

The digital hegemony of the United States: politics, economy, and domestic disputes over technological power

La hegemonía digital de Estados Unidos: política, economía y disputas domésticas sobre el poder tecnológico *A hegemonia digital dos Estados Unidos: política, economia e disputas internas sobre o poder tecnológico*

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This article examines the political and economic foundations of the United States' digital hegemony. Drawing on documentary analysis, expert interviews, and market data, it investigates how state investment, deregulation, and corporate concentration shaped this dominance. The findings reveal a hyper-concentrated techno-industrial model that produces mounting domestic tensions. The article contributes to communication studies by denaturalizing digital hegemony through an analysis of its internal conditions of production.

KEYWORDS: Digital hegemony, digital platforms, market concentration, political economy, regulation.

Este artículo examina los fundamentos políticos y económicos de la hegemonía digital de Estados Unidos. Mediante análisis documental, entrevistas a especialistas y datos de mercado, estudia cómo la inversión estatal, la desregulación y la concentración corporativa construyeron ese dominio. Los resultados revelan un modelo tecno-industrial hiperconcentrado que genera tensiones internas crecientes. El trabajo contribuye a los estudios de comunicación al desnaturalizar la hegemonía digital desde sus condiciones de producción domésticas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Hegemonía digital, plataformas digitales, concentración de mercado, economía política, regulación.

O artigo examina os fundamentos políticos e econômicos da hegemonia digital dos Estados Unidos. Por meio de análise documental, entrevistas com especialistas e dados de mercado, ele estuda como o investimento estatal, a desregulamentação e a concentração corporativa construíram esse domínio. Os resultados revelam um modelo tecnoindustrial hiperconcentrado que gera tensões internas crescentes. O trabalho contribui para os estudos de comunicação ao desnaturalizar a hegemonia digital a partir de suas condições de produção domésticas.

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INTRODUCTION

The growing consolidation of a small group of large US digital platforms in global markets has reignited the debate surrounding the digital hegemony that the United States has built over recent decades. This article proposes an approach to the US digital economy, where the major technology companies that currently control much of the Internet's infrastructure, services and content originated (Schaake, 2024; Srnicek, 2018). Unlike approaches that focus on the global effects of this dominance, this article seeks to examine the political and economic factors that allowed a highly concentrated techno-industrial complex to develop within the United States itself. It also addresses the tensions and debates that this structure generates within the country, as well as the political responses it has prompted. In this sense, the work proposes to denaturalize hegemony by observing both its conditions of internal production and the contradictions that run through it.²

As for the scope of the study, although some milestones relevant to understanding the current formation of the US techno-industrial complex are covered, this is not intended to be an exhaustive history of the digital economy or the Internet in that country. The analysis focuses on the moment when the large platforms –those corporations that, in their origins, embodied promises of democratization of communications (Bolaño, 2000)– consolidate their economic power and begin to be the subject of controversy for their business practices (Flew & Martin, 2022). Following episodes such as the Snowden case (2013) and, in particular, the Cambridge Analytica scandal (2018), a new era of public, political, and media scrutiny of the power and impact of digital platforms began in the United States. This paper places this turning point around 2019, when parliamentary investigations, requests for information, legislative proposals, executive actions, and, above all, legal

² It is important to clarify that this article is part of a larger research project entitled “La Gobernanza Económica de las Redes Digitales: para un Análisis de Mercados y la Competencia en Internet y sus Impactos sobre los Derechos de los Usuarios”, developed at the Universidade Federal de Sergipe (Brazil), of which the author is a member.

proceedings questioning the structure of the digital market as it had been consolidated began to multiply.

In terms of time frame, the analysis covers the final stretch of Donald Trump's first term (2017-2021), Joe Biden's administration (2021-2025), and offers some preliminary considerations on the first months after Trump's return to the presidency (2025-). The study is presented as a simple case with intrinsic value, both for its particular characteristics and for its inclusion in a broader research project that considers other national and supranational cases (Yin, 1984). However, the work is not limited to the description of the case: it incorporates an analytical component aimed at explaining the functioning of the phenomenon, beyond its descriptive characterization (Coller, 1994).

