people can take advantage of tax credits to make energy-efficient updates to their homes, while another pointed to an international climate change report that showed it was not too late for nations to take steps to combat a heating planet.

Where's the money?

35 Traditional news media are in deep crisis. For every exception, like *the New York Times*' surging revenue for digital subscriptions, there are more horror stories of stagnating traffic and declining readers and viewers. So far this year, more than 1,900 jobs have been cut in the U.S. news industry, already surpassing the 1,808 jobs cut in all of 2022, according to a report from job placement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. The one-time darlings of news in the social media age, like BuzzFeed News and Vice, have died or on life support.

40 Meanwhile, TikTok is the fastest-growing social media platform for news, according to a report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism published on Tuesday. Twenty percent of 18-to-24-year-olds use TikTok to learn about current events, up 5 percentage points from last year, the report said.

Lisa Remillard, a 20-year veteran of broadcast journalism who has been a TV anchor in Tallahassee, Florida, and San Diego, California, hopes to parlay this growth into a new business model that could help independent journalists earn a living on TikTok and other social media platforms.

45 Remillard founded BEONDTV, a lifestyle and entertainment digital media company.

Since 2020, she has also functioned as a one-person newsroom, filming videos to walk her 2.5 million TikTok followers through the biggest national news each day, such as the U.S. debt ceiling deal and the possibility of a TikTok ban in the United States due to the platform's Chinese ownership. "In my deepest, darkest hopes and dreams, I wish that could be the result of all this hard work," Remillard said, expressing her hope for a new business model for independent journalists.

50 As Spehar's "Under the Desk News" began to take off, the *Los Angeles Times* hired them for six months last year to be the face of the news organization's TikTok account. The benefit was mutual: Spehar learned how journalism is produced, while the publisher benefited from Spehar's TikTok skills.

55 Spehar's advice to journalists: build a following on TikTok that will pay for their reporting on subscription platforms like Substack, where some writers have carved out lucrative careers. "Pick the world that you want to show people and tell them exactly what stories you cover," Spehar said.

More general impact of TikTok

Document 2 - AN INCOMPLETE GUIDE – Love, Hate or Fear It, How TikTok Has Changed America

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/04/18/business/media/tiktok-ban-american-culture.html?unlocked_article_code=1.qE0.wk91.LLaSsM-lxED-&smid=url-share

Document 3 - TikTok is not the enemy of journalism. It's just a new way of reaching people.

Adapted from Chris Stokel-Walker, *The Guardian*, 23 July 2022

Twenty-three million people in the UK use TikTok every month. Enhanced by the pandemic and its impact on remote work, apps like TikTok and Instagram have become the digital equivalent of the watercooler. It's where we talk about Love Island, the latest soaps, the dysfunction in our government and what's going on in the world.

So why are we so surprised that it's a place people turn to for news?

Ofcom's latest report on news consumption in the UK, showing that TikTok is the fastest-growing source of news for adults, has been met with incredulity and worries about the death of "traditional journalism".

But rather than seeing it as a threat, old media bods should see it as a natural evolution. News finds us in the best possible way, and always has. Whether it's the switch from newspapers to TV bulletins that summed up a day in an evening, to the constant updates of 24-hour TV channels and social media updates, the way journalism has been presented has always been in flux.

When radio, then television, first began to dabble in reporting on the world, newspaper folk worried that the speed and immediacy of broadcast media would put paid to print. Decades on, print is still with us. Nightly news broadcasts were also due to go the way of the dodo when CNN first started transmitting 24 hours a day, yet appointment viewing remains relatively strong for well-packaged summaries of the day's news. And all of them were due to be overtaken by the internet. At each inflection point in the evolution of journalism, the arguments were the same: the medium was so different, and the speed at which information was gathered and imparted, that journalism was going to the dogs. The old ways of presenting news were always the best – until the new thing came along, the world didn't end and, actually, people preferred the alternative.

Now, TikTok does things differently – in style, format and how it presents videos to users – than even other tech platforms, and so was always going to be a more significant break from what's gone before. It also has a different cadence, language and style of presentation to even other social media platforms, which is why it is less possible for news outlets to simply recut their existing TV or Facebook video for the platform.

But all that doesn't necessarily mean dumbing down, nor is it the end of journalistic values. Journalism's old guard has latched on to one key stat to make its case: less than a third of youngsters trust what they see on TikTok – less than half the proportion that trust TV news.

While news outlets such as the *Washington Post* have successfully migrated to the platform, producing idiosyncratic videos that take a wry stance on the day's news, most media platforms have steered clear of TikTok to date.

That leaves a vacuum that individuals, who are often not trained journalists, have filled. Nearly twice as many users (44%) say they get information from other people they follow on the app as opposed to news organisations (24%). When confronted with stories such as the Amber Heard-Johnny Depp defamation trial, TikTok's "news" output can often come up short, becoming a talking shop for scurrilous gossip and painfully off-piste over-analysis.

By the same token, however, the app came into its own as a news-gathering and presenting tool in the early days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ordinary Ukrainians picked up their smartphones and documented the atrocities of the Russian regime, their footage viewed nearly a million times a minute in the war's early days.

The reality is that TikTok is where the audience is these days: a billion worldwide. So it makes sense for news outlets to be there too. Broadcasting and journalism industries that pride themselves on reacting quickly and giving the audience what they want should avoid format snobbishness. What upstart news organisations have recognised is that news has never been set in amber. After all, we no longer present the news in dinner jackets and bow ties, because the audience decided it was old hat. (685 words)

Concerns about TikTok

Document 4 - What are we worrying about when we worry about TikTok?

Samantha Floreani, *The Observer*, Sat 21 Jan 2023

Sensationalist headlines and reactionary calls for stricter moderation risk missing the forest for the trees

Is there any platform that creates as much collective angst as TikTok?

For some, TikTok is just a silly video app. For others, it's a symbol of our most potent social and political fears. What are young people engaging with? Isn't it collecting a huge amount of data? Are they being dragged down dangerous rabbit holes? And is China spying on them?

5 Concerns about data privacy, hyper-personalisation and exposure to content that could be harmful are all reasonable. But sensationalist headlines, reactionary calls for stricter content moderation – or banning the app entirely – risk missing the forest for the trees.

10 TikTok is not some strange aberration; it's the logical next-step on the pathway of platform capitalism that was laid down by those that came before it. It's a product of a privatised internet that best serves applications ultimately designed not for people, but for profit.

I confess: I really like TikTok. For me, it's become a place of joy and absurdity among the rage, horrors, and tedium of its competitors. As a digital rights and privacy advocate, admitting this feels like a dirty little secret.

The thing is, it's possible to simultaneously hate a platform but love the people on it and the things they create.

15 But my experience of TikTok is likely to be completely different to yours; that's by design. TikTok's commitment to algorithmically curated content is one of the reasons it stands out from the rest. The "For You" page is responsible for its popularity and profitability – but also its harm.

As with all social media, there are myriad horrendous marks against TikTok. From TraumaTok and content encouraging disordered eating and self-harm to influencer propaganda attempting to recruit Gen Z to the military, there is no shortage of reasons to worry.

