 ISRAEL CONNECTION TO ERIC SCHMIDT’S PUSH FOR NY “SMART CITIES”

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*WITH NY GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO RECENTLY ANNOUNCING THAT FORMER HEAD OF GOOGLE, ERIC SCHMIDT, WOULD LEAD AN EFFORT TO “REIMAGINE” POST-PANDEMIC LIFE IN THE STATE, MEDIA REPORTS HAVE FAILED TO NOTE THAT THE GROUNDWORK FOR THAT “REIMAGINING” WAS LAID LAST YEAR AND INTIMATELY INVOLVES THE STATE OF ISRAEL.*

In recent weeks, considerable media attention has been given to the decision by NY Governor Andrew Cuomo to tap former Google executive Eric Schmidt to [lead a 15-member panel](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/video-audio-photos-rush-transcript-amid-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic-governor-cuomo-announces-20) tasked with “reimagining” New York’s post-pandemic tech infrastructure as well as its education, economic and healthcare system. Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates was also recruited for this initiative by Gov. Cuomo, leading some American media outlets to criticize the venture as turning New York “[into a Silicon Valley science experiment](https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/pkyenm/new-york-is-turning-into-a-silicon-valley-science-experiment).”

However, it is much more than merely a Silicon Valley experiment. As [*The Last American Vagabond* reported last month](https://www.thelastamericanvagabond.com/top-news/techno-tyranny-how-us-national-security-state-using-coronavirus-fulfill-orwellian-vision/), Schmidt currently chairs the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence (NSCAI), which discussed plans last May regarding how to re-make American society to foster the mass adoption of AI-driven technologies, including so-called “smart cities” and related systems of mass surveillance. That commission includes key people, not just from Silicon Valley, but also the U.S. military and intelligence communities – a testament to how the divisions between Big Tech, the Pentagon and U.S. intelligence have become increasingly blurred in recent years.

Unsurprisingly, one of the main initiatives that the Schmidt-chaired New York panel is set to promote is the fast-tracking of “smart city” implementation as outlined by the Schmidt-chaired NSCAI. The use of the term “reimagining” in the announcement that Schmidt would chair this panel also underscores this point, given that Google’s “smart city” subsidiary, Sidewalk Labs, [describes itself](https://www.theverge.com/2017/10/17/16488942/alphabet-sidewalk-labs-toronto-quayside) as “reimagining cities from the Internet up.” Smart cities are more accurately defined as cities that are micromanaged by technocrats via an all encompassing system of mass surveillance and a vast array of “internet of things” devices that provide a constant and massive stream of data that is analyzed by artificial intelligence (AI).

Notably, Cuomo’s appointment of Schmidt to lead this panel aimed at “reimagining” life in New York came [right before](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/bv8ga4/sidewalk-labs-abandons-its-smart-city-in-toronto) news broke that a Google subsidiary was scrapping its plans to build a smart city prototype in Toronto. Schmidt still chaired Google’s parent company, Alphabet, when that deal was first negotiated in 2017. At the time, Schmidt [had said](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/24/google-alphabet-sidewalk-labs-toronto) that Google’s effort to turn Toronto into a “smart city” had come “from Google’s founders getting excited thinking of ‘all the things you could do if someone would just give us a city and put us in charge’.”

Though smart cities have been largely unpopular among Americans to date, the coronavirus crisis has led to a spate of positive PR pieces promoting their implementation, such as [a recent piece in *Wired*](https://www.wired.com/story/coronavirus-covid-19-urban-planning-health/) which claims that “smart city planning could slow future pandemics” and [an article from *Forbes*](https://www.forbes.com/sites/simonchandler/2020/04/13/how-smart-cities-are-protecting-against-coronavirus-but-threatening-privacy/) about how “smart cities are protecting against coronavirus.”

While the current coronavirus crisis and Schmidt’s increasingly public role in ushering in AI-driven technological “solutions” throughout New York have given a boost to the smart city agenda, the plan to create these cities in New York was in the works well before coronavirus. However, those pre-pandemic smart city plans intimately involve one key actor that has, thus far, gone unnamed in recent media reports – the state of Israel.

WHO WILL BUILD NEW YORK’S SMART CITIES?

Last June, NY Governor Cuomo [announced a $2 million partnership agreement](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/during-solidarity-and-trade-mission-governor-cuomo-and-israel-innovation-authority-announce-2#_blank) with the Israel Innovation Authority, a branch of Israel’s Economy Ministry, that aimed to “further strengthen economic development ties between New York State and Israel.” The agreement was specifically related to the “co-development and commercialization” for technologies related to smart cities, cybersecurity and drones (unmanned aerial vehicles), among others.