In addition to the bibliographic review, the study is based on an extensive analysis of the actions of the three branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial—as well as a series of semi-structured interviews with specialists from think tanks, pressure groups, and research centers in the United States: Courtney Radsch, Director of the Center for Journalism & Liberty at Open Markets Institute; Karina Montoya, Senior Reporter, Center for Journalism & Liberty at Open Markets Institute (both in Washington, D.C., December 2024); Tim Bernard, tech policy analyst and writer; Claire Atkin, co-founder & CEO of Check My Ads (both in New York City, December 2024); and a remote interview with Selena Oduro, Senior AI Policy Analyst at Data & Society (January 2025).³ The compilation and analysis of market indicators from various sources was also incorporated, particularly from official agencies in the country and private consulting firms commonly referenced in academic works, such as Statista and StatCounter, among others.

³ Informed consent has been obtained for identification purposes. No direct quotations are attributed because these interviews served a heuristic function (opening up the field and defining the problem) and their contributions are integrated through thematic synthesis and triangulation with public documentation and academic literature, in order to avoid citation bias and maintain focus on structural analysis.

The article is structured in three parts: first, it analyzes the political aspects that allow us to understand the current phase of US digital hegemony. Next, it addresses its economic foundations based on a study of market indicators that characterize the economic structure of the main digital segments, from basic infrastructure to content and advertising services. Finally, it examines the disputes surrounding the governance of the digital ecosystem within the United States itself, including legislative debates, legal proceedings, and the actions of regulatory bodies. This approach sheds light on the paradoxes of a model that projects power outward but also generates resistance, unintended effects, and political responses within.

THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Central to this work is the notion of digital hegemony, understood here as the ability of a coalition of actors—state and corporate—to direct, organize, and ensure consensus around rules, infrastructures, and practices of the data economy, combining cultural-normative leadership and mechanisms of coercion or market closure. We use this term to refer to a pattern of domination based on critical infrastructures, data, and standards that produces systemic dependence and the ability to direct third parties.

Unlike generic notions of economic hegemony, control of technical layers (cloud, operating systems, app stores, search engines) is combined with network effects and economies of scale in data that raise barriers to entry and allow for intermediation power over contiguous markets. Legal frameworks (such as intermediary immunities and competition rules) and the financialization of the sector complete the picture. This approach allows us to understand both the global expansion of US firms and domestic disputes over their regulation and the reconfiguration of power between the state, platforms, and other actors (Bolaño et al., 2025; Rivero, 2025a).

The strategy was analytical-comparative by layers (infrastructure, applications/services, governance), with triangulation between secondary sources and expert testimonies to identify mechanisms of power and changes in the regulatory regime. The selection criteria were:

a) 2013-2025 period (from Snowden to the current situation of generative AI); b) relevance to the main themes of the work (ownership/concentration, public policy, litigation, and enforcement), and c) coverage of submarkets with significant network externalities (cloud, search, social, ads, mobile stores). Among the limitations of the study, we highlight: 1) interviews with public decision-makers and business representatives are not included; 2) market data may differ depending on the source methodology; 3) regulatory dynamics evolve rapidly; therefore, we anchor statements in publicly traceable documents and specify cut-off dates.

POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DIGITAL HEGEMONY

The origins of US digital hegemony cannot be understood without considering the historical background of the articulation between the public and private sectors in the development of digital technologies. As various studies have pointed out, the expansion of the US digital economy was deeply linked to state funding in its early stages, particularly through military and scientific investments in communication networks and computer infrastructure (Zuckerfeld, 2010). In this process, the state did not limit itself to acting as a regulator or facilitator: it played a central role in shaping the technological and business environment that gave rise to the digital platforms that dominate the market today.

During the 1990s, the paradigm of Internet self-regulation—promoted by agencies such as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and reinforced by regulations such as Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act—established the conditions for accelerated growth of technology companies, with little state intervention (Mueller, 2015). This “techno-libertarian ethos” (Bradford, 2024, p. 16), based on non-interference and trust in the self-regulatory capacity of markets, helped consolidate a normative environment that favored both business concentration and the vertical integration of digital platforms.

