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IL TRUMPISMO COME NUOVO MODELLO DI GOVERNO

Tra neoliberalismo e neofascismo

A cura di
Davide Borrelli, Christian Laval e Nilton Ken Ota

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Silvana Cristina Da Silva, Márcio Cataia

TRUMPISM, BIG TECH AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY FASCISM

The instrumentalization of individuals into digital soldiers

Abstract:

Trumpism incorporates and disseminates so-called corporate warrior ethics, forging a new social subject which operates under a logic akin to fascism. During his first term, Donald Trump enacted the federal Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act (CLOUD Act, 2018), which compels US-based technology companies to provide data to federal authorities, regardless of where it is stored. Data extracted by Big Tech (entities that are simultaneously civil and military) fuels programmable digital architectures that underpin the (geo)politics of the Big State and antidemocratic digital platforms, propagating a militarization of subjects according to a doctrine of "total information". Similar to the cognitive preparation for the rise of "entrepreneurs of the self" under the aegis of competitiveness, the alliance between Big State and Big Tech instrumentalizes social media users as soldiers in a war against "manufactured enemies". A distinctive feature of contemporary fascism is that these digital soldiers believe they are acting in self-defense, rather than as members of a diffuse army within digital networks designed to instrumentalize subjects.

Keywords:

Warrior ethics; Big State; Big Tech; Digital Soldiers.

1. *Introduction*

The aggression against Venezuela in early 2026, with the kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro, imposed Trumpism on Latin America within the global doctrine defined by the US National Security Strategy (NSS) published in December 2025. Although NSS builds the Monroe Doctrine, summarized in the phrase "America for the Americans", the contemporary landscape of neoliberal globalization assumes systemic specificities that

are impossible to reduce to the geopolitical reality of the Monroe Doctrine era, defined in the first quarter of the 19th century, and its Roosevelt Corollary, the Big Stick policy of the early 20th century. The Monroe Doctrine advocated against the existence of colonies in the American continent and foreign intervention in the internal affairs of American countries, offering in exchange the non-intervention of the United States in conflicts related to European countries and their colonies. However, by the beginning of the 20th century, the Doctrine had become ambiguous, as it sanctioned a unilateral right of foreign intervention, as was the case with the US intervention in Cuba. Today, the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, or rather, Trumpism, updates the old American expansionism (the case of Greenland also being part of this logic), yet without the sacred mantle of the 19th-century Doctrine of Manifest Destiny, which was based on the belief that the US had a divine mission to expand its territory and spread its democratic and civilizing ideals. Today, conflicts and wars of conquest place the ideal of security above democracy.

The NSS states:

> We want a Hemisphere that remains free of hostile foreign incursion or ownership of key assets, and that supports critical supply chains; and we want to ensure our continued access to key strategic locations. In other words, we will assert and enforce a "Trump Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine. [...] We will deny non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to position forces or other threatening capabilities, or to own or control strategically vital assets, in our Hemisphere. This "Trump Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine is a common-sense and potent restoration of American power and priorities, consistent with American security interests. (NSS 2025, pp. 5, 15).

The "Trump Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine underpins a geopolitical shield operated by two fundamental and interdependent arms: the military arm, which resorts to extraterritorial aggression and warfare - as exemplified by the intervention in Venezuela - to safeguard control over the "strategically vital assets" identified by the NSS; and the normative and legal arm, represented by instruments such as the *CLOUD Act* (2018), which instrumentalizes the monopoly of Big Tech by compelling these corporations to convert their data architecture into surveillance tools at the service of federal authorities. This consolidates a strategic symbiosis: while the Big State provides the military force and the legal framework necessary to guarantee corporate expansion and hegemony in the global market, Big Tech serves the state by providing the critical infrastructure and informational support required for projecting power and maintaining national security.

This article contends that the symbiosis between the Big State and Big Tech operates through a techno-algorithmic control that instrumentalizes attention to forge digital soldiers. The state increasingly morphs into a hypervigilant entity that, instead of succumbing to the power of corporations, acts in concert with Big Tech, which operates and monopolizes the supporting networks that are crucial to the global power projection of a "two-headed Leviathan". By instrumentalizing private data architecture for national security purposes and extending its jurisdiction beyond physical borders – converting cyberspace into a space of surveillance – the state reaffirms its power with renewed vigor.

