



# POLICY TAKEAWAYS

DAY 1, SESSION 2.2. BIG TECH AND PLATFORM REGULATION

## A Balancing Act: The Promise and Peril of Big Tech in India

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Better understanding how digital platforms impact Indian society is needed as these play a key role in the country's development. To clarify this Tandem Research proposes to classify Big Tech's (i.e. Apple, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, Facebook, Baidu and Tencent) social function in terms of "four buckets" of influence (Market Power, Informational Gateway, Privacy, Sovereignty)<sup>1</sup>. Efforts to regulate Big Tech in India should avoid taking a "silos" approach. Instead, a holistic regulatory approach across all four areas of influence is required. Any successful attempt, must also first address the government's limited regulatory capacity, as well as its political relationship with Big Tech.

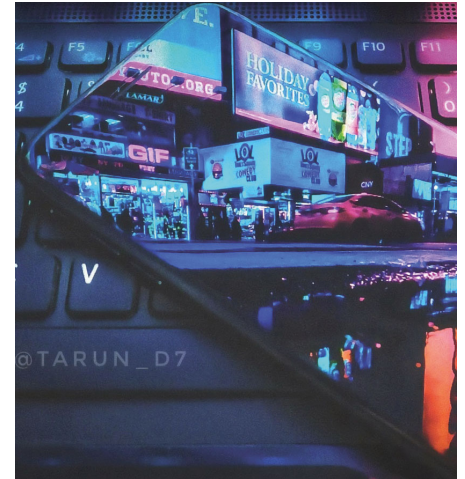


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### Key Takeaways

#### 1 Understanding Big Tech and their market models in the Indian context

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Big Tech within India may operate according one of four types of market models: *data-centric* models, where companies collect data through multiple platforms (Facebook); *network effects*, represented by the interaction of different platforms driving value to its business (companies including Google map in their own platforms); *infrastructural models*, provided by companies providing platforms for markets and vendors (Amazon); or *civic models*, which include platforms that provide a space for civil society to organize and develop campaigns.

#### 2 The influence of Big Tech in the development of Digital India

2

Big Tech plays a crucial market and state support role in India which can be understood in terms of four areas (buckets) of functionality. These are directed to increasing India's market power, providing an informational gateway, ensuring data privacy and assisting in protecting sovereign interests.

#### 3 Social concerns around the expansion of Big Tech in India

3

Big Tech's broad social influence raises issues such as anti-competitive behaviour, over-representation in policy discourse, influence over people's choices, role in disseminating misinformation, content moderation, excessive granular data collection, loss of individual agency, tax avoidance and impediments to law enforcement. In addition, many suggest there is a lack of transparency on Big Tech's business models which prevents regulators from accurately investigating their activities.

#### 4 A regulatory approach should be based on the main areas of Big Tech's influence, and its limitations

4

Regulatory efforts should seek to address the main functions of Big Tech and not the individual platforms. However, the state's current regulatory capacity may be limited and its political interactions with Big Tech need to be scrutinized. Instrumenting transparency and accountability is yet to be achieved and issues around implementation, competition policy, freedom of speech and international cooperation, require further development.

<sup>1</sup> "A balancing act: the promise and peril of Big Tech in India" at: <https://tandemresearch.org/publications/a-balancing-act-the-promise-and-peril-of-big-tech-in-india>

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