It is equally important to note that the state’s anti-regulatory stance has spread to other areas of public intervention, such as data privacy protection. This is happening even after critical episodes that caused friction between users and large platforms, such as the

aforementioned Cambridge Analytica case. While other core capitalist countries have adopted legal frameworks for the processing of personal data in digital environments, the United States does not have specific federal legislation on this matter.⁴ Some states, such as California and Colorado, have moved forward with their own regulations, which highlights both the difficulty of building consensus at the federal level and the existence of a social demand for protection against business models based on mass surveillance.

This regulatory environment has been key to the growth of large digital platforms, as it has allowed them to operate without the limitations that affect traditional media. From its origins, the Internet was conceived under a logic of freedom and limited regulation, which contributed to the perception of its supposed “ungovernability” (Lessig, 1999).

In economic and financial terms, the interrelationship between technology and the economy became particularly evident in the second half of the 1990s, when the Internet reached historic levels of market capitalization. However, this rapid growth led to a speculative bubble that began to burst in March 2000 with the collapse of dot-com companies.

In this process, the neoliberal paradigm played a decisive role in consolidating the current model. As Cófreces (2024) states, the primacy of the market over state regulation has been a guiding principle of US digital policy, enabling technology companies to act with considerable leeway in the exploitation of data and the configuration of digital markets (Couldry & Mejias, 2022). Historical milestones such as the Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace, delivered in Davos in 1996 by John Perry Barlow, founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), express a vision of cyberspace detached from the material world, free of physical boundaries and where the rules of the physical realm would have no place (Cófreces, 2024).

Winseck and Bester (2023) distinguish at least three stages in the development of the Internet: an initial phase characterized by com-

⁴ One of the most notable cases is the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), in force since 2016 (Parlamento Europeo & Consejo, 2016).

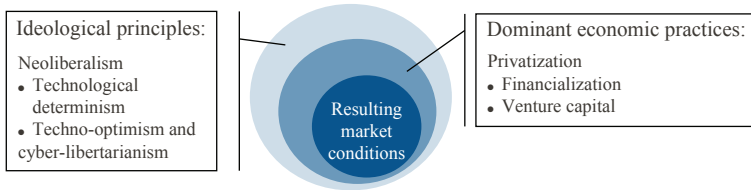
petition (1990-2007), followed by a period of moderate competition (2007-2014), and a third phase marked by the consolidation of a few companies expanding their reach into adjacent markets. In parallel with this concentration, it identifies two key transformations. First, the platformization of the Internet, that is, the transition from a network based on open and interoperable protocols to a set of vertically integrated “walled gardens” represented by large platforms. This state of affairs is defined by Terranova (2024) as the Platform Corporate Complex (PCC). Second, digital platforms began to play the role of infrastructure for other services –websites, applications, advertising services, media, among others– (Winseck & Bester, 2023, pp. 486-487). This “neoliberal platformization of the network” (Cófreces, 2024, p. 12) drove the creation of an architecture geared toward generating value through the extraction, accumulation, and massive use of data for commercial purposes, while promoting the exclusion of the state as a regulatory actor.

The idea that free competition would suffice to regulate the digital economy served, to a large extent, as justification for state non-intervention in response to complaints of monopolistic practices or abuse of dominant position (Flew, 2023, p. 39). In this regard, Bradford (2024) points out that the US position on regulation is shaped by “the country’s unshakeable faith in markets and skepticism toward government regulation” (p. 16).

Thus, the US economic and regulatory model played a central role in shaping the global digital economy. Deregulation, legal protections granted to platforms, and the absence of an effective competition framework facilitated the consolidation of tech giants such as Alphabet, Meta, Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft (Schaake, 2024; Srnicek, 2018).

The scheme (Figure 1) links ideological principles (neoliberalism, technological determinism), economic practices (privatization, financialization, venture capital), and the emergence of dominant actors. It summarizes the main themes of the article: 1) the political-legal substrate; 2) how these practices are expressed in specific submarkets (cloud, stores, search, social, ads); 3) domestic disputes that attempt to rebalance the system (at the congressional, judicial, and regulatory levels).