Thus, as of early 2026, large US multinational companies are about to become exempt from the global tax agreement that targets these companies' profits. The plan, finalized by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), excludes US-based multinationals from the minimum tax rate of 15%, following direct intervention by the Trump administration with other G7 members. This new plan or agreement aims to preserve accounting and legal maneuvers used to transfer profits to tax havens with low or no taxation. Since the beginning of Trump's second term, the US government has threatened to impose retaliatory tariffs on countries that charge taxes on US companies (The Guardian 2026a). Tax havens are nothing new in the global economy. Market hawks have long - especially since the 1970s - established offshore areas that are safe for the market and the free movement of capital, without the burden of the state, democracy, or social security (Slobodian 2023). What is new, however, is the adoption of such lax policies in the biggest world economy.

As Guéguen (2024) states, in this neoliberal period, the market and its competitive mechanisms are elevated to a supreme value, in the face of which democracy itself comes to be perceived as a threat. This context suggests a deep mistrust towards democracy, bordering demophobia. Such attitude translates into a process of building enmities, in which groups such as environmentalists, feminists, and critics of austerity and privatization policies are framed as adversaries of the neoliberal state for opposing market logic.

In addition to the much-debated yet reasonably consolidated fact that the market defends itself through financial control of companies (in which shareholding control plays a prominent role), this neoliberal period, as we understand it, inevitably involves control of information and the infrastructure associated with it, too. The rise of Big Tech as geopolitical actors stems fundamentally from the centrality of information in the contemporary period. For Sadin (2015), information should not be understood as simple data or communication but as a digital translation of reality that

establishes a new regime of algorithmic truth. His critique of digital reason shows that information, when continuously captured, processed, and prescribed by technical systems, acquires a normative character, guiding social, economic, and political decisions with an authority that is superior to human interpretations. In this sense, information is simultaneously an instrument of surveillance, as it allows for the real-time capture of behaviors and flows, and a power device, as it legitimizes the primacy of technical prescriptions over other forms of knowledge. In addition, information becomes the raw material of algorithmic life, structuring everyday practices and redefining the relationship between individuals, communities, and institutions. Thus, information is more than content: it is the basis of a technological regime that reorganizes human experience under the logic of computing and digital normativity.

In fact, control of information is a fundamental aspect of power, now under the aegis of large companies, the so-called Big Tech. At the time of writing, Chinese company ByteDance, under threat of being banned by the Trump administration, announced a share restructuring agreement in the US. The new composition will include local companies Silver Lake and Oracle, and MGX, from Abu Dhabi, leaving ByteDance with a minority stake of 19.9%. In a statement, the new joint venture said it "will operate under defined safeguards that protect national security through comprehensive data protection, algorithm security, content moderation, and software guarantees for US users" (The Guardian 2026b).

Mhalla (2024)[1] characterizes the power of Big Tech as an unprecedented phenomenon in contemporary history, marked by its ability to act simultaneously as economic, technological, and geopolitical actors. Big Tech companies not only concentrate resources and innovation but also reconfigure the morphology of states, redefine the balance of power between nations, and actively participate in fields traditionally reserved for state sovereignty, such as war and security. While constituting the core of US power, these corporations function as disruptive agents of democracy, establishing a new "two-headed Leviathan" formed by the ambivalent alliance between Big Tech and Big State. This unlimited power, driven by a desire for boundless expansion, reveals the centrality of digital technologies in the production of hegemony and in a new configuration of the international division of labor. Big Tech, in association with the Big State, transforms individuals into "soldiers" in a full information war, as every

1 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Asma Mhalla's works from the original French into English were made by the authors.

digital action - from using social networks to consuming data - is mobilized as part of a strategy of economic expansion free from the shackles of the welfare state, technological control of industrial and informational production, and social capillarization, in which freedom is never collective, but individual to the soldiers themselves.

For this reason, the US government has enacted the federal Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act (CLOUD Act 2018), an extraterritorial law requiring US technology companies to provide data to federal authorities, regardless of where it is stored.

In this sense, this article constitutes a theoretical and critical essay aimed at analyzing the transformation of the state into a hypervigilant entity operating in a symbiotic relationship with Big Tech. On one hand, Big Tech's monopoly over information infrastructure and data control provides the state with the necessary support for the renewal and expansion of its frontiers beyond national territory. On the other hand, these corporations participate in modulating subjects into activists for the causes of the Big State but also for their own, as they depend on psychologically aligned subjects and rely upon free speech fundamentalism (Görgen 2026) to expand the information market, given that information has become an essential commodity for the functioning of global capital.

Consequently, the central argument is that the diluted borders between Big Tech and the Big State instrumentalizes human subjectivity, converting citizens into "digital soldiers" in a war of total information. These "digital soldiers" are defined here as individuals who, captured by an illusion of freedom and entrepreneurial autonomy, end up acting as active agents in disinformation networks, forming a diffuse army that defends authoritarian agendas and market interests, often in contradiction to their own class interests and social solidarity.

