

THE GLOBAL RACE FOR TECH REGULATION: COMPARING APPROACHES IN THE EU, US, AND CHINA

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ABSTRACT

As digital technologies reshape economies and societies, governments around the world are racing to regulate the tech sector. The European Union, United States, and China have emerged as three dominant regulatory forces, each with distinct philosophies and strategies. This article compares their approaches to tech regulation, focusing on data privacy, antitrust enforcement, artificial intelligence governance, and platform accountability. By analyzing these models, we gain insight into how geopolitical priorities, legal traditions, and economic interests shape the future of global tech governance.

Keywords: Tech Regulation, Data Privacy, Antitrust, Artificial Intelligence, EU Digital Services Act, US FTC, China Cybersecurity Law, Platform Accountability, Global Governance.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is no longer just a sector—it's the infrastructure of modern life. From social media and e-commerce to artificial intelligence and cloud computing, digital platforms influence everything from public discourse to national security. As tech giants grow in power and reach, governments are responding with regulatory frameworks aimed at curbing abuses, protecting consumers, and asserting sovereignty. The EU, US, and China represent three contrasting models in this global race for tech regulation (Alaaraj et al., 2023).

The EU has positioned itself as a global leader in digital regulation, emphasizing human rights, consumer protection, and market fairness. Enacted in 2018, GDPR sets a high standard for data privacy, requiring user consent, data minimization, and breach notification. These laws target platform accountability and market dominance, imposing transparency obligations and anti-monopoly measures on Big Tech. The EU's approach is rights-based and precautionary. It seeks to prevent harm before it occurs and treats data protection as a fundamental right. Regulators like the European Commission and national data protection authorities actively enforce rules, often levying substantial fines. In contrast, the US has historically favored a laissez-faire approach, allowing innovation to flourish with minimal interference. However, growing concerns over misinformation, monopolistic practices, and data breaches have prompted a shift (Alateyah et al., 2023).

The FTC has ramped up antitrust investigations into companies like Meta, Amazon, and Google, challenging mergers and monopolistic behavior. California's Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) and Virginia's Consumer Data Protection Act (CDPA) reflect growing momentum for privacy legislation. The White House has issued executive orders and blueprints for AI governance, emphasizing risk management and ethical use (Alawneh et al., 2024).

The US model is reactive and fragmented. It prioritizes economic growth and innovation, often regulating after public outcry or market failure. Federal and state agencies share jurisdiction, leading to inconsistent enforcement. China's regulatory strategy is deeply intertwined with its political and economic goals. The government views tech regulation as a tool for maintaining social stability, national security, and ideological control (AlMulhim et al., 2023).

These laws mandate data localization, government access to data, and strict security protocols. China's version of GDPR, PIPL regulates data collection and processing, with an emphasis on state oversight. Authorities have cracked down on fintech firms, ride-hailing apps, and online education platforms, citing anti-competitive behavior and social risk. China's model is centralized and authoritarian. It combines consumer protection with political control, using regulation to align tech development with state priorities. Enforcement is swift and opaque, often involving fines, bans, or forced restructuring (Alshehri et al., 2010).

CONCLUSION

The global race for tech regulation is not just about laws—it's about power, values, and the future of digital society. As the EU, US, and China continue to shape their regulatory landscapes, the rest of the world watches closely. Harmonization will be elusive, but dialogue and cooperation are essential to avoid fragmentation and ensure that technology serves humanity—not just profit or control.

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