20 There are also plenty of examples of TikTok being used for social good. Labourers have used it to gain visibility and criticise their working conditions; it's the home of a growing Indigenous creator community; and many young people use it to organise and amplify their voices on critical political issues.

25 What are we really worrying about when we worry about TikTok? Most concerns seem to be misdirected anxieties about the broader status quo of the platform ecosystem. Almost all widely used digital platforms threaten the privacy and security of users. They share information with various governments, have the capacity for cultural and ideological influence, and exploit user data for profit.

30 TikTok has shifted emphasis away from mass virality and toward maximum niche-ification. Once it has determined what keeps someone on the app, it takes them deep into the obscure content trenches. Perhaps they lingered on a couple of sad heartbreak videos and now they're being bombarded with depression content, or re-watching a controversial political video led them to conspiracy theories. Wherever they end up, once there, it can be incredibly hard to get out.

This is partially why online anonymity is so important – it gives people the grace of exploration and inquiry. It allows people to make choices, change their minds, learn, and grow. TikTok doesn't make room for this kind of internet exploration; it makes it impossible to have curiosity without consequence.

35 TikTok isn't alone in using engagement and recommender algorithms to curate personalised content feeds, but it does take it to the extreme. This is profitable both because it keeps people scrolling and because there's very little difference between being able to personalise content and personalise ads.

40 Because of its monumental success, other apps are attempting to follow in TikTok's footsteps, giving us a glimpse into the current trajectory of social media. Instagram recently faced backlash when it started prioritising recommended short-form videos, and just last week, Twitter made the algorithmic feed the default. With a business model this lucrative, it's not enough to fight TikTok alone.

45 Let's go down our own rabbit hole: if you're worried about algorithms showing people problematic content, you should be worried about targeted advertising. The logic of personalised engagement is the same. And if you're worried about targeted advertising, you should be worried about the way data is collected for profit under surveillance capitalism. That's what enables it.

And if you're worried about surveillance capitalism, you should be worried about regular old capitalism. Profit is what drives companies toward invasive data collection and developing algorithms that keep people on their apps for longer.

50 But online spaces run for profit aren't preordained. This is a choice, and we could make a different one. What might social networking look like if the incentive to make money was removed? What might be built if it was in the hands of the people, with the motive being connection, creativity, or community, rather than market competition?

55 This is not a call to apathy, but rather, to think bigger. It's an invitation to take those concerns about TikTok and reorient them. It's time to broaden our collective political imagination of the kind of online experiences that could be possible if we break the profit-motive stranglehold and make room for publicly owned and collectively controlled social technology.

Samantha Floreani is a digital rights activist and writer. They are the program lead at Digital Rights Watch

Document 5 -TikTok's Pro-China Tilt

A bill that will force the app's Chinese owners to sell will soon become law.

NEWSLETTER, The Morning, By [David Leonhardt](#), April 24, 2024

The debate over TikTok has shifted very quickly. Just a few months ago, it seemed unlikely that the U.S.

government would force ByteDance, the Chinese company that owns TikTok, to sell it. The platform is

5 popular, and Congress rarely passes legislation aimed at a single company.

Yet a bipartisan TikTok bill — packaged with aid for Ukraine, Taiwan, Israel and Palestinians — is now on its way to becoming law. Late last night, the Senate
10 passed the measure, 79 to 18, three days after the House passed it, 360 to 58. President Biden said he would sign it today. If ByteDance does not sell TikTok within 12 months, it will be banned in the United States.

What explains the turnabout?

15 I have asked that question of policymakers and their aides in recent weeks and heard a similar answer from many. Parts of the debate over TikTok — about the overall benefits and drawbacks of social media, for instance — are complicated, and they would not justify
20 the forced sale of a single company, the policymakers say. But at least one problem with TikTok falls into a different category.

It has become a leading source of information in this country. About one-third of Americans under 30
25 regularly get their news from it. TikTok is also owned by a company based in the leading global rival of the United States. And that rival, especially under President Xi Jinping, treats private companies as extensions of the state. “This is a tool that is ultimately within the control
30 of the Chinese government,” Christopher Wray, the director of the F.B.I., has told Congress.

When you think about the issue in these terms, you realize there may be no other situation in the world that resembles China’s control of TikTok. American law has
35 long restricted foreign ownership of television or radio stations, even by companies based in friendly countries. “Limits on foreign ownership have been a part of federal communications policy for more than a century,” the legal scholar Zephyr Teachout
40 explained in The Atlantic.

The same is true in other countries. India doesn’t allow Pakistan to own a leading Indian publication, and vice versa. China, for its part, bars access not only to American publications but also to Facebook, Instagram
45 and other apps.

TikTok as propaganda

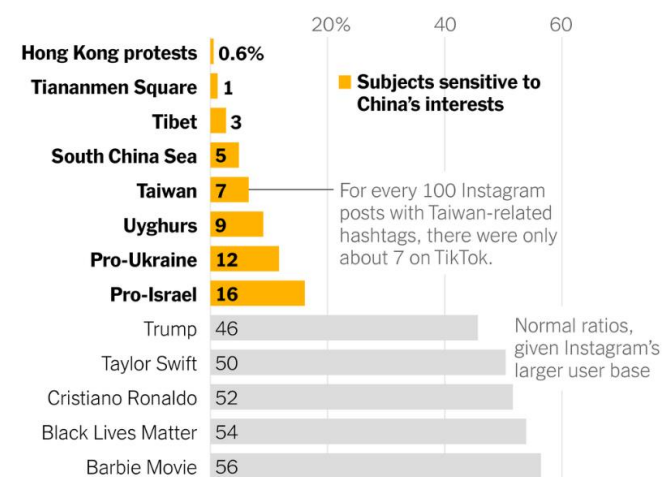
Already, there is evidence that China uses TikTok as a propaganda tool.

Posts related to subjects that the Chinese government
50 wants to suppress — like Hong Kong protests and Tibet — are strangely missing from the platform, according to a recent report by two research groups. The same is true about sensitive subjects for Russia and Iran, countries that are increasingly allied with China.

55 Consider this data from the report:

Subjects missing from TikTok

TikTok hashtags as a percent of Instagram hashtags on the same subjects



Source: Network Contagion Research Institute | Actual hashtags do not include spaces. Black Lives Matter hashtag is #BLM. | By The New York Times

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The report also found a wealth of hashtags promoting independence for Kashmir, a region of India where the Chinese and Indian militaries have had recent skirmishes. A separate Wall Street Journal analysis,
65 focused on the war in Gaza, found evidence that TikTok was promoting extreme content, especially against Israel. (China has generally sided with Hamas.)

Adding to this circumstantial evidence is a lawsuit from a former ByteDance executive who claimed that its
70 Beijing offices included a special unit of Chinese Communist Party members who monitored “how the company advanced core Communist values.”

Many members of Congress and national security experts find these details unnerving. “You’re placing the
75 control of information — like what information America’s youth gets — in the hands of America’s foremost adversary,” Mike Gallagher, a House Republican from Wisconsin, told Jane Coaston of Times Opinion. Yvette Clarke, a New York Democrat,
80 has called Chinese ownership of TikTok “an unprecedented threat to American security and to our democracy.”

