



**America Votes 2024:
The Transatlantic Impact**
August 26, 2024 | Paper No. 12

G | M | F
Geostrategy

**Crossed Wires? Technology Policy After
the US Election**

Lindsay Gorman and Julia Tréhu

Crossed Wires? Technology Policy After the US Election

By Lindsay Gorman and Julia Tréhu | August 26, 2024

Technology has consistently been atop the transatlantic policy agenda, with the United States and the EU racing to maintain leadership and set democratic standards for key technologies. The next occupant of the White House will inherit major portfolios related to them, from innovation policy and artificial intelligence (AI) to semiconductor manufacturing and green technologies. In each of these, the new president will face a choice: stay the course, tweak the approach, or redo it. Europe can best prepare for a new administration and uphold transatlantic technology leadership by strengthening coherence in its own technology agenda, including its digital rulebook and economic security measures.

AI Innovation and Governance

Whereas a Kamala Harris administration would “[reject the false choice](#)” between AI innovation and responsible governance, Donald Trump’s return to power would lead to far less emphasis on mitigating risks or harms. As “AI czar”, the current vice president promoted the flagship executive order to advance “safe, secure, and trustworthy” AI. She also shepherded industry heads to make [voluntary](#) AI commitments and represented the United States at the [AI Safety Summit](#) in the United Kingdom. Were she to occupy the Oval Office, her administration would [likely](#) expand initiatives to realize AI’s benefits for the public interest by harnessing civil society for the protection of digital rights and promoting international collaboration across a [network of national AI safety institutes](#).

The [2024 GOP platform](#), in contrast, promises to repeal Biden’s “dangerous” executive order that “hinders AI Innovation, and imposes Radical Leftwing ideas on the development of this technology”. As [reported by The Washington Post](#), a Trump-aligned think tank’s plans to “Make America First in AI” would entail a new order establishing “industry-led” agencies to evaluate AI models, a review of “unnecessary and burdensome regulations”, and “Manhattan projects” on military technology. The first Trump administration’s [executive order on Maintaining American Leadership in AI](#) stipulated that “federal agencies must avoid regulatory or non-regulatory actions that needlessly hamper AI innovation and growth.”

Antitrust and Platform Regulation

Competition policy under Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Chair [Lina Khan](#) has followed a doctrine aimed at combating harms to innovation from a concentrated technology sector. A Harris administration may continue this approach, including via the FTC’s consumer protection enforcement in the [AI sector](#) and its [inquiry](#) into generative AI firms and cloud service providers, despite emerging tensions in the Democratic party. Some [major donors](#) have, in fact, called for Harris to replace Khan.

Competition-policy debates among conservatives are also raging. One section of [Project 2025](#), cited as a blueprint for a second Trump administration (although he has [distanced himself](#) from it), recommends that the FTC investigate how Big Tech acquires and maintains market power. Another section questions if the FTC should even exist. Republican vice-presidential nominee JD Vance has [claimed](#) that “it’s time to break up Google” and expressed [support](#) for Khan. Under either administration, the current [docket](#) of antitrust cases brought by the FTC, the Department of Justice, and states’ attorneys-general against Google, Apple, and Amazon will likely continue.

On digital platform regulation, Harris supports the [Kids Online Safety Act](#), and her administration would likely continue to advocate for stricter guardrails to prevent cyberbullying, harassment, and self-harm. She spearheaded [privacy](#) efforts as California attorney general and would likely continue to call for federal privacy legislation and Section 230 reform. The 2024 GOP platform expresses concern about censorship and protecting “Free Speech online”, and Project 2025 recommends “reining in Big Tech” through fundamental Section 230 reform and imposing transparency requirements for platform decisions that block or prioritize content. Trump’s own anti-platform stance is rooted primarily in personal grievance and would likely result in headline-grabbing congressional investigations but little significant legislation.

Technology Competition with China

Bipartisan concern about China means technology competition will remain a priority for either administration, which will respond by promoting US innovation leadership and extricating US investment that enables Chinese military ambitions or human rights abuses. Differences lie in approach and degree.

Innovation Leadership

Harris would continue to implement the Biden administration’s flagship industrial policies—the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)—and proceed with investment in areas such as semiconductors, AI, green technology, biotechnology, and quantum information. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo has even called for a “[CHIPS II](#)”, and Harris would also likely promote domestic infrastructure such as broadband deployment.