To investigate the mechanisms by which this technopolitical arrangement transforms individuals into soldiers of the information war, this paper is structured in two parts. The first is dedicated to dissecting the anatomy of the American Big State, demonstrating that neoliberalism did not promote the end of the state, but rather its reconfiguration into a technopolitical entity that instrumentalizes the infrastructure of Big Tech to project global power and extraterritorial surveillance. The second part examines the forging of "digital soldiers", analyzing how Silicon Valley rationality and the psychopower of platforms convert social resentment and human attention into weapons of hybrid warfare. Finally, the conclusions summarize the challenges posed by this "two-headed Leviathan" to the sovereignty of nations and point to cognitive and infrastructural sovereignty as decisive frontiers for the survival of democracy.

2. *The American Big State*

In the introduction to his book *Pour une géographie du pouvoir* (Towards a Geography of Power), Raffestin (1980) offers a scathing critique of the concept of power used by classical political geography, which emerged in Europe in the late 19th century, particularly from the lineage of Friedrich Ratzel, because this approach conceived of the state as the sole source of power. For Raffestin (1980), the phenomenon of power is historical, predating the state, as other institutions have also claimed the right to govern, to guide men in their actions, and in fact, the power of the clergy predates the territorial state. However, this assertion does not exclude the fact that the state is a powerful institution, one that claims for itself the monopoly and legitimacy of the exercise of violence, as opposed to all other institutions that dispute the power to govern. The state and territory have been a reality since Westphalia (1648): the state with its reference system based on power and territory as its strength, with its vital space surrounded by borders, within which a given legal-political regime prevails that distinguishes it from others and under which the state exercises its power of government.

Supiot (2015) points out that "government" is a category capable of encompassing different forms of exercising power and that, in addition to the argument of state authority, there is another, more decisive one: transnational corporations have come to occupy, in the new institutional context that is taking shape - exacerbated by neoliberal globalization - a position comparable to that of states. Since the industrial era, the ways in which individuals are governed, both by states and corporations, have been mutually influential. The current reciprocal interactions between state policy and corporate policy (Santos 1997b) have a revealing institutional character in the present.

These interactions, or metabolism, were long overshadowed by the maxim that neoliberal globalization would be marked by the miniaturization of the state, by the withdrawal of the state from its traditional and long-standing functions, especially in the economic sphere. And the demands of the market, or of large companies, guided by privatizations after the Washington Consensus, did indeed show a state in apparent retreat. However, as Dardot and Laval (2009) stated, quoting Andrew Gamble, we are not dealing with a simple withdrawal of the state but with a political re-engagement of the state on new bases, with new methods and new objectives. The neoliberal commitment was and continues to be synonymous with the free market, but not with *laissez-faire*, as government practices and mechanisms were marked as guardians of the legal, monetary, and behavioral rules that guarantee competitiveness in a context of "unofficial

collusion with large oligopolies", creating market conditions and individuals adapted to market logic - entrepreneurs of themselves.

Dardot and Laval (2009) demonstrate that neoliberalism does not imply the withdrawal of the state, but rather its profound reconfiguration. Far from being limited to economic regulation, as many analysts claim, the neoliberal state assumes a preponderant role as a normative instance, responsible for disseminating and imposing competitive rationality in all spheres of social life. In this sense, it ceases to be the guarantor of social rights and begins to act as an active agent of market discipline, promoting policies of austerity, privatization, and labor flexibility, while at the same time instituting mechanisms for evaluating and holding individuals accountable for social ills as they become entrepreneurs of themselves. The central contradiction pointed out by the authors is that, although neoliberal discourse extols freedom and the market supremacy, its implementation depends on a strong and coercive state, whose function is to ensure the hegemony of competition as the organizing principle of contemporary society.

Neoliberal norms have found two privileged vehicles for their global dissemination: financialization and the globalization of technology (Dardot & Laval 2009, p. 199). In this article, we focus on the perspective of technological globalization, or as Santos (1997a) stated, technical unicity, which is so important that it leads Mhalla (2024; 2025) to describe the current existence of a Big State inseparable from Big Tech.

The terms Big State and Big Tech - the "two-headed Leviathan" - suggest a new hybrid (technopolitical) regime, in which state sovereignty and corporate power merge, redefining democracy, war, and digital governance: it is a new form of governing, exercised through informational control.