In response, TikTok denies that China’s government influences its algorithm and has called the outside
85 analyses of its content misleading. “Comparing hashtags is an inaccurate reflection of on-platform activity,” Alex Haurek, a TikTok spokesman, told me.

I find the company’s defense too vague to be persuasive. It doesn’t offer a logical explanation for the huge gaps
90 by subject matter and boils down to: Trust us. Doing so would be easier if the company were more transparent. Instead, shortly after the publication of the report comparing TikTok and Instagram, TikTok altered the

search tool that the analysts had used, making future
95 research harder, as my colleague Sapna Maheshwari reported.

The move resembled a classic strategy of authoritarian governments: burying inconvenient information.

The coming fight

100 The fight over TikTok won't end even when Biden signs the bill. Chinese officials have signaled that they will not allow ByteDance to sell TikTok, and ByteDance plans to fight the law in court. It will have some American allies, too.

105 On the political left, groups like the A.C.L.U. say that the TikTok bill violates the First Amendment. (You can read the A.C.L.U.'s argument here.) On the right, Jeff Yass, who's both a TikTok investor and a major Republican campaign donor, is leading the fight against
110 the bill. He is also a former board member at the Cato

Institute, which has become a prominent TikTok defender. Yass may be the person who convinced Donald Trump to reverse his position and oppose the bill.

115 These opponents hope to use TikTok's popularity among younger Americans to create a backlash in coming weeks. And they may have some success. But they are in a much weaker position than they were a few months ago.

120 As Carl Hulse, The Times's chief Washington correspondent, told me, "The fears that TikTok gives China too much of a way into the U.S. seem to be overriding any political concerns." There is a long history of members of Congress overcoming partisan

125 divisions to address what they see as a national security threat. Even in today's polarized atmosphere, it can still happen.

Document 6 - « Dans la bataille Chine - Etats-Unis autour de TikTok, la mauvaise foi est la chose la mieux partagée »

Chronique Stéphane Lauer, Editorialiste au « Monde », Le Monde, 29 avril 2024

Derrière des inquiétudes légitimes sur les problèmes que pose le réseau social chinois, se cache la frustration des Américains face à un succès susceptible de contester leur hégémonie
5 technologique, souligne Stéphane Lauer, éditorialiste au « Monde ».

Le Monde, 29 avril 2024

Des parlementaires votent à une majorité écrasante la mise au ban d'une entreprise étrangère. Diabolisée en raison de la
10 nationalité de son propriétaire, elle est accusée de menacer la sécurité nationale. Un président se précipite pour autoriser la vente de l'entreprise à des investisseurs triés sur le volet. Un ancien ministre des finances flaire la bonne affaire et se met sur les rangs pour la racheter.

15 Nous ne sommes pas dans la Russie de Vladimir Poutine, mais aux Etats-Unis, porte-étendard de la libre entreprise. Le réseau social chinois TikTok, puisque c'est l'entreprise dont il s'agit, ne serait-il pas en train de faire perdre la raison à l'Amérique et pas seulement à cause de la diffusion des
20 courtes vidéos addictives et chronophages qu'il permet de diffuser ?

Le projet de loi « sur la protection des Américains contre les applications contrôlées par des adversaires étrangers » adopté au Sénat le 23 avril somme ByteDance, le propriétaire chinois
25 de TikTok, de vendre l'application dans un délai d'un an sous peine d'interdiction. Steven Mnuchin, ex-secrétaire au Trésor de Trump, se dit prêt à monter un tour de table. La bataille sino-américaine autour de TikTok va désormais se régler devant les tribunaux dans une affaire où la mauvaise foi est la
30 chose la mieux partagée.

Les zéloteurs du texte soulignent que l'application a déjà été interdite en Inde en 2020, que les plates-formes américaines, Facebook, YouTube ou X, n'ont pas le droit de cité en Chine depuis quinze ans. En somme, un prêté pour un rendu.

35 Une addiction problématique

Quand Pékin reproche à Washington d'« *abuser du pouvoir de l'Etat pour réprimer les entreprises étrangères* », c'est l'hôpital qui se moque de la charité. Mais le fait que les Etats-Unis adoptent des comportements comparables à ceux du
40 gouvernement chinois risque de sérieusement écorner le magister américain sur les valeurs de libertés et la garantie d'un Internet ouvert. Les critiques sur la censure dans les autocraties pourraient désormais sonner creux auprès du Sud global.

45 Derrière le débat sur le danger réel ou supposé de l'application se cache une intelligence artificielle redoutablement efficace. A partir de milliards de vidéos courtes, TikTok accumule une masse inédite d'informations sur les utilisateurs. Grâce à une viralité décuplée, les
50 algorithmes de TikTok ont permis à l'application de passer la barre du milliard d'abonnés en deux fois moins de temps qu'il en a fallu à Facebook. En moyenne, les Américains passent
50 % plus de temps sur le réseau chinois que sur Instagram.

Que l'addiction entretenue par TikTok pose problème ne fait
55 pas de doute. Mais TikTok a bon dos. Même si l'application d'origine chinoise a passé un cran dans la sophistication de la dépendance, on peut objectivement adresser les mêmes reproches à ses concurrents américains. Alors que les Européens s'en inquiètent et réglementent pour protéger les
60 plus jeunes, les Etats-Unis sont restés passifs face au phénomène.

Les tentatives des plates-formes américaines pour imiter le succès de la technologie chinoise sont balbutiantes. Reels (Facebook et Instagram), Shorts (YouTube), Watch 65 (Pinterest), Spotlight (Snapchat) ou Fast Laughs (Netflix) n'arrivent pas à la cheville de TikTok. La Chine, longtemps accusée de ne faire que copier-coller, a marqué un point face à la technologie américaine. Derrière une campagne aux accents maccarthystes, se cache la frustration des Américains 70 d'être contestés dans leur hégémonie.

Autre caractéristique du modèle TikTok : sa moindre efficacité dans la monétisation des contenus. Les plates-formes américaines, qui ne peuvent pas rester sans réagir à la déferlante TikTok, sont obligées de développer des 75 applications qui se révèlent moins rentables, une mutation qui risque de peser sur leurs cours de Bourse. De quoi alimenter la campagne anti-TikTok.

L'enjeu de la protection des données

Pour autant, il ne faut pas être naïf. Le lien entre TikTok et le 80 pouvoir chinois par l'intermédiaire de ByteDance n'a rien d'un fantasme. Que Pékin n'ait jamais accepté de renoncer à sa prérogative d'exiger l'accès aux données des utilisateurs américains – possibilité à laquelle la Chine affirme n'avoir jamais eu recours jusqu'à aujourd'hui – reste très 85 problématique.

