

December 12, 2023

To the Chief Executive Officer:

I write with regard to your company's decision to cut ties with X, the American social-media application, while simultaneously maintaining a presence on TikTok, the social-media application founded in China.

A review by my office indicates that your company is participating in a boycott of X that originated with the left-wing advocacy group, Media Matters. Supposedly, companies are boycotting X out of concern that their brands could be tarnished by association with antisemitic content that some users have posted on that application.

Due to your company's apparent concern for its image on social media, I was fascinated to learn that it maintains an active presence on TikTok. That social-media application, through its parent company, ByteDance, is under the jurisdiction and influence of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a brutal group that seeks to weaken our country and subvert our way of life. China's national-security laws give the CCP access to all data managed by Chinese firms, including ByteDance. This means TikTok is a far bigger liability to your company than X, and should be treated accordingly.

There is little doubt that TikTok is manipulated to serve the interests of the ruling CCP. For example, TikTok instructed moderators to censor content about Tibet and the Tiananmen Square Massacre. Users who brought attention to the CCP's genocide of the Uyghurs and other ethnic groups have been censored and banned.

The type of hate-fueled content that led you to boycott X is also pervasive on TikTok. For example, content glorifying the terrorist group Hamas exploded on the platform following that group's massacre of around 1,400 people in Israel on October 7. Pro-Hamas content has been viewed much more frequently on TikTok than pro-Israel content, evidence that the application is placing a finger on the scale of video suggestions. Millions of users have also been exposed to videos glorifying Osama bin Laden and his post-9/11 manifesto. This content furthers the CCP's strategy of distracting, dividing, and dumbing down Americans, giving the CCP an open field to pursue its objectives.

But TikTok's problems go well beyond an adversary's ability to manipulate content. In October 2022, ByteDance was caught using the app to spy on American journalists. The *New York Times* reported the company stores Americans' private information—including driver's licenses, addresses, and device IDs—in China, where ByteDance employees can access it. *Forbes* then reported TikTok also stores the tax information and Social Security numbers of its content creators in China. The company's CEO blatantly lied under oath when he denied that TikTok stores U.S.

user data in China, providing further evidence that the application and its founder cannot be trusted.

Following the logic of the X boycott, your brand is now in imminent danger of being tarnished by association with the deranged, genocidal content found on TikTok. Your brand also risks association with TikTok's owner, ByteDance, which collaborates with the CCP to repress the Chinese people and interfere in America's political process.

I take no position on whether your company should boycott X. You have advertising executives, shareholders, and customers to tell you that. However, I am appalled by the double standard of boycotting an American social-media application while maintaining a presence on a social-media application controlled by America's greatest adversary.

If your company believes it is necessary to cut ties with X, I expect you to cut ties with TikTok, as well—and soon.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator

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