A key component of this partnership was the creation of the “Smart Cities Innovation Partnership (SCIP),” which Cuomo’s office described as “a new initiative that will share innovative technologies, research, talent and business resources between cities in New York and Israel.” It was also stated that “New York and Israel will contribute an equivalent amount of matching resources” to the project. Cuomo, at the time, also said that New York’s Incubator programs for start-ups – an initiative with funds exceeding $5 million — would “implement a new focus on Israeli companies,” as opposed to local companies.

Regarding this new “Smart Cities Innovation Partnership,” Dr. Ami Applebaum – chairman of the Israel Innovation Authority and Chief Scientists of the Israel’s Economy Ministry – [stated the following](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/during-solidarity-and-trade-mission-governor-cuomo-and-israel-innovation-authority-announce-2#_blank):

*“As technology advances and touches every facet of our daily lives,****the future of Smart Cities is just around the corner****and highly depends to [sic] new and innovative technologies. This collaboration between the ESD (Empire State Development of New York State) and the Israel Innovation Authority, facilitated by our Americas Operations desk and the Ministry of Economy, Foreign Trade Administration (FTA), headed by Mr. Inon Elroy, Economic Minister to North America, will provide startups an opportunity for pilot validation sites to address the strategic concerns of both States such as cybersecurity, supply chain, energy, health, transportation, wastewater, water, civic engagement, parks, public works, and safety.”*

The partnership specifically called for the establishment of five “Smart Cities” in Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) regions in New York that would interact with “test bed sites” created in Israel. This means that this “smart city” partnership only involves the creation of smart cities in New York, not Israel, but gives Israeli companies a major role in designing these five New York smart cities.

Though the press release from last year claims this would be an “equal venture,” an article on the SCIP [published by *The Jerusalem Post*](https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-Innovation-Authority-to-develop-smart-cities-with-New-York-622615) in March asserts that New York’s state government will be funding the entire $2 million project, giving $1 million to the Israel Innovation Authority and $1 million to Israeli companies. The New York government website, however, currently states that the $2 million partnership [involves](https://its.ny.gov/press-release/esd-announces-call-applications) New York state giving $1 million exclusively to New York-based companies and the Israel Innovation Authority giving additional $1 million exclusively for Israeli companies seeking to develop New York-based projects.

On March 18, the SCIP [was launched](https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-Innovation-Authority-to-develop-smart-cities-with-New-York-622615) “via educational outreach and solicitation of interest in different New York localities.” The five “winning” New York municipalities, who will be [announced in July](https://esd.ny.gov/new-york-smart-cities-innovation-partnership), will be required “to designate physical or virtual sites to be used in new pilot technologies” sometime over the course of 2020, with those “smart city” technologies being implemented in early 2021.

The selection of the projects will be overseen by Eric Gertler, President and CEO of the Empire State Development (ESD), who [was nominated](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-nomination-eric-gertler-serve-president-and-ceo-empire-state) to the position shortly after Cuomo announced the NY-Israel Smart City partnership and returned to a trip from Israel. Notably, Gertler is also currently [chairman of the America-Israel Friendship League](https://aifl.org/news/the-america-israel-friendship-league-announces-its-new-leadership) (AIFL) and is on the Board of Governors for Tel Aviv University and Israel’s Technion. He also has long-standing close ties to Mort Zuckerman, a Zionist media mogul who recently came under fire for his ties to [his former business associate](https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/07/jeffrey-epsteins-rolodex-famous-friends-and-acquaintances.html), Jeffrey Epstein. Gertler used to work for Zuckerman as former co-publisher of the Zuckerman-owned *New York Daily News* and Gertler is also a trustee of Zuckerman’s family foundation.

SMART CITIES AND CYBERNYC

The initiation of the SCIP followed the launch of another major New York partnership with Israel that created two new, massive cybersecurity centers. Those cybersecurity centers, built in New York City and funded by New York taxpayers, are managed by private Israeli companies with close ties to Israel’s government, pro-Israel lobby organizations and Israeli intelligence-linked firms. Known as “[CyberNYC](https://www.timesofisrael.com/as-threats-grow-nyc-launches-100-million-israeli-run-cybersecurity-hub/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)” and first announced in 2018, the program officially seeks to “spur the creation of 10,000 cybersecurity jobs and make New York City a global leader in cyber innovation.”

However, Jerusalem Venture Partners (JVP) and SOSA –the two Israeli companies set to run these two “CyberNYC” centers – have been rather clear that they view the centers, not as a “collaborative” effort, but as a means for providing Israeli cybersecurity companies a foothold in the American market and as a springboard for their global expansion. A report I [previously wrote for *MintPress News*](https://www.mintpressnews.com/cybernyc-taxpayers-millions-cyber-center-israel-ties-intelligence/264984/) noted that both JVP and SOSA are Israeli government and military contractors and are also connected to Israel’s intelligence apparatus, particularly companies started by former members of Israel’s Unit 8200 signal intelligence unit. Notably, SOSA’s “CyberNYC” center in particular is associated with the America-Israel Friendship League, chaired by the President of New York’s ESD Eric Gertler who is involved in the NY-Israel “Smart Cities Innovation Partnership.”