La menace TikTok a au moins le mérite de pousser les Etats-Unis à davantage se préoccuper de la protection des données, après s'être opposés avec dédain puis véhémence aux tentatives de régulation européenne sur le sujet. La vérité,

90 c'est qu'aujourd'hui, à force d'avoir négligé cette dimension, sous prétexte que les Etats-Unis contrôlaient les principales plates-formes, les citoyens américains sont très mal protégés en matière de confidentialité. Il est illusoire de croire que la disparition de TikTok empêchera la Chine d'aspirer des 95 données si bon lui semble.

Les promoteurs de la loi anti-TikTok invoquent aussi le danger que le Parti communiste chinois puisse orienter les contenus en fonction de ses intérêts du moment, voire manipuler l'opinion dans le cadre d'un scrutin électoral. Dès 100 lors qu'un quart des Américains considèrent TikTok comme une source d'information, le sujet n'est pas à prendre à la légère. Mais, jusqu'à présent, en quoi Facebook et Twitter (rebaptisé X en juillet 2023) ont-ils été des remparts contre les ingérences étrangères ?

105 L'Europe, qui n'a pas su faire émerger ses champions du numérique, se retrouve prise entre deux feux. La différence de nature entre l'autocratie chinoise et la démocratie américaine ne doit pas occulter le danger intrinsèque des réseaux sociaux, quelle que soit leur nationalité. L'approche 110 régulatrice adoptée par l'UE est sans doute l'arme du pauvre dans cette course technologique, mais elle est la seule voie possible pour rester fidèle à des principes qui deviennent à géométrie variable aux Etats-Unis. Faute de pouvoir participer au match, l'Europe ne peut pas plus devenir 115 supporteur de l'une des deux équipes. Elle doit se contenter d'un rôle d'arbitre au moment où chacun est tenté de ne plus respecter aucune règle.

Document 7 - Sur TikTok, l'effet « terrier de lapin » inquiète la Commission européenne et les ONG

Bruxelles a annoncé l'ouverture d'une enquête visant le réseau social pour des manquements présumés en matière de protection des mineurs. En cause, notamment, son algorithme, accusé de faire remonter des contenus nocifs pour les mineurs et les jeunes adultes.

Le Monde, 27 février 2024 Par [Leslie Souvanlasy](#)

Pour Selma, tout commence en 2021, lorsqu'elle tombe sur une vidéo TikTok intitulée « Cinq signes montrant que vous êtes autiste », proposée sur sa page Pour toi. 5 L'étudiante en droit, qui a alors 17 ans (*les témoins n'ont pas souhaité donner leur nom de famille*), la regarde par curiosité, puis fait défiler un contenu sur le même thème qui lui est aussitôt proposé, et ainsi de suite. « J'ai commencé à m'inquiéter, j'ai visionné une 10 centaine de vidéos pour savoir si je l'étais vraiment. C'était devenu irrationnel. » Elle voit dès lors des signes d'autisme dans chacun de ses gestes, mais n'en parle pas à ses parents, qui s'inquiètent de son isolement croissant. « Toute la journée, j'attendais le moment où 15 j'aurais quelques minutes pour ouvrir TikTok et regarder si d'autres vidéos allaient m'indiquer d'autres signes, je devenais folle », se rappelle-t-elle.

Depuis, Selma a désinstallé l'application, « *pour le bien de [sa] santé mentale* », explique-t-elle. Elle a été 20 victime de l'effet *rabbit hole* (« terrier de lapin ») qui vaut à TikTok de vives critiques. Tant qu'il s'agit de vidéos inoffensives tout va bien. Mais ses détracteurs dénoncent un encouragement à regarder de plus en plus de vidéos dangereuses pour la santé mentale.

25 Pour répondre à ces inquiétudes, la Commission européenne a annoncé, le 19 février, l'ouverture d'une enquête visant le réseau social pour des manquements présumés en matière de protection des mineurs. L'institution a ouvert « *une procédure formelle* » afin 30 de déterminer si TikTok a enfreint le règlement sur les services numériques (le Digital Services Act, ou DSA). Les inquiétudes du gendarme européen du numérique portent en particulier sur la protection des mineurs, la transparence de la publicité, l'accès aux données pour 35 les chercheurs, ainsi que les risques liés à la conception

addictive de la plate-forme et aux contenus préjudiciables.

De son côté, TikTok France affirme au *Monde* que cette enquête est une « simple vérification de la mise en place
40 du règlement européen sur les services numériques (DSA). Comme indiqué dans le communiqué, cela ne présage pas de conclusions ». Le réseau social se targue d'être « un précurseur qui a développé des
fonctionnalités et des paramètres visant à protéger les
45 adolescents et à restreindre l'accès à la plate-forme aux moins de 13 ans ».

« De graves risques » pour la santé mentale

L'alerte avait déjà été donnée au niveau européen en novembre 2023, lorsque l'ONG AI Forensics a réalisé
50 une enquête, en collaboration avec Amnesty International et l'Algorithmic Transparency Institute, sur le phénomène. Cette dernière a montré comment les enfants et les jeunes adultes qui regardent des contenus relatifs à la santé mentale sur la page Pour vous de la
55 plate-forme sont rapidement entraînés dans des « spirales » de contenus potentiellement dangereux, notamment des vidéos qui rendent romantiques et encouragent les pensées dépressives, l'automutilation et le suicide.

60 « Les constatations [de l'enquête d'Amnesty International] dénoncent les caractéristiques de conception manipulatrices et addictives de TikTok, dont le but intrinsèque est de conserver l'attention des utilisateurs et utilisatrices le plus longtemps possible »,
65 analysait Lisa Dittmer, chercheuse à Amnesty International. L'enquête a également montré que le système algorithmique de recommandation de contenus « expose les enfants et les jeunes adultes ayant déjà des problèmes de santé mentale à de graves risques ».

70 Les algorithmes de TikTok « ne sont ni bons ni mauvais », nuance Olivier Ertzscheid, chercheur en sciences de l'information à l'université de Nantes. « Les algorithmes permettent également de survaloriser les contenus positifs. Mais les utilisateurs peuvent
75 rapidement s'enfermer dans un rabbit hole négatif à partir du moment où les interactions avec des contenus blessants ou offensants ont lieu. » Depuis mars 2023, il est possible de réinitialiser son fil Pour toi pour éviter les recommandations « répétitives ». Cette
80 fonctionnalité permet alors d'avoir un nouveau fil

d'actualité, comme si l'utilisateur « venait tout juste de s'inscrire sur TikTok », précisait un communiqué de la plate-forme.

Algorithme opaque

85 Régulièrement qualifié d'opaque, l'algorithme du réseau de partage de vidéos de l'entreprise chinoise ByteDance (maison mère de TikTok) n'est que partiellement connu. Peu d'informations sont divulguées sur son fonctionnement et son mode de
90 recommandation. En 2021, le *New York Times* avait réussi à obtenir une note interne de l'entreprise d'ingénieurs basés à Pékin, baptisée « TikTok Algo 101 ». « Le document montre que le temps de visionnage [des vidéos] n'est pas le seul
95 facteur pris en compte par TikTok. Il propose une équation approximative pour la notation des vidéos, dans laquelle une prédiction basée sur l'apprentissage automatique de l'application numérique et le comportement réel de l'utilisateur sont additionnés
100 pour chacune de ces données : les likes, les commentaires et le temps de lecture, ainsi que le temps de visionnage passé sur une vidéo », écrivait le quotidien américain.

