

Big Tech vs Big Government

- [Key Takeaways](#)
- [Real World Examples](#)
- [Further Reading](#)

Key Takeaways

1. **Privacy and Data Protection:**

- **Big Tech:** Claims robust data protection and offers users tools to control their data.
- **Big Government:** Advocates for oversight to ensure data isn't misused.
- **Big Government Risk:** Potential for overreaching surveillance, infringing on citizen privacy.

2. **Monopolistic Practices:**

- **Big Tech:** Defends their market dominance as a result of superior products/services.
- **Big Government:** Wants to curb anti-competitive behavior to ensure fair competition.
- **Big Government Risk:** Targeting companies based on political/nationalistic agendas instead of genuine market concerns.

3. **Content Moderation and Censorship:**

- **Big Tech:** Argues for the right to enforce community standards.
- **Big Government:** Concerned about potential biases or inadequate moderation.
- **Big Government Risk:** Suppression of dissenting voices, curtailment of free speech, or promotion of state propaganda.

4. **Taxation:**

- **Big Tech:** Uses tax strategies based on global operations.
- **Big Government:** Wants companies to pay taxes where profits are generated.
- **Big Government Risk:** Excessive or targeted taxation that could distort market dynamics or stifle innovation.

5. **National Security vs. Encryption:**

- **Big Tech:** Stresses the importance of encryption for user privacy.

- **Big Government:** Wants access to encrypted data for law enforcement.
- **Big Government Risk:** Demanding backdoors to encrypted systems, compromising global cybersecurity.

6. **Digital Sovereignty:**

- **Big Tech:** Advocates for a globalized and open internet.
- **Big Government:** Prefers control over national digital infrastructure and data.
- **Big Government Risk:** Overemphasis might lead to a fragmented and heavily restricted internet.

7. **Economic and Innovation Concerns:**

- **Big Tech:** Believes they drive innovation and create significant economic value.
- **Big Government:** Concerns about the power of tech giants stifling startups and local industries.
- **Big Government Risk:** Overregulation that might hamper innovation and market dynamics.

8. **Transparency:**

- **Big Tech:** Operates proprietary algorithms and platforms.
- **Big Government:** Calls for transparency in algorithms and operations.
- **Big Government Risk:** Lack of transparency in governmental actions and decisions.

9. **Interoperability and Open Standards:**

- **Big Tech:** Some prefer proprietary systems, while others support open standards.
- **Big Government:** Advocates for interoperability to prevent vendor lock-in.
- **Big Government Risk:** Mandated interoperability might stifle innovation or be used to favor local entities.

10. **Digital Literacy and Education:**

- **Big Tech and Big Government:** Recognize the importance of user education.

- **Big Government Risk:** Introduction of biased educational programs promoting state narratives.

11. **Global Operations vs. Local Laws:**

- **Big Tech:** Emphasizes challenges of adhering to myriad local laws.
- **Big Government:** Asserts the need to uphold local laws and protect its citizens.
- **Big Government Risk:** Excessive localization laws might unfairly control or restrict global tech companies.

Real World Examples

Big tech companies often find themselves in disputes with governments over user data, driven by the tension between privacy rights and law enforcement or regulatory demands. Here are a few notable examples:

1. **Apple vs. the FBI (2016):** One of the most famous cases involved Apple and the FBI regarding the iPhone of a shooter involved in the 2015 San Bernardino attack. The FBI wanted Apple to create a backdoor to bypass the device's encryption, but Apple refused, citing concerns that this would set a dangerous precedent for user privacy and security. The dispute escalated to the courts but was resolved when the FBI accessed the iPhone through a third party.
2. **Microsoft vs. the U.S. Government (2013-2017):** Microsoft contested a U.S. government warrant demanding access to emails stored in a data center in Ireland, arguing that U.S. warrants didn't apply to data stored overseas. This case, which raised significant questions about international law and digital privacy, went through several court levels and was pending before the U.S. Supreme Court. However, it became moot when the U.S. Congress passed the CLOUD Act in 2018, clarifying law enforcement's ability to access electronic data stored internationally.
3. **Google in Various Countries:** Google has had numerous run-ins with governments over user data. For instance, in the European Union, Google has faced challenges over the "Right to be Forgotten" law, which allows individuals to request the removal of personal information from search results. Google has to balance compliance with these requests against the public interest in that information.
4. **Facebook and Privacy Laws:** Facebook has been in the spotlight for how it handles user data, particularly after the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018. Governments worldwide, especially in the European Union, have scrutinized Facebook's data practices, leading to legal challenges and demands for stricter regulation.

Further Reading

Agarwal, R. (2020). *Why A Big Government Cure Would Be Worse Than Big Tech Control*. Forbes

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/rajshreeagarwal/2020/09/22/why-a-big-government-cure-would-be-worse-than-big-tech-control/?sh=69a92c7b134c>

Engin, Z., & Treleaven, P. (2019). Algorithmic government: Automating public services and supporting civil servants in using data science technologies. *The Computer Journal* , 62(3), 448-460.

<https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/8852885>

Petit, N. (2020). *Big tech and the digital economy: The moligopoly scenario*. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780191874291

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198837701.001.0001>