Government and information have always gone hand in hand (Braudel 1979) but with each new round of technical and technological modernization, the links between both are substantially transformed and occasionally open up new eras, according to Mattelart (1994). The invention of the cable telegraph ushered in one of those eras, as for the first time, information could be relayed without a physical carrier (Raffestin 1980). Radiotelegraphy quickly came to be used for transmitting news but was also incorporated by the military for tactical purposes. Aware of its potential warfare use, many states turned this technique into a monopoly, as access to the opponent’s information (intelligence) combined with the protection of one’s own information (encryption/censorship) creates a crucial tactical advantage in conflicts. In this sense, information is a strategic (decision-making) resource: each side seeks to know everything about its adversary but needs to protect its own information flows so as not to become vulnerable.

The issue of national security was raised as a *leitmotif* of the Big States, especially for the United States, particularly after World War II. There was a marked concern in the US about the need to contain communism; although this bureaucratic euphemism, according to Anderson (2015), was too dry to galvanize public opinion for the launch of the Cold War, so the key word reflecting US imperialism was "security", linking the internal atmosphere and external operations on a single front, thus ensuring the transition from the New Deal to the Truman Doctrine. The danger no longer stemmed from depression but from subversion. *The Social Security Act* (1935) was followed by a *National Security Act* (1947) which placed democracy under its control, reversing the hierarchies of what should be protected against threats. American national security, as we know it today, is historically and inherently anti-democratic and expansionist. Contradictorily, the legitimacy of expansionism stems from the ideology that the world should be free and democratic, with the caveat that peace comes before justice. The US Big State maintains a national security law in place but fails to exercise economic monopoly over information flows (clouds, cables, data centers etc.), which remain under the Big Tech control.

Recent data from Synergy Research Group (2025) reveals an extreme oligopoly: Amazon, Microsoft, and Google together control 68% of the global public cloud infrastructure. This concentration transforms the ""cloud" - often perceived as ethereal and decentralized - into a highly centralized physical asset, where the data sovereignty of entire nations depends contractually on three private entities under US jurisdiction.

Anderson's analysis (2015, pp. 51-52, based on Robert Brenner 2006) points to a structural tension in state actions. On the one hand, state authority itself relies on the vitality of a profit-driven economy, which prevents the government from acting against the interests of capital. On the other hand, the state does not operate under the same logic as the private sector and often lacks market norms and pricing systems which are essential tools for measuring efficiency and rationality in the corporate world.

According to Rikap's analysis (2023), the hegemony of Big Tech companies does not derive solely from market dynamics but is fundamentally sustained by legal regimes that legitimize the monopoly of data extraction. This dynamic creates a scenario of systemic exclusion: by capturing and retaining the flow of data and knowledge, Big Tech companies take away from the community the informational resources that are indispensable for its survival and robustness, concentrating resilience solely in themselves.

In the US domestic context, but with international repercussions, the most immediate consequence of the September 11, 2001 attacks was

the enactment of the *Patriot Act*. This legislation relativized citizens' privacy and fully subordinated it entirely to the imperatives of national security amid a war with international terrorists, helping discredit the notion that states were becoming weaker. The *Patriot Act* laid the legal framework for mass surveillance of the population a practice that would, in turn, require substantial technological investments. Although this specific legislation is no longer in force, most of its surveillance doctrines have been reformulated, renewed, and incorporated into subsequent legislation, such as the *Cloud Act*, which reflects the US expansionist unilateralism by imposing its control on servers and networks located in other sovereign territories, effectively treating the world as an extension of US territory.

This democratic erosion becomes even more critical when analyzed from the perspective of the platforms' political economy. If, as Rikap (2023) demonstrates, Big Tech companies already exercise global power through their monopoly on data and knowledge extraction, the *Cloud Act* functions as the legal arm that instrumentalizes this concentration in favor of the US government. This creates a dangerous symbiosis: the corporate infrastructure of Big Tech companies, which already operated a "systemic exclusion" in the market, now serves as a vehicle for US legal extraterritoriality, transforming private servers into outposts of state surveillance that ignore national borders.

Control of networks (physical and informational) has consolidated itself as a vector of global hegemony, elevating the domain of information to the status of a geostrategic resource. This dissolves the fallacy of state obsolescence in the age of neoliberalism and instead of retreating, the state is morphing into a hypervigilant entity that, far from succumbing to the power of corporations, acts in concert with Big Tech, which operate and monopolize the supporting networks that are indispensable to the global power projection of the "two-headed Leviathan". By instrumentalizing private data architecture for national security purposes and extending its jurisdiction beyond physical borders – converting cyberspace into a space of surveillance – the state reaffirms its power with renewed vigor showing that the Leviathan has not disappeared; it has digitized and merged with capital, erecting a hybrid hegemony where the defense of the market order and the capacity for state coercion become inseparable faces of the same apparatus of control, which seeks to neutralize various forms of dissent. Under the regime of informational control, as posited by Mattelart (2007), the enemy is whoever withstands the conversion of market logic into the sole regulatory principle of social organization.