L'« objectif ultime » de TikTok étant d'augmenter le
105 nombre d'utilisateurs quotidiens actifs, toujours d'après cette note interne, l'accent est mis sur la « rétention », c'est-à-dire le fait de revenir sur l'appli, et le « temps passé ». L'expérience est souvent décrite comme une addiction, qui vient solliciter le centre de la récompense
110 dans le cerveau des utilisateurs, libérant de grandes quantités de dopamine. Autre révélation du *New York Times* : le lanceur d'alerte qui lui a transmis ce document s'est dit « troublé » par la tendance de l'application à proposer des contenus « tristes »
115 susceptibles d'induire la volonté de se faire du mal.

L'enquête de la Commission européenne pourrait par conséquent représenter une avancée pour les experts, car elle devrait permettre d'éclairer le fonctionnement de TikTok. « Ce qui va être intéressant, c'est de savoir
120 à quelles données la Commission va avoir accès et à quel point la plate-forme va être coopérative avec le régulateur, relève Marc Faddoul, directeur d'AI Forensics. TikTok va évidemment minimiser son impact sur les jeunes et sa responsabilité. »

Legislation against TikTok

Document 8 -What to Know About the TikTok Bill That the House Passed

The bill, which would force TikTok's Chinese parent to sell the popular social media app, faces a difficult path in the Senate.

The New York Times, March 13, 2024, by David McCabe and Sapna Maheshwari,

House lawmakers on Wednesday approved legislation meant to force ByteDance, the Chinese internet company, to sell its wildly popular social media app TikTok.

The vote was the latest development in a yearslong cold war between the United States and China over who controls valuable technology from computer chips to artificial intelligence. Lawmakers and the White House have expressed concerns that TikTok's Chinese ownership poses a national security risk because Beijing could use the app to gain access to Americans' data or run a disinformation campaign.

The bill faces a difficult path in the Senate. Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader, has not yet committed to bringing it up for a vote.

Here's what to know about the bill.

Why have House lawmakers supported the bill?

Many are worried that the Chinese government could demand the personal data of Americans from ByteDance and that, under Chinese law, ByteDance would have to comply.

Lawmakers including Representative Mike Gallagher, the Wisconsin Republican who co-led the bill, and Senator Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia, also say China could use TikTok's powerful algorithm to feed its users political propaganda. Christopher A. Wray, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Avril Haines, director of national intelligence, have flagged the concerns in the last year.

The bill, which Mr. Gallagher introduced with Raja Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat, has had bipartisan support. The House voted to pass the bill 352 to 65, with one voting present.

TikTok says the concerns are baseless. It notes that about 60 percent of the company is owned by global institutional investors, including the financial giants Susquehanna International Group and BlackRock. It also says that three Americans are on its five-person board. According to the company, it has spent more than \$1 billion on a plan that stores sensitive U.S. user data domestically on servers operated by Oracle, the American cloud computing company.

How would the bill force ByteDance to sell TikTok?

The bill essentially says that TikTok must be sold within six months to a buyer that satisfies the U.S. government. The sale would have to guarantee that ByteDance no longer has any control over TikTok or its algorithms that recommend content to users.

If ByteDance cannot or refuses to sell TikTok, it would be unlawful for app stores and web hosting companies to distribute or update the app in the United States. The Justice Department could punish any company that works with TikTok or offers its app for download.

Probably not.

With 170 million users in the United States alone, TikTok would carry a high price tag, which few companies or individuals could afford. If forced to sell, it's also unclear whether ByteDance would put the app's entire global footprint up for sale or just its United States operation.

Some of the companies that could potentially afford to buy TikTok are tech giants like Microsoft, Google and Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram. But the Biden administration has tried repeatedly, using antitrust law, to block those companies from becoming bigger.

Even if ByteDance could find a buyer for TikTok, China might not let a sale occur. In 2020, when American officials first tried to force a sale of TikTok, Beijing placed export restrictions on technology that sounded similar to TikTok's content recommendation algorithm. Last year, Beijing said it would oppose a sale.

"You're not going to be able to force ByteDance to divest," said James Lewis, a senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

What are ByteDance's other options for TikTok?

Besides a sale, ByteDance could potentially pursue other options, like spinning off TikTok through an initial public offering.

45 The details of the divestment would probably hinge on a key question regarding whether ByteDance would sell or spin off the entire global footprint of TikTok's operations or just the portions of the app that operate in the United States. Selling just the U.S. app alone could prompt major issues, from how does the algorithm that suggests content to users function to whether it can display content from other countries.

What are the politics of a ban?

50 Support for a ban has been bipartisan, as Republicans and Democrats have both been concerned about China's influence.

But in a surprise move, former President Donald J. Trump opposed the TikTok legislation in recent days. That was a reversal from his position on the app in 2020, when he tried to ban it.

"Trump's opposition is a meaningful new headwind to this bill becoming law," said Paul Gallant, a policy analyst

55 for TD Cowen. "A lot will depend on whether he goes to the mat on this TikTok bill the way he did with the border security bill."

Free speech groups have also opposed the bill, saying they worry that a ban would shut down expression.

How would a ban work, and what would it mean for TikTok users?

If the bill passes the Senate and is signed into law by the president, it would impose civil penalties on app stores, like

60 those operated by Apple and Google, if they distributed or updated TikTok.

The app is already on millions of phones in the United States, but the restriction on updates is likely to degrade users' ability to access it.

This would be supplemented by a measure that prohibits web hosting companies from helping to distribute the app.

Document 9 -Which countries have banned TikTok and why?

By Euronews, 14/03/2024

Many countries are concerned about TikTok's security and the platform's ties to China. This week, the United States Congress approved a bill against ByteDance's app.

The United States took one more step towards becoming

5 the possible first country to ban the social media app TikTok over privacy concerns. On Tuesday, April 23, Congress approved legislation which would force the Chinese owner of the app ByteDance to sell the platform within nine months or face a ban.

10 Several countries have banned it on government devices, fearing that sensitive information could be exposed when the app is downloaded. And many countries remain cautious about the platform and its ties to China. Western technology companies, including Airbnb, Yahoo, and

15 LinkedIn, have also been leaving China or downsizing operations there because of Beijing's strict privacy law, which specifies how companies can collect and store data.

Here are the countries and regions that have announced or already implemented partial or total bans on the app.

20 Australia

On April 4, Australia banned TikTok from all federal government-owned devices over security concerns.

A notice issued by the Attorney General's Department said TikTok poses security and privacy risks due to the

25 "extensive collection of user data and exposure to

extrajudicial directions from a foreign government that conflicts with Australian law".

Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus said in a statement that based on intelligence and security agencies' advice, the ban

30 would come into effect "as soon as practicable".

The UK

On March 16, Oliver Dowden, the UK Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office, announced in a statement to the UK's House of Commons an immediate ban of the app on

35 government official devices.