FIGURE 1
US REGULATORY MODEL FOR THE DIGITAL ECONOMY



Source: The author.

This model, which summarizes the above scheme, significantly influenced the global architecture of the Internet, establishing a regulatory benchmark that many countries had to adopt or challenge by formulating alternative models, such as the European model of defensive regulation or the Chinese model aimed at generating technological autonomy (Bolaño et al., 2025). However, the increase in discussions about digital sovereignty and platform regulation in various regions indicates that the US paradigm could face new challenges in the future. In this context, US dominance over the global digital ecosystem is being challenged not only from outside, but also from within, by concerns about its sustainability, social impacts, and compatibility with democratic values.

The political and legal principles outlined –intermediation immunities, preference for self-regulation, and historically limited enforcement– are embodied in market structures with high network effects and spaces for self-preference. Below, we describe how this legal and institutional architecture translates into specific economic configurations at the layer level (cloud, operating systems, app stores, search, social media, and advertising), showing that the incentives created by the policy framework are not neutral but directly shape the form of competition and the accumulation of market power.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS: CONCENTRATION AND CONFIGURATION OF DIGITAL MARKETS

The digital hegemony of the United States is largely based on a highly concentrated economic structure. From basic infrastructure to the most specialized digital services, the US market responds to a logic of intensive accumulation that combines economies of scale, network effects, and barriers to entry based on vertical integration and data control (Holt, 2024; Wu, 2018).

In terms of basic infrastructure, the United States maintains a hegemonic position with high levels of concentration. Although there are other relevant players in this segment, US companies such as Century Link (formerly Level3), Verizon, Comcast, and AT&T account for 70 % of global traffic. In particular, some US Big Tech companies, such as Meta and Alphabet, have entered the critical infrastructure deployment business by installing their own submarine cables (Baladron & Rivero, 2022; TeleGeography, 2025). When it comes to data centers and cloud computing services, US dominance is remarkable. Not only does it lead the global ranking with more than 5 300 data centers, but the state of Virginia alone surpasses several major cities in China and Europe combined in terms of number of facilities and installed capacity, measured primarily in electricity consumption (Statista, 2025).

Also, at the infrastructure level, despite the existence of numerous Internet service providers (ISPs), the market is highly concentrated around a few players with national coverage. Five companies –T-Mobile, AT&T, Comcast, Charter, and Verizon– control residential fixed broadband Internet access, in a context where 66 % of households have only two provider options offering minimum acceptable speeds. In terms of mobile connectivity, three operators account for more than 90 % of the market (FCC, 2024a, 2024b).

Concentration is even more pronounced in the digital platform markets. The mobile operating systems and app stores segment functions as a duopoly, dominated by Apple (iOS/App Store) and Alphabet (Android/Google Play), which not only set the rules for app distribution but also impose economic conditions on both developers and users (FCC, 2024a, p. 94). This technical architecture has a direct impact on compe-

tition in adjacent sectors, such as music, video games, and digital book sales.

In terms of search and navigation services, Alphabet (Google Search) accounts for more than 87 % of the combined market between mobile and desktop devices, followed far behind by Bing (StatCounter, 2025). The distribution of digital audiovisual content also shows high levels of concentration. In the online video segment, platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and YouTube dominate both in terms of number of subscriptions and volume of views (FCC, 2024a, p. 160). In the music market, Spotify (of Swedish origin) leads the sector, constituting the only case in which a foreign company heads a segment of the US digital market (p. 180).

With regard to e-books, Amazon exercises comprehensive dominance, covering both the sale of devices (Kindle) and content (Business Research Insights, 2025). Digital advertising in the United States is also highly concentrated, with Alphabet and Meta leading the market. Alphabet controls the entire value chain—from supply and demand to online advertising intermediation—while Meta derives its main income from this source (Sensor Tower, 2024).

Although some sectors—such as video games and online audio—have a greater diversity of players, in all cases there are still hard cores of concentration, sustained by factors such as scale, service integration, available capital, and technological capabilities. This economic concentration is linked to global expansion strategies that allow large platforms to replicate their business models in other territories, thus shaping a transnational digital ecosystem under US control (Buckweitz & Noam, 2024).