3. *Big Tech and Digital Soldiers*

The causal relationship between the technical control of infrastructure and the algorithmic management of attention is grounded in a continuous feedback mechanism, or "flywheel," that fuses material and epistemic layers into a "single machine" of power. Technically, Big Tech holds a monopoly not only over the flow of information but over the physical infrastructure itself - undersea cables, data centers, and clouds - that constitutes the architecture of digital reality. This material dominance allows the algorithmic superstructure to capture user attention as its primary raw material, utilizing tools such as infinite scroll and recommendation systems to maximize screen time and extract real-time behavioral data. Unlike historical monopolies, platform power is "primary epistemic", as it defines what is visible, thinkable, and debatable, transforming "free speech" into a capture device that continuously extract subjectivity from users. As Görgen (2026) states, for Big Tech, free speech is not a social value but the raw material of the business model. At this point, manipulation ceases to be passive and becomes instrumentalization: "psychopower" acts upon social affection and resentment, modulating user conduct so that they act as "digital soldiers". The individual, believing they are exercising sovereign will, begins to operate within a grammar of information warfare designed by algorithms that amplify hostility and enmity as engagement and profit strategies. Thus, the militarization of minds is the direct result of a technical design that converts human experience into "prediction products" and belligerent political action serving the symbiotic purposes of the Big State and private capital.

The systematic dissemination of hate within Big Tech's machinery is based on what Da Empoli (2019) describes as the "marriage between anger and algorithms ", where network infrastructure is technically designed to prioritize emotional engagement over factual truth. Through a centrifugal logic, algorithms operate as resentment-processing machines that identify niches of indignation and, through continuous optimization processes, inflame the passions of isolated groups to convert them into attack vectors against manufactured enemies. Psychically, this device instrumentalizes "free speech" to capture attention and induce states of affective reactivity, exploring the fact that disinformation is 70% more likely to be shared than real news. Thus, the work of Big Tech's expert engineers not only manipulates public opinion but instrumentalizes user subjectivity (treated as "soldiers in the battle for true justice") by transforming social anxiety into cognitive weaponry[2]. The Cam-

2 Studies in persuasive communication demonstrate that the act of convincing individuals can be far more effective when tailored to their unique psychological

bridge Analytica case was emblematic of the use of mass user information from Facebook to capture refined individual profiles and influence voters in the 2016 election of Donald Trump (The Guardian 2018).

Trumpism, in a symbiotic relationship with Big Tech, forges a normativity of individuals based on arming spirits for "full war". Two elements are fundamental to this process: the centrality of information - which, in turn, requires infrastructure for its effectiveness - and the ability of digital platforms to convert citizens into entrepreneurs of themselves and "digital soldiers".

These individuals' subjectivation is based on the principles of neoliberalism, such as individual freedom, competition in all spheres of life, and the view of the welfare state as an enemy (Dardot & Laval 2009). Furthermore, it is based on the large-scale militarization of minds, armed for combat against ideological adversaries.

The maintenance of territorial sovereignty currently rests on the control of information, which makes the relationship between Big Tech and the Big State an intimate one (Mhalla 2024). This means that sovereignty, more than in other periods, is conditioned by informational dominance, both to maintain internal cohesion within territories and to defend or expand international borders. In addition to frontline combatants in traditional wars, digital soldiers actively participate in information warfare, and reversing this transformation of citizens into digital soldiers necessarily involves the "cognitive armament" of the population (Mhalla 2024).

3.1. *Data: the raw material of the 21st century*

Big Tech refers to digital oligopolies such as Google, Meta (formerly Facebook), Amazon, and X (formerly Twitter), which have transformed themselves into business models based on the intensive analysis of user-provided data (Morozov 2018). They have inspired the emergence of other digital corporations based on platform models, usually led by investment funds (Langley & Leyshon 2017). The rise of Big Tech as geopolitical actors stems fundamentally from the centrality of information in the contemporary period.

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characteristics and motivations - that is, based on each person's behavioral information. Experiments conducted using "digital footprints" (browsing trails, social media networks etc.) support persuasive appeals directed at the psychological traits of large groups, with the aim of influencing their behavior. This can occur to encourage healthier behaviors or even be used to covertly exploit character flaws and persuade individuals to take actions contrary to their own interests, highlighting the potential need for policy interventions (Matz *et al*. 2017)

Originating in the 21st century, advanced capitalism - or platform capitalism - has come to focus on the extraction and use of a particular type of raw material: data (Srnicek 2016). Platforms are an efficient means to this end, connecting users and groups for different purposes (usually consumption), becoming more effective as they gain scale. The challenge lies in keeping the platform attractive and users engaged, which allows for the capture of increased volumes of information and its transformation into profit and political power.