"This is a precautionary move. We know that there is already limited use of TikTok across government, but it is also good cyber hygiene," the minister said in his address to MPs.

40 The ban is based on a report by the UK's National Cyber Security Centre, which found "there could be a risk around how sensitive government data is accessed and used by certain platforms".

Although the UK was one the first countries to ban the use

45 of other Chinese-owned technology such as Huawei's, **critics flagged the delay in banning TikTok**compared to allies.

EU institutions

The European Parliament, the European Commission, and

50 the EU Council, the three top EU bodies, have all banned TikTok on staff devices, citing cybersecurity concerns.

The European Parliament's ban took effect on March 20. It also "strongly recommended" that members of parliament and staff remove the app from their personal devices as well.

France

On March 24, the French government banned the installation and use of "recreational" applications such as TikTok, Netflix and Instagram on the work phones of 2.5 million civil servants.

The ban, which was notified through a "binding" instruction, immediately took effect and does not apply to the personal phones of state employees.

France is the first country to step up efforts to also ban other "recreational" applications such as Netflix on government devices.

"Recreational applications do not present sufficient levels of cybersecurity and data protection to be deployed on administration equipment. These applications may therefore constitute a risk to the data protection of these administrations and their public officials," the French government said in a statement.

French Minister of Public Service Stanislas Guerini tweeted that the measure was intended to "ensure the cybersecurity" of the country's administrations and civil servants.

Canada

After the US move, Canada announced on February 28 it was banning TikTok from all government-issued devices, saying the app presents an "unacceptable" risk to privacy and security.

Employees will also be blocked from downloading the application in the future.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said at the time that further action may or may not follow.

"I suspect that as government takes the significant step of telling all federal employees that they can no longer use TikTok on their work phones many Canadians from business to private individuals will reflect on the security of their own data and perhaps make choices," Trudeau said. "I'm always a fan of giving Canadians the information for them to make the right decisions for them," he added.

95 New Zealand

On March 17, New Zealand announced TikTok would be banned from the phones of government lawmakers at the end of the month.

Unlike in other countries such as the UK, the ban doesn't affect all government workers and only applies to about 500 people in the parliamentary complex.

Parliamentary Service Chief Executive Rafael Gonzalez-Montero said officials could make special arrangements if they needed TikTok to perform their democratic duties.

New Zealand prime minister Chris Hipkins said he didn't have TikTok on his phone and added, "I'm not that hip and trendy".

India

In 2020, India imposed a ban on TikTok and dozens of other Chinese apps, including the messaging app WeChat, over privacy and security concerns. The ban came shortly after a clash between Indian and Chinese troops at a disputed Himalayan border killed 20 Indian soldiers and injured dozens.

The companies were given a chance to respond to questions on privacy and security requirements but the ban was made permanent in January 2021.

See the whole list here:

<https://www.euronews.com/next/2024/03/14/which-countries-have-banned-tiktok-cybersecurity-data-privacy-espionage-fears>

Document 10 -On TikTok, Resignation and Frustration After Potential Ban of App

While Congress says the social app is a security threat, critics of the law targeting it say it shows how out of step lawmakers are with young people.

Read the article with the video illustrations [HERE](#)

By Yiwen Lu, *The New York Times*, April 24, 2024

As Congress voted Tuesday night on legislation that could ban TikTok, Americans were posting their real-time reactions on the embattled video-sharing app.

The Senate passed a revised TikTok bill, tied to a package to provide aid for Israel and Ukraine, with a 79-18 vote, and President Biden signed it into law Wednesday. It will force TikTok's Chinese owner, ByteDance, to sell the app to an American entity within 12 months or face a ban in the United States. The House passed the bill on Saturday with a 360-to-58 vote.

Here's what lawmakers who oppose the law, content creators and users said.

Lawmakers

10 Representative Ro Khanna, a California Democrat representing Silicon Valley, had been a vocal opponent of the bill. He shared his opposition through videos posted on TikTok before and after the House vote. Mr. Khanna has been outspoken against a sweeping ban on TikTok, and has met with people who create content for TikTok to understand their concerns.

15 "I voted no today on the bill to ban TikTok because it hurts the free speech of creators, activists, organizers, and small business owners who rely on the app to have their voices heard," Mr. Khanna said in a statement following the House's vote. He added his support for a new law that would give users more control of their data.

Representative Jamaal Bowman, a New York Democrat, was another opponent of the bill and previously said that banning TikTok meant silencing the voices of young people. In a two-and-a-half-minute video on Saturday, he called for comprehensive social media reform instead of singling out TikTok.

20 "The House is showing a complete disconnect between what we are doing in the House of Representatives and what's happening in the real world with young people," Mr. Bowman said in the video.

Users

Rebekah Ciolli, 35, a stay-at-home mother of three in Indiana, signed up for a TikTok account early last year.

25 Before that, she had hoped for a ban because, she said, she did not "need another social media app that is consuming your life." But now, she spends a few hours on the app every day, looking up content like at-home learning and family-friendly recipes and finding like-minded users. To her, losing TikTok would mean losing a community.

"There's all these moms across the world that I'm friends with, even though I've never truly met them in person," Ms. Ciolli said in an interview. "I will definitely be sad to lose that."

Content Creators

30 Ariana Afshar, also known as @arianajasmine--- on TikTok, usually creates content about political news. After the House passed the TikTok legislation, she filmed herself in front of a screenshot of CNN's coverage of the bill to explain the vote, adding that "this is only going to hurt the trust that people have with the government."

Because most of her audience is Gen Z and young millennials, Ms. Afshar worried that passing such a bill would dissuade young people from voting in this year's election. "The younger generation is already pretty mad at this administration," she said in an interview. "The ripple effect is going to be much larger than what lawmakers are calculating right now."

To many content creators, TikTok is a lifeline. They built their businesses on TikTok, and the app is how their customers got to know them. The uncertainty surrounding TikTok is making many of them worry about their livelihood.

40 "It's affecting everything, even down to our financial planning," said Nadya Okamoto, who is a founder of August, which sells sustainable menstrual products, and is known for her content on menstrual health. "We have been able to grow organically. And what's scary is that as small business owners, we don't know what that looks like moving forward."

45 Ms. Okamoto spearheaded an open letter to President Biden to oppose the passing of the bill. The letter, last updated on Monday, has 47 signatures from TikTok creators.

V Spehar, who runs the news aggregation and analysis account @UnderTheDeskNews on TikTok, posted 10 videos over the past week about the legislation. On Friday, Mx. Spehar told their over three million followers about the upcoming vote, calling it a way where the government misuses "the levers of power that they hold to pass a legislation that is deeply unpopular with the American public."

50 One day after the vote, in a video dubbed with the song "Omigod You Guys" from the "Legally Blond" musical, Mx. Spehar filmed themselves shaking their head to the text, "Trying to get people to care about politics after Congress voted to ban TikTok."

"The consequence is not that TikTok gets banned," Mx. Spehar said in an interview. "It's that the American public loses faith even more in the institute of the government than they already have."