INTERNAL TENSIONS: CONTRADICTIONS AND CHALLENGES TO HEGEMONY FROM WITHIN

Although the United States is the epicenter of the global digital economy, it is also the territory where the tensions and contradictions caused by the highly concentrated platform model that has taken hold are most clearly expressed. In recent years, the country has become the scene of a growing debate about the economic, social, and politi-

cal effects of the market power of large technology companies. This debate has given rise to critical assessments from different sectors of the state, academia, and civil society (Feld, 2019; House of Representatives, 2020; Khan, 2017, 2018; Lynn, 2024; Montoya, 2024; Radsch & Montoya, 2024; Wu, 2018).

Since 2018, in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, the public visibility of the risks associated with mass data collection, algorithmic manipulation, and the political use of digital platforms has increased significantly. This crisis acted as a catalyst to reposition the issue of Big Tech on the public agenda, not only as economic actors with dominant power, but also as political agents capable of influencing deliberative, democratic, and regulatory processes.

The most obvious shift took place during Joe Biden's presidency (2021-2025), who took office with the explicit intention of revitalizing an antitrust tradition that had been weakened in recent decades (Executive Office of the President, 2021). His administration promoted the appointment of key figures in regulatory agencies, such as Lina Khan at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Jonathan Kanter at the Department of Justice (DOJ), with the aim of reviewing the application of competition law in the digital environment. They were joined by academic Tim Wu, renowned for his critical work on digital markets, as presidential advisor on technology issues. These additions promoted a more structural reading of market power, questioning not only specific anti-competitive behaviors, but the very economic architecture of the platforms. Conceptually, an attempt was made to return competition laws –such as the Sherman Act (1890) and the Clayton Act (1914)– to their original purpose, which was to protect competitive dynamics in a broad sense.

It should be noted that, since the late 1970s, the influence of the Chicago School had promoted a narrow reinterpretation of antitrust laws. In this view, the rules no longer served to limit market power, but only to ensure the productive efficiency of companies (outputs) and consumer welfare, measured exclusively by prices. Reversing this approach is a central task for the period, both because of the need to recover the original spirit of the legislator and due to the inadequacy of price metrics to

capture the dynamics of many digital markets, in which products are offered, apparently, “free of charge” (Bilic et al., 2021; Picard, 2023).

At the same time, Congress introduced numerous bills aimed at restricting practices considered abusive, such as vertical integration in marketplaces (Amazon case), self-preference in search engines (Google Search case), or conditions imposed on developers in app stores (Apple and Google Play case). Although most of these 2021 initiatives—which clearly addressed structural aspects of platform business models—did not succeed, they created a climate of growing pressure on companies (Congressional Research Service [CRS], 2021).

Among the obstacles that prevented legislative progress were high political polarization in Congress, the powerful tech industry lobby, and diversionary strategies promoted by the platforms themselves, which included public relations campaigns (such as the Google News Initiative), forms of self-governance (such as Meta’s Oversight Board), and narrative frameworks that presented regulation as a threat to innovation. Added to this was the geopolitical argument—also promoted by the companies themselves—that warned of the risks of weakening the tech giants in the context of competition with China (Bradford, 2024; Flew et al., 2023).

In the judicial sphere, since 2020 the FTC has been pursuing anti-trust proceedings against Facebook for alleged monopoly in social media, and since 2023 another against Amazon, accused of exclusionary practices to preserve its dominance in e-commerce. The Department of Justice (DOJ), for its part, is conducting two legal actions against Google: one for practices aimed at monopolizing search, and another for monopoly in the digital advertising market. The *U.S. v. Google* case, initiated in 2020 during Donald Trump’s first term, was the first antitrust case brought against a Big Tech company since the DOJ’s lawsuit against Microsoft in 1998 (Holt, 2024, p. 129). All of these cases remain open at the time of this writing, with no final judgments. In some cases, regulatory authorities have requested structural remedies, including measures such as divestiture or the sale of business units. The DOJ, for example, has raised the possibility of Google divesting Chrome. For its part, the FTC sued Meta in 2020 for forming a possible monopoly by integrating Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp under the same conglomerate (Rivero, 2025b; Tech Policy Press, n.d.).