A Trump-Vance administration would push US leadership in AI and commercial space technology. The GOP platform also focuses disproportionately on crypto, and Trump has [promised](#) to make the United States the “crypto capital of the planet”. “Trumponomics” prioritizes American manufacturing, albeit via [fossil fuel](#) extraction rather than green technologies. Project 2025 calls for repealing the IRA and rescinding all unspent funds. In practice, however, that may be difficult to do since red-state politicians who receive the bulk of the [funding support the act](#). Funding for the bipartisan CHIPS Act would also likely continue, including to foreign firms such as TSMC, despite Trump’s inaccurate [claim](#) that Taiwan “stole” the American semiconductor industry.

Derisking vs. Decoupling

A Harris administration is likely to continue building out Biden’s [targeted](#) derisking agenda. This would comprise actions such as finalizing an outbound investment-[screening](#) regime on certain US investments in China-based semiconductor, quantum information technology, and AI companies, and pursuing the “[small yard, high fence](#)” policy of export controls to restrict Chinese access to advanced semiconductors and manufacturing equipment.

The first Trump administration spouted tough rhetoric on China and introduced measures such as the [foreign direct product rule](#) on Huawei, the [Clean Network Initiative](#), and the (failed) attempts to ban TikTok and WeChat. Trump’s views on China, however, are inconsistent. He has recently [reversed](#) course on a TikTok ban, saying “I’m for TikTok.” Trump’s latest proposal for a [60% tariff](#) on all Chinese goods and the strong anti-Beijing stance of Project 2025 suggest a commitment to a broad-spectrum economic decoupling agenda, with less emphasis on targeting specific critical sectors.

Implications for Europe

The next European Commission also assumes a hefty technology agenda as the EU stakes out a position on techno-economic security and implements the AI Act, Digital Markets Act, and Digital Services Act (including ongoing [probes](#) into US technology firms). Brussels' growing concern about dependence on Chinese green technologies, batteries, and critical minerals, its [investigations](#) into Chinese cleantech subsidies, and its efforts to derisk on AI, quantum computing, and biotech are moving the EU toward a closer alignment with likely US policy under either administration.

The bloc could expect the Trade and Technology Council to continue under a Harris administration while the chances of deft transatlantic coordination diminish under Trump. EU officials have preempted these concerns, [stating](#) that "the momentum will continue whatever happens."

While Europe may welcome a more willing interlocutor in a Harris presidency, the best preparation is to put the European digital house in order by implementing existing technology laws and crystallizing economic security and green technology agendas. A coherent technology strategy will make a stronger ally for a Harris administration or a partner more able to find new entry points and shoulder more responsibility for constructive transatlantic relations on technology with a Trump administration.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in GMF publications and commentary are the views of the author(s) alone.

As a nonpartisan and independent research institution, The German Marshall Fund of the United States is committed to research integrity and transparency.

About the Author

Lindsay Gorman is managing director and senior fellow of GMF's Technology Program. She is also a venture scientist with Deep Science Ventures focused on AI and biotechnology. A quantum physicist and computer scientist by training, Gorman leads work on the US-China emerging technology competition, AI and democracy, and transatlantic innovation.

Julia Tréhu is a Paris-based program manager and fellow with GMF Technology. Her focus is on US and European digital and technology policy, including technology-related trade and investment policy, platform regulation, data governance, and artificial intelligence. Tréhu holds master's degrees in international political economy from the London School of Economics and in international security from Sciences Po Paris, and a bachelor's degree in history from Princeton University.

About GMF

The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) is a nonpartisan policy organization committed to the idea that the United States and Europe are stronger together. GMF champions the principles of democracy, human rights, and international cooperation, which have served as the bedrock of peace and prosperity since the end of the Second World War, but are under increasing strain. GMF works on issues critical to transatlantic interests in the 21st century, including the future of democracy, security and defense, geopolitics and the rise of China, and technology and innovation. By drawing on and fostering a community of people with diverse life experiences and political perspectives, GMF pursues its mission by driving the policy debate through cutting-edge analysis and convening, fortifying civil society, and cultivating the next generation of leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. Founded in 1972 through a gift from Germany as a tribute to the Marshall Plan, GMF is headquartered in Washington, DC, with offices in Berlin, Brussels, Ankara, Belgrade, Bucharest, Paris, and Warsaw.

Ankara • Belgrade • Berlin • Brussels • Bucharest

Paris • Warsaw • Washington, DC

gmfus.org