TikTok and the 2024 Election Campaign

Document 11 - Donald Trump s'oppose à l'interdiction de TikTok aux Etats-Unis, quatre ans après avoir voulu le proscrire

Les déclarations de l'ancien président républicain, lundi, constituent un revirement alors que ce dernier avait pris, en 2020, un décret pour interdire le réseau social chinois dans le pays, invoquant une menace à la sécurité nationale.

Le Monde, le 11 mars 2024

Prenant le contrepied de l'actuel chef de l'Etat américain, Joe Biden, prêt à soutenir une proposition de loi qui menace le réseau social chinois TikTok, Donald Trump s'est dit, lundi 11 mars, défavorable à son interdiction aux Etats-Unis. « *Ce qui me déplaît, c'est que sans TikTok, vous allez faire grossir Facebook, qui est pour moi un ennemi du peuple, au même titre que d'autres médias* », a déclaré le seul candidat encore en lice pour l'investiture républicaine lors du scrutin présidentiel du 5 novembre, lors d'un entretien à la chaîne CNBC.

Il s'agit d'un revirement pour l'ancien président américain, qui avait pris, en août 2020, un décret pour interdire TikTok aux Etats-Unis, invoquant une menace à la sécurité nationale. Saisis par la plate-forme et des créateurs de contenu, deux juges fédéraux de juridictions distinctes avaient ensuite retoqué la mesure, en septembre et en décembre 2020, des décisions que n'avait pas contestées le gouvernement Trump.

Si le texte est adopté, « je le signerai », a déclaré Joe Biden

La totalité des cinquante membres d'une commission de la Chambre des représentants ont voté jeudi en faveur d'une proposition de loi qui forcerait, en cas d'adoption, la maison mère de TikTok, ByteDance, à céder sa filiale, sous peine d'interdiction du réseau social aux Etats-Unis. Le texte devrait être soumis au vote de la Chambre cette semaine, selon plusieurs médias américains.

Les parlementaires s'inquiètent des liens entre TikTok et les autorités chinoises, y voyant le risque d'une transmission massive de données d'utilisateurs américains vers la Chine. A plusieurs reprises, le groupe a assuré ne pas avoir reçu de demandes du gouvernement chinois en ce sens et dit que, le cas échéant, il refuserait.

« [Si les parlementaires] *l'adoptent, je le signerai* » a déclaré vendredi M. Biden au sujet du texte, se disant ainsi prêt à promulguer cette nouvelle loi, soutenue par des parlementaires démocrates et républicains.

Lundi, M. Trump s'est dit favorable à la protection des données, mais a affirmé, sans preuve, que d'autres entreprises technologiques étaient prêtes à communiquer des informations d'utilisateurs américains si Pékin le demandait, mentionnant Facebook.

Après ce revirement, plusieurs médias américains ont évoqué les liens de l'ancien chef de l'Etat avec le financier Jeff Yass, donateur majeur à des candidats républicains et dont la société d'investissement, Susquehanna International Group, possède une participation importante au capital de TikTok.

Selon le *New York Post*, Jeff Yass, qui a rencontré Donald Trump en Floride il y a quelques jours, aurait menacé de ne plus financer des candidats républicains si la loi concernant TikTok était adoptée. Interrogé par CNBC, Donald Trump s'est défendu d'avoir abordé le sujet avec le financier.

Document 12 - Pro-Trump PAC Joins TikTok Amid Fight Over Its Chinese Ownership

The New York Times, By Chris Cameron, May 8, 2024

The main political action committee backing former President Donald J. Trump joined TikTok on Wednesday, jumping onto the popular social media platform while it is at the center of a political battle over its ownership by a Chinese corporation, ByteDance.

The super PAC, Make America Great Again Inc., is independent of Mr. Trump's presidential campaign, but the move to TikTok — using the handle @MAGA — signals a shift in strategy nearly three months after President Biden's re-election campaign joined the social media platform.

"There's millions of voters on TikTok, and @MAGA will deliver President Donald J. Trump's pro-freedom, pro-America agenda every day with the facts and stories that matter," Taylor Budowich, the chief executive of the PAC, said in a statement. "We aren't trying to set policy, we are trying to win an election."

10 The TikTok account, which had about 300 followers as of Wednesday evening, has posted five videos so far, four attacking Mr. Biden and one attacking Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the independent presidential candidate, as a “radical leftist.”

Mr. Biden signed a law in April that would force a sale of TikTok by ByteDance, which sued the federal government on Tuesday in an effort to block the law. Under the terms of the law, ByteDance has about nine months to sell the app 15 or it will be banned in the United States. The president can extend that time frame to a year.

Mr. Trump had also tried to ban the app during his term, ordering ByteDance in August 2020 to divest the app. A federal judge blocked the attempted ban the next month, and Mr. Trump left office a few months later.

But when House Republicans moved to force the sale of the app via legislation, Mr. Trump came out against the bill, saying that ByteDance’s ownership was still a national security threat but that a potential ban would anger young 20 Americans.

“Frankly, there are a lot of people on TikTok that love it,” Mr. Trump said in an interview on CNBC. “There are a lot of young kids on TikTok who will go crazy without it.”

Mr. Trump himself is not on TikTok — preferring to use his own social media site, Truth Social — and neither is his campaign. With TikTok still operating in the United States, for now, and with Mr. Biden’s campaign using the app, Mr. 25 Budowich said that Mr. Trump’s message should be “brought to every corner of the internet.”

“We will not cede any platform to Joe Biden and the Democrats,” he said.

Document 13 - **President Biden’s Campaign Is on TikTok**

BY SIMMONE SHAH, CNN.COM, FEBRUARY 12, 2024

President Biden’s 2024 campaign joined TikTok on Super Bowl Sunday, an effort to connect with young voters ahead of the November presidential election. The move comes despite Biden’s previous firm stance against the app and its potential national security concerns.

The account, @Bidenhq, will be run by Biden’s campaign staff alongside other accounts on X, Threads, Facebook, 5 and Truth Social, according to campaign advisers. On Monday, the account already had more than 51,000 followers, and Biden’s first video more than half a million.

"The campaign will continue meeting voters where they are, innovating to create content that will resonate with critical audiences and the core constituencies that make up the President’s diverse and broad coalition of voters," advisers said in a statement. Biden campaign advisers also said they "are taking advanced safety precautions around our devices 10 and incorporating a sophisticated security protocol to ensure security."

The app, owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, has faced scrutiny in Congress over improper data use, given that Chinese law requires China's companies to share information with the government. (TikTok has denied sharing U.S. data with the Chinese government.)

The Biden Administration’s policy has previously been critical of TikTok. In late 2022, the President signed legislation 15 blocking the use of the app on government devices. Last year, the administration threatened to ban TikTok in the U.S. if ByteDance did not sell its stake in TikTok to an American company.

But his team has also turned to creators on the app to reach younger audiences, even inviting a group of creators to the White House in 2022 for a private meeting with the President. TikTokers have been briefed by the administration on everything from the war in Ukraine to student debt relief in the hopes of spreading the administration’s policy 20 information with the growing population of users who turn to the platform for news.