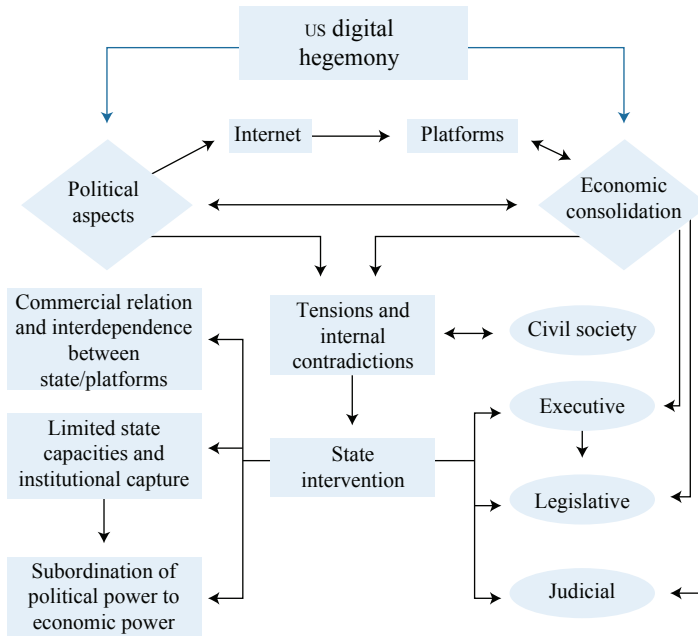
These internal tensions do not represent a break with US digital hegemony, but they do express a growing dispute over its legitimacy. The same country that devised and promoted the platform model is now facing structural questioning about the effects of that architecture on the concentration of power, economic inequality, and the health of its democracy. Joe Biden himself, whose administration was marked by an active approach to this agenda, expressed in his farewell speech in January 2025 his concern about excessive concentration in the technology sector and the emergence of a “tech-industrial complex that could pose real dangers for our country” (Oval Office, 2025). In this sense, analyzing domestic controversies allows for a deeper understanding of both the foundations and the cracks in a hegemony that is often observed solely through its external projection.

DISCUSSION: DENATURALIZING HEGEMONY

Understanding US digital hegemony requires moving beyond perspectives that explain it solely in terms of technological advancement or business efficiency. As this paper has shown, this hegemony is the product of a historical construction in which political, regulatory, and economic decisions converge, taken in a specific context that allowed for the emergence and global expansion of large digital platforms. In this sense, rather than a spontaneous or inevitable process, it is a carefully configured political-economic regime that combines state investment, deregulation, market concentration, and institutional capture.

From a historical perspective, we can see a trajectory that has taken us from the founding ideals of an open and decentralized Internet to the consolidation of an ecosystem dominated by hyper-concentrated platforms. This shift was consolidated, not without tension and resistance, by a small group of companies –Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Apple, and Microsoft– which today operate as global players with levels of capital accumulation and political power comparable to those of many nation states (Lynn, 2010; Schaake, 2024). The acquisition trajectories of these companies –250 in the case of Alphabet, 91 in Amazon, and 67 in Meta– reveal a process of expansion without major regulatory obstacles until recently, highlighting a domestic institutional environment that is largely permissive of business concentration.

FIGURE 2
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF US DIGITAL HEGEMONY



Source: The author.

On the economic front, analysis of US digital markets reveals a structural trend toward high levels of concentration, even in sectors with apparent diversity of suppliers. From basic infrastructure –such as submarine cables, data centers, or telecommunications services– to more specific sectors –such as music, video game, or e-book distribution–, patterns of dominance sustained by network effects, vertical integration, economies of scale, and user capture strategies can be observed. The articulation between hardware, software, platforms, and content within closed ecosystems, as in the cases of Apple or Alphabet, reinforces this dynamic, limiting the possibilities for new players to enter the market.