Big Tech companies are the devices responsible for this extraction; monopolization is the intrinsic goal of their platforms. As holders of all kinds of data, they become influential and powerful. More than an economic sector, it is a tool for the algorithmic control of life (Sadin 2015), stemming from the "Californian ideology" of Silicon Valley.

The Californian ideology has become globalized, causing the phenomenon of the "siliconization of the world" (Sadin, 2016) and the submission of all dimensions of life to algorithms, in the name of supposedly exact mathematical efficiency. This ideology stems from counterculture - libertarian movements that saw technology as an instrument of emancipation - and culminates in the oligopolization of information under the guise of individual freedom and entrepreneurship.

The genealogy of this relationship between technology and liberalism, referred to by Sadin (2016) as technoliberalism, shows that neoliberal subjectivation and contemporary fascism take their shape from the " mediates " (Raffestin 1980): technical macrosystems and microsystems that enable the circulation of ideas and the concretization of the goals of power structures (Santos 1997b).

The current hegemony of Silicon Valley was engineered in five major moments, according to Sadin (2016). The first moment in the construction of Silicon Valley's ideological dominance was part of the counterculture movement of the 1930s and 1940s[3], based on technology, the pursuit of academic excellence, partnerships between the electronics industry and the military, and the "spirit of entrepreneurship" - later called the "culture of risk". This period, although symbolically engendered by the myth of the small garage animated by daring individuals, was showered with abundant public investment. This phase took root in an environment where the pioneering vision of expansion to the West had already taken shape and solid associations had been formed between private capital and public institutions, such as universities and the US military complex.

3 The sense of counterculture employed refers to the creation of an environment favorable to technoscience, not to a sense of challenging the *status quo* (Sadin 2016).

The second moment can be traced back to the 1970s, with the birth of Microsoft and Steve Jobs' first projects at Apple, whose revolution consisted of creating "personal computing" from computers that connected people over more user-friendly interfaces. In this context, cyberculture and hacker culture exploded, presenting themselves as possibilities for "horizontal media".

The fourth moment stems from a significant event for the US and the world: the attacks of September 11, 2001. This event made capturing, processing, and storing information key elements for national security and the sustainability of the digital economy. Google, with its indexing and collection systems, has become a model fueled by the massive capture of Internet users' attention. In this sense, the industrial interpretation of behavior has become the main pivot of the digital economy. This axiom forms the backbone of the "fourth Silicon Valley" (Sadin 2016), promoting what Zuboff (2019) called surveillance capitalism, widely denounced by Edward Snowden in 2013.

Finally, the fifth moment of Silicon Valley is mainly located in the second decade of the 21st century and is characterized by the global expansion of the Silicon Valley spirit, which now inspires other countries, regions, and cities. At the same time, the massive information model invades all spheres of life (Sadin 2016), a process made possible by the spread of infrastructure such as fiber optic cables and interactive devices, notably smartphones.

The Covid-19 pandemic was one of the most decisive events in accelerating the digitization and algorithmic control of life, compelling a large part of the population to carry out daily activities mediated by applications, computer systems, and platforms. This scenario consolidated the stage for the massive collection of behavioral information on a global scale.

Data, as a raw material, becomes a resource (Raffestin 1980) from the moment it is processed into information for strategic use. To this end, investment in infrastructure for capturing and processing these assets is essential (Srnicek 2016). From one perspective, the digital economy is dependent on energy and mineral inputs for the manufacture of electronic devices and connection networks. In classical geopolitics, the state acts as a central agent in the search for strategic resources, such as energy sources. Examples of this are the invasion and kidnapping of the president in Venezuelan territory by the United States, in search of control of oil, and the war in Ukraine, which exposes conflicts over territorial domination and acce

ss to critical minerals, such as rare earths.

On the other hand, the digital age requires complex systems for the circulation, storage, and interpretation of data for decision-making - the

so-called material layer (Mhalla 2024). Technical macrosystems (Santos 1997b) for capturing and transmitting information, such as global and regional fiber optic cable networks, are ventures that require substantial public resources, although they are often built and operated by private entities. According to Mhalla (2024), most submarine cables are owned or operated by giants such as Google or Meta.

A new phase is being ushered in with artificial intelligence, a technology that consumes large amounts of water and electricity and requires robust infrastructure for rapid information processing; this is the layer of informational interactions or cyberspace (Mhalla 2024). This entire set of systems and technical objects coupled with nature- the technosphere (Santos 1997b) - is intensified in the contemporary period.

