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Security Mutants: Youth Movements and Social Media

Barack Obama's naming of Howard Schmidt as the US "cyber czar" in December 2009 put the public/private revolving door into the spotlight. Schmidt had worked in information security for Microsoft, then the Bush Administration, then Ebay before returning to civil service. But this sovereign sign is augmented by a "bottom-up" approach to partnerships and alliances. This paper focuses on one particular government/media initiative called the Alliance of Youth Movements. This State Department co-sponsored group produced a web-hub of materials that distributed technical knowledge and social media skills for youth protestors around the world. At the same time, similar deployments of social media technologies by domestic protestors are considered a "criminal use of a communication facility" (as with the Tin Can Communications Collective's use of Twitter during 2009 G20 protests in Pittsburgh, PA) This article argues that alliances and partnerships have become key actors on the terrain of security. At the same time, the emergent political mutations arising from this terrain are sorted through revitalized police powers and information warfare tactics: action (mobilization) and inaction (immobilization).