At the institutional level, this concentrated structure has begun to be questioned both outside and inside the United States. Although regula-

tory frameworks in regions such as the European Union, Latin America, and Asia tend to be designed defensively against the power of Big Tech, the truth is that controversies surrounding the impacts of the model have also intensified within the United States itself. From the Edward Snowden and Cambridge Analytica scandals to the multiple lawsuits filed between 2020 and 2024, digital hegemony is no longer presented as a virtuous manifestation of entrepreneurial spirit, but has become the subject of public, political, and judicial scrutiny.

This repositioning of the internal debate reveals at least three key elements. First, the existence of a sustained institutional dispute that spanned different administrations (Trump-Biden-Trump) and materialized in parliamentary investigations, new merger guidelines (DOJ & FTC, 2023), legislative proposals, and litigation brought by the FTC and DOJ. Second, the recent entry of large platforms into a new phase of relationship with the state, characterized by explicit alliances with political power—as in the case of Donald Trump’s return in 2025—which raises questions about the continuity of incipient regulatory advances. And thirdly, the emergence of a critical—albeit still fragmented—agenda that challenges both the economic effects (monopolies, exclusion of competitors) and the social and political impacts (manipulation of information, erosion of privacy, effects on mental health and the democratic fabric).

Over the past decade, limited regulatory consensus has given way to a bipartisan agenda to review the market power of large platforms, expressed in legislative investigations, bills, and federal and state litigation. Rather than a unified ideological shift, this is a heterogeneous coalition that converges on the diagnosis of concentration and asymmetries but diverges on remedies (structural vs. behavioral) and the desirable scope of public intervention. Ongoing proceedings against search, ad tech, and social media platforms illustrate a dispute over control of distribution channels, rules for data access, and interoperability. The controversy over default settings, bundling, and self-preference cuts across agencies, courts, and legislators, and reconfigures the balance between innovation and democratic control.

From a Latin American or Global South perspective, denaturalizing US digital hegemony involves not only observing its effects on our

territories, but also analyzing the conditions that made it possible. This perspective allows us to question the idea of inevitability that often surrounds platform models and to recover the capacity for intervention of institutional frameworks, state decisions, and social disputes in their construction. Hegemony cannot be explained solely by the technical or innovative capabilities of companies, but rather by their insertion into an economic-political model of accumulation that has enjoyed state support, tax benefits, government contracts, and regulatory tolerance. Although not addressed in this paper, it is important to note that civil society has also played a role in formulating demands, diagnoses, and regulatory proposals.

At the same time, thinking about hegemony from within enables new analytical tools for those seeking to build alternatives. If dominant platforms emerged and expanded in a specific institutional environment, then it is possible to imagine other ecosystems, governed by different rules, actors, and purposes. This means, among other things, questioning the technological determinism that presents platforms as the only possible future for communication, culture, or social life.

CONCLUSIONS

This article addressed the political and economic factors that sustain the digital hegemony of the United States. Rather than treating it here as a natural effect of technological progress, it was analyzed as a historical construct, the result of state decisions, market dynamics, and a regulatory framework that favored concentration.

The study identified three key elements. The first is active state intervention, both in the early stages of the open Internet with its promises of democratization and in the consolidation of the Corporate Platform Complex. The second is a digital economy structured around a few players, with strong vertical integration and control of infrastructure and data. And finally, an institutional framework that includes and goes beyond state actors, which is beginning to question this concentration, although without significant results so far.

Throughout the analysis, it became clear that hegemony cannot be explained solely by technical or business capabilities. Political support,

strategic alliances, and regulatory advantages have been decisive. This relationship between public power and platforms seems to have even strengthened in recent times, particularly after Donald Trump's return to power. It is not possible to conceive of this process in a linear fashion. The collusion between Silicon Valley magnates and the current administration may or may not result in greater state protection for their businesses; it is certainly an open-ended situation.

However, the signs of conflict are evident. Legislative, judicial, and social reactions within the United States show that the internal legitimacy of this model is not assured. The country that promoted and exported the current digital ecosystem is now facing debates about its own limits. In an international scenario where artificial intelligence is advancing and other powers are challenging US leadership, these discussions are becoming urgent. The risk that the future of digital technologies will be made of old materials is a possibility, so thinking about alternatives is not only a task of analysis: it is also a political and social challenge.

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