3.2. *The militarization of social media networks: digital soldiers*

The great contemporary breakthrough lies in the integration of the technosphere into the human body itself, guiding and subjecting individuals to automated decisions. This process is made possible by the ubiquity of smartphones and the rise of wearable devices. Such systems capture data in real time, which is processed by algorithms designed to capture emotions and, based on them, induce specific behaviors. Thus, smartphones and their technical nanosystems function as extensions of macrosystems aimed at controlling attention. The digital environment materializes the "invisible hand" of the market via automation (Sadin 2019), which would be impossible without a belief system anchored in psychic instrumentalization shaped to manufacture desires. Such a situation constitutes the psychosphere (Santos 1997b) - the set of beliefs, desires, and habits that inspire behaviors aligned with power structures. In this context, it is necessary to understand the mechanisms of persuasion that transform individuals into entrepreneurs of themselves and, simultaneously, into digital soldiers.

This would not be possible were it not for Big Tech's instrumental defense of "free speech". According to this notion, without free speech, there would be no data production, nor the possibility for digital media or platform users to create the information flow necessary for Big Tech's business model. As Görgen (2026) states, "Big Tech structurally requires free speech to exist - it is both the raw material and the commodity of the model - and this converts any attempt to regulate informational flow into something that can be framed, with apparent democratic legitimacy, as censorship. This shield is not a rhetorical accident. It is a logical consequence of a business model that has never existed before".

Thanks to computational models and increased processing capacity, the algorithmic management of everyday life brings together socio-technical practices, business, and political power. This reality manifests itself through the knowledge generated about the masses and the intentionality contained in technical work, in which every electrical impulse of a transistor carries the purposes of their creators. Digital platforms express the power of Big Tech associated with the Big State, camouflaged under a savior aura. The central question is how individuals are captured by far-right discourses, becoming activists who defend agendas contrary to their own interests and fight against collective public policies. The "white American man", feeling neglected by the state, rebels against affirmative action, social action, and gender action and turns against immigrants (Brown 2019, 2021), fueling contemporary fascism based on supposed racial superiority. Technologies are used to recognize affections and channel the resentment of social strata victimized by neoliberal policies, such as white American citizens, who have seen their prospects for a better life disappear with the widespread implementation of neoliberal policies. The use of digital behavioral records (Kosinski *et al*., 2013; Matz *et al*. 2017) shows that manipulation is not merely theoretical but measurable in terms of consumer behavior and, by extension, political behavior. Control over psychological digital traces has increased the power of influence over a mass of Internet users (platforms, social media networks, applications, etc.), which has led to the power and capacity to shape individual reason by appealing directly to underlying personality traits - a tool used by agents of contemporary fascisms in an intricate relationship between the Big State and Big Tech.

When theorizing about the technical phenomenon, Ellul (1954) highlights the advantage of the "mass man", who acts mainly on involuntary impulses due to psychological massification. Hence the centrality of advertising, which is responsible for producing lifestyles and convincing individuals to integrate this concept. Advertising aims to awaken needs based on psychological studies, generating a collective psychology appropriate to the current geographical environment. Social networks have become forms of entertainment based on techniques for capturing attention, such as suggestibility (Freud 2011) and control of the psychosocial apparatus.

Stiegler (2008) pointed to a "proletarianization of the spirit that is", the alienation of libidinal energy initiated early on by marketing to children. Such psychopower is an active wing of financial capitalism and gains effectiveness through sociotechnical networks. It represents the systemic control of the economy of desires, operating on individuation (psychic formation) and transindividuation (socialization). Its constituent organs are

marketing and psychotechnologies - tools for forming and capturing attention (the ability to concentrate and care for oneself and others) that have evolved from radio and TV to social media. The advancement of these technologies has generated neurofields (Mhalla 2024), invisible devices for cognitive conditioning. According to Mhalla (2025), these are environments of constant flow where the mind is trapped through sensory overload, fragmentation of attention, and the illusion of freedom.

Big Tech companies hold cognitive power: the ability to shape mental processes (perception, memory, reasoning) by modifying perceived reality itself. This power resonates in resentful societies where neoliberalism has stifled the white middle and working classes (Brown 2021). Nationalist parties have captured this dissatisfaction, associating the decline of these groups with internal and external "enemies ". Thus, corporations and the far right harness fear and uncertainty to produce belligerent engagement, in a move akin to classic fascism. Although the militarization of popular culture and cities is not new (Graham 2011), it is taking on new digital contours. Citizens are armed with information about their own behavior to fight "wars" against targets fabricated by disinformation (Wardle 2020) or partially true data that activate the seeds of pre-existing contemporary fascism and set them in motion.