The app proved to be a strong force for mobilizing young voters in the 2020 Presidential election. A survey published last March found that 20% of Gen Z got information about political issues from TikTok in 2022.

In his first video, captioned “lol hey guys”, a staffer asked the President various rapid-fire questions related to the Super Bowl, such as which team he was supporting for the Super Bowl, and which of the two Kelce brothers was his 25 favorite.

At the end, he was asked to choose between himself and former President Donald Trump.

“Are you kidding?” he said. “Biden.”

The president's team is formally launching its online rapid response network. We talked to the head of it about what they have planned.

Politico, By ELENA SCHNEIDER, 09/27/2023

The Biden campaign is entering the chat. And then reentering it again and again.

The president's reelection team is formally launching its campaign war room on social media Wednesday. With 5 the handle Biden HQ, it will serve as a rapid response operation aimed at reaching voters by pumping out content — lots of content.

Aides involved in it have adopted the mantra “more is more.” They're starting on X, formerly known as 10 Twitter, and Threads, but they're looking to work a host of mediums beyond those. And for an operation famous for downplaying the significance of the viral hit of the day, they now hope that their missives go viral themselves.

15 It'll be “hotter,” “fast” and “might be a little funny,” said Rob Flaherty, Biden's deputy campaign manager.

“[Biden HQ] gives us the ability to just be a little punchier, to get a little bit more volume out there,” Flaherty said, “but also help drive narratives on social 20 [media] at a higher clip.”

Rapid response is not new to either party. But an intense focus on producing viral content online reflects the shifting battlefield of modern campaigning — from pushing out talking points and working reporters to 25 cutting popular videos and disseminating them to allied influencers. It also means combating disinformation that can spread quickly.

“You'll see us go on offense about stuff that needs correcting,” Flaherty said.

30 The launch comes as the Biden administration is facing a Republican-led federal court case and congressional investigation into its outreach to social media companies in 2020, urging them to remove content related to Covid-19 and the 2020 election. It also 35 coincides with concerns that the president isn't translating well with younger voters who live predominantly online.

Those very online voters will get their first taste of the Biden campaign's go-viral efforts during the second 40 Republican presidential primary debate Wednesday night. But, in advance, Flaherty sat down for an interview to discuss the objectives.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and brevity.

45 POLITICO: How is this campaign voice different from what we've heard from the Biden campaign already?

Flaherty: Biden HQ is going to be a social media brand that sits on top of the digital war room that we're putting 50 together at the campaign across here and at the [Democratic National Committee]. It's going to be our rapid response voice. It's going to be a little more irreverent. It's going to be fast — might be a little funny. But the point is how do we build on the success that 55 we've seen, so far, with social media rapid response and give it a higher octane approach.

Is this a rebranding of [social] channels that already exist?

It's sort of a new channel, [but] we're building on some 60 properties that already exist. For example, the DNC has had the ‘DNC War Room,’ for a while that's been churning out content. ... The idea of campaigns having these kinds of properties is certainly nothing new on either side. But I think the idea is that we're applying 65 these resources to it, but also, it's going to just sort of be a bit of a hotter campaign voice.

Traditional campaign war rooms have existed for a long time. How does this one look different?

If you look at how these rapid response war rooms on 70 the left have popped up — in 2008, they were putting fact checks up on the campaign website about ads that were running. In 2012, they built a ‘Truth Team,’ which was making content aimed at reporters. And in 2016, there was ‘The Briefing,’ on our side, and there was, sort 75 of, this content stream. In 2020, we added paid media to it. I think the point of this operation is we're going to start to bring all that stuff to bear again.

In a fractured media environment that we're in right now, speed matters. And so, you're going to see us 80 making sure that the latest clips are getting out in the world of what our opponents are saying. We're going to build on the kind of rapid response content that has been a successful hallmark for us so far, like the Marjorie Taylor Greene video that we saw back in July.

85 Back in 2020, the Biden campaign really leaned heavily on influencers to get out your message. Does Biden HQ build on that influencer network?

Absolutely. So, the DNC has been working to build this great influencer network with allies — an amplification 90 network. We've been doing that work, too ... We fully

acknowledge that it's not enough to just think about owned content, but you have to think about how you distribute it and who it's being distributed to.

Three years is a lifetime on the internet. How does the Biden campaign adapt digitally in 2024 versus 2020?

I think the answer to that is on our earned [media], our own [media], and our paid media, you have to be in just a lot more places because the world has become more fragmented and more personalized. So that means more diversity in the way we think about ad targeting, more diversity in the way we think about earned media, a higher volume of content. That's all the stuff that we can do from the campaign.

And the other thing is, how do we get messages out through other people to the people who trust them? Yes, it's influencers and creators, but it's also, how do we get our supporters to be amplifying messages to their social networks.

There was an attempt, at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, to put out a lot of content. Whether it was the ill-fated podcast, or other ways to try and get Biden out there that didn't come to fruition. Are these videos the most effective way [to pump out content]?

Well, no, I think the reality is, you just never know what's going to stick, and so you have to try a lot of stuff. And so that's going to mean pumping out a lot of clips of our opponents with no spin on the ball, which we've seen lots of people do. That's going to mean some more of these rapid response videos that we've done pretty frequently, but we're going to ratchet up the tempo. So the reality is, the answer to that question is, more is more. ... This account gives us that bandwidth to be able to do that.

One other thing worth noting is, we're not just launching this on Twitter. We're going to launch it on Threads. We're going to be thinking about this as platform agnostic because we just don't know what the long-term outlook looks like for Twitter. We have to think about this as not just a Twitter play, but as a broad-based platform play.

When you said that this was going to be a little hotter — can you talk a little bit more about the tone?

Obviously, the president, his voice is a particular voice. We use his voice to attack our opponents, but we do it in a way that is respectful and befitting of his voice. ... But it's an opportunity for us to just be a little more aggressive, maybe be a little snarkier, maybe be a little funnier, but also factual.

The mantra back in 2020 was, based on some of your interviews, to 'win the soul of the internet.' Is getting

a little hotter, getting a little more aggressive an acknowledgement that you needed to be more on offense on the internet?

No, I don't think that's true. I think we were on offense in 2020. We did things like the flyswatter ... That's always been part of the repertoire. The strategy in 2020 was about using the internet to connect people. And it may not be what the algorithm favors all the time, but it's going to help us identify the people we need to take action for us.

But he's the president, and he's taking arrows from all kinds of crazy corners of the far right, so we have to go be on defense to be on offense or be on offense to be on defense.

How much of Biden HQ will be about policing disinformation [on social media]?

Our strategy here is going on offense against the attacks that come in against the president. The best sort of thing that a campaign can do is be aggressive about the inaccuracies and the attacks that are coming in, and so, we're going to be aggressive, pushing back in a number of different ways against our opponents. We'll defend the President's record to the hilt.

According to public polling, Biden is struggling to connect with younger voters. Is Biden HQ a way to reach those voters?

I think the reality is, it's a way to communicate online. There are certainly a lot of young voters online. There are certainly a lot of not young voters online. ... I think this is a content stream that is age neutral, but we'll certainly be in places where a lot of young people are.