Zuckerberg vs. Trump in 2020: Who Controls Cyberspace?

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By Micah Lakin Avni

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As he attempts to quell rumors, it has become increasingly clear that Mark Zuckerberg, the billionaire founder and CEO of Facebook, intends to run against President Trump in the 2020 election. Here are just a few indications:

* In April, Zuckerberg clarified in an SEC filing that a leave of absence for government service would not be considered as “voluntary resignation” of his position at Facebook.
* The young father has seemingly renounced his Silicon Valley atheism, saying religion is “important.”
* The signature grey t-shirt and jeans have been replaced with a suit and tie for many photo ops.
* But most telling is the personal challenge that he has undertaken for 2017. Zuckerberg publically committed to visiting all fifty states this year in order to “get out and talk to more people about how they’re living, working and thinking about the future.”

“Going into this challenge, it seems we are at a turning point in history,” he wrote in [a Facebook post](https://www.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10103385178272401). “For decades, technology and globalization have made us more productive and connected. This has created many benefits, but for a lot of people it has also made life more challenging. This has contributed to a greater sense of division than I have felt in my lifetime. We need to find a way to change the game so it works for everyone.”

Very presidential.

Mark Zuckerberg exerts more control over social media than any other person on earth. Facebook maintains profiles on over 150 million American citizens. They know everything about our personal lives and are privy to our most private conversations. They control the news — fake and real. They push information and connections to other users based on personal preferences, and throw people into feedback loops that influence and intensify the formation of opinions.

The recent election has raised concerns about phenomena like fake news and profiling. Many have attributed President Trump’s success to his savvy use of social media. Surely, the president understands the power of social media and he uses it effectively. But he does not control it. Facebook, Google and Twitter control social media.

Now let’s imagine for just a moment that Mark Zuckerberg has already decided to run in 2020. What is to stop him from using Facebook, the omnipotent tool that he created, to influence the way that the American people perceive reality in order to further his campaign?

Social media is having a damaging and deleterious effect on the world we live in. Children suffer from cyberbullying, shaming, loneliness and depression. Incitement encourages a culture of hatred and violence. Jihadist terror spreads like wildfire. Feedback loops create polarization. Fake news obscure the truth.

Modern countries spend billions of dollars a year on self-regulation and policing to protect their citizens. Almost all major areas of our public lives: finance, transportation, communication, broadcast, healthcare, and food are regulated. However, the Internet and social media have remained free from government oversite.

Last year, my father, [Richard Lakin](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/29/world/middleeast/champion-of-coexistence-felled-by-its-failure-is-buried-in-israel.html), was brutally murdered by Jihadist terrorists who had been radicalized on social media. Shortly after the attack, I wrote a [letter to Mark Zuckerberg](http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/mark-zuckerberg-assures-muslims-facebook-a-safe-environment-for-you/) urging him to take responsibility for curtailing the dangerous phenomena that social media has unleased upon the world. My letter was ignored, as were many others. Facebook and the other folks in Silicon Valley have consistently proven that they are more concerned about the bottom line than the greater good. They talk big about building a perfect and healthy world, while closing their eyes to the spread of evil; generating billions of dollars in profits from the traffic generated by cyberbullying, fake news, hate speech and terrorism. The time has come to intervene.

Rudy Giuliani was recently appointed as President Trump’s cybersecurity advisor; perhaps the most important position in the new administration. Giuliani, more than anyone else, will have an impact on how the world looks in 2020, and on who gets elected.