Though there are numerous other such connections, the most crucial and relevant to note is that the “CyberNYC” initiative directly involves the participation of the Unit 8200 “start-up incubator” called Team8. As I [previously reported](https://www.mintpressnews.com/cybernyc-taxpayers-millions-cyber-center-israel-ties-intelligence/264984/) for *MintPress:*

***“Team8, particularly its presence in New York, has long been associated with the push by pro-Israel political donor and American hedge fund manager Paul Singer and Israel’s government to make Israel the global cybersecurity leader as***[***a means of preventing countries from boycotting Israel***](https://www.mintpressnews.com/neocon-billionaire-paul-singer-driving-outsourcing-us-tech-jobs-israel/259147/)***over human rights violations and war crimes. Team8’s role in CyberNYC will see them not only finance part of the initiative but also***[***training cybersecurity workers***](https://www.timesofisrael.com/team8-joins-bid-to-help-nyc-become-global-cybersecurity-leader/)***who will be hired as part of the partnership.”***

Team8, in addition to being closely tied with controversial Unit 8200-linked companies like [Cybereason](https://www.mintpressnews.com/cybereason-israel-tech-firm-doomsday-election-simulations/263886/), also has developed close ties to former U.S. government officials, including the former head of the U.S.’ National Security Agency (NSA) Mike Rogers, who [now works for Team8](https://www.team8.vc/member/mike-rogers/). Another notable U.S. connection to Team8 is the fact that one of Team8’s leading investors is none other [than Eric Schmidt](https://www.mintpressnews.com/cia-israel-mossad-jeffrey-epstein-orwellian-nightmare/261692/), who is now set to “reimagine” life in New York at Cuomo’s behest. In addition to Team8, Schmidt’s Innovation Endeavors fund [is heavily invested](https://www.timesofisrael.com/google-founders-vc-fund-sees-big-future-for-israeli-iot-tech/) in several Israeli “internet of things” companies and [other Israeli hi-tech start-ups](https://www.jpost.com/Business/Globes/Eric-Schmidts-Israeli-dream-team).

In addition, Schmidt’s former employer, Google, has partnered with the Israeli company Carbyne911 for the implementation of emergency services and 911 call functions for “smart cities.” [Carbyne911](https://www.mintpressnews.com/cia-israel-mossad-jeffrey-epstein-orwellian-nightmare/261692/) is chaired by former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and was partially financed by Barak’s close friend Jeffery Epstein. Its software, designed by former Unit 8200 members, has built-in “pre-crime” functionality, among other Orwellian features.

Given that Schmidt’s involvement in the new Cuomo-created panel to “reimagine” New York’s tech infrastructure, it is very disconcerting that media reports have failed to even mention the clear role that Israeli government-backed initiatives, as well as Israeli intelligence-linked start-ups and incubators, are set to have on New York’s future.

These ties are particularly concerning given that Israel’s government and intelligence service has [a long history](https://www.mintpressnews.com/mega-group-maxwells-mossad-spy-story-jeffrey-epstein-scandal/261172/) of [aggressively spying](https://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Report-Extensive-Israeli-espionage-hushed-up-by-US-officials-351833)[on the U.S. federal government](https://www.newsweek.com/israel-flagged-top-spy-threat-us-new-snowdennsa-document-262991) and/or [blackmailing top American politicians](https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-said-to-have-offered-lewinsky-tapes-for-pollard/), particularly using technological means. In addition, Israel’s government under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has [an explicit policy](https://www.mintpressnews.com/cia-israel-mossad-jeffrey-epstein-orwellian-nightmare/261692/) of creating U.S. dependence on Israeli tech companies in order to counter the nonviolent Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS) movement within the U.S. and to make Israel the dominant global “cyber power.” It is no coincidence, then, that Israel has also been chosen by other countries with strong Zionist lobbies to create “smart cities,” some specifically for “low-income residents,” in places [like Brazil](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-companies-to-build-smart-city-in-brazil/) and [elsewhere](https://www.jpost.com/Jpost-Tech/How-is-Israel-leading-the-way-in-smart-city-tech-540658) in the years since this policy [began in 2012](https://www.mintpressnews.com/neocon-billionaire-paul-singer-driving-outsourcing-us-tech-jobs-israel/259147/).

Of course, while these policies and the NY-Israel smart city partnership are set to be a major boon for Israeli companies and Israel’s geopolitical goals, New Yorkers stand to be the biggest losers of the “reimagining” of their state. Not only are high-paying jobs in New York’s hi-tech future being given to foreigners and foreign-owned companies, but also the already privacy-eroding potential of “smart cities” will be placed largely in the hands of a foreign power.