Trumpism has enormous skills in exploiting social media networks for this purpose, including to justify military action in other countries or to garner support from followers domestically. The "choice" of immigrants as enemies of the American nation and the attribution of almost unlimited powers to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) resonates in part of American society. Individuals are converted into soldiers and activists on social media, acting directly on the battlefield. The intimate and functional relationship between the state - especially the US state - and Big Tech expresses the scale and nature of the information war that is taking place today on social media platforms.

Those who control information become powerful geopolitical agents, as all sectors of the traditional economy increasingly depend on data to leverage profits. Similarly, governments can no longer function without strategies to streamline their services and guarantee sovereignty involving the management of mass information (or disinformation) to reap the benefits of hybrid warfare.

Fighting this trend involves recovering the control of information, through the " cognitive armament of the population " (Mhalla 2024) and protecting of individual information, collected massively by Big Tech in close collaboration with the state. "In the realm of new informational and cognitive struggles, where every brain becomes a potential battlefield, it is up to each nation to cognitively arm its democracy" (Mhalla 2024 p. 268). Countries

that do not have their own Big Tech companies are subject to the interests of US corporations and the US government, with limited strategies to respond to the power of the US Big State. Brazil, following a long debate on the Internet, created the *General Data Protection Law* (LGPD)[4] in 2018, which requires companies to request citizens' consent for collecting and using their data, which led to a direct clash with Big Tech and the US government. The Brazilian government also implemented the Pix public payment system[5], advancing on the credit card corporations' markets. Both the LGPD and Pix collided with Big Tech and major card operators, who attempted to impose commercial retaliation on Brazil.[6] As such, national Sovereignty - exemplified by Brazilian initiatives such as the LGPD and Pix - is no longer a purely territorial issue but has become an informational dispute, hence Mhalla (2024) suggestion that nations should promote the "cognitive armament" of their populations to protect their citizens' individual and collective psychic apparatus from the domination tactics of global technical infrastructures.

4. *Conclusions*

The analysis developed throughout this article allows us to affirm that the classic distinction between state power and private corporate power has become obsolete for understanding 21st-century geopolitics. The phenomenon emerging from Trumpism and the consolidation of the Silicon Valley model establishes a new era of hybrid hegemony – the embodiment of the two-headed Leviathan: the Big State and Big Tech have coalesced into a singular technopolitical organism. If, on the one hand, the US government provides the legal framework (such as the *Cloud Act*) and the military force (its renewed Big Stick policy) to ensure the expansion of data markets, on the other, digital corporations provide the ubiquitous sur-

4 The *General Personal Data Protection Law* (LGPD), n. 13709/2018, came into force in 2020 and provides for the processing of personal data, including in digital media, by natural persons or legal entities governed by public or private law, with the aim of protecting the fundamental rights of freedom and privacy and the free development of the personality of natural persons.

5 Pix is the Brazilian instant payment system, developed and managed by the Central Bank of Brazil, which allows real-time financial settlement, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Operating as a public digital infrastructure, the system uses simplified identification keys or QR codes to enable immediate transactions between individuals, companies, and the government, regardless of the financial institution.

6 See: https://diplomatique.org.br/a-questao-da-politica-externa-de-trump-e-o-ataque-ao-pix/, Retrieved December 18, 2025.

veillance infrastructure and behavioral modulation architecture necessary for "full war".

It can therefore be concluded that national sovereignty has shifted from purely territorial control to the domain of cognitive and informational infrastructures. The transformation of citizens into “digital soldiers” - who, under the illusion of freedom and entrepreneurship, actively work against their own class interests and social solidarity - represents the final victory of neoliberal ideology over politics. Contemporary fascism is not confined to the brutality of classical military and paramilitary violence; it radicalizes its efficacy by operating silently within servers, submarine cables, and synapses, mobilizing negative affects and resentment to shield the market order against any dissent.

The resistance poses a twofold and urgent challenge. First, reclaiming the materiality of the network: nations that do not control their data, their clouds, and their payment systems (as exemplified by the Brazilian case with Pix and LGPD) are condemned to digital vassalage. Second, and more complex, is the imperative of "cognitive armament" . The defense of democracy hinges on the capacity to safeguard the psychic integrity of populations against persuasive design and the militarization of consciousness permeating the networks. Without effective digital sovereignty, democracy risks becoming a mere simulacrum operated by algorithms, where the horizontal key principles of the right to communication - freedom, access, diversity, and participation - are subjugated by the verticalization of information under Big Tech’s logic of profit and the Big State’s logic of security.

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