

GAFAM.

polished – soigné
wages – salaires
shifts – horaires de travail
engagement – implication
warehouse – entrepôt
restroom – toilettes

burnout – épuisement professionnel
revolving door – passages privé-public
upscale clubs – clubs huppés
reportedly – prétendument

competitive advantage – avantage concurrentiel
invest heavily – investir massivement
to soften – adoucir

dubious – douteux
exploitation – exploitation
harassment – harcèlement
exhausting – épuisant

Western governments increasingly depend on digital solutions from the GAFAM giants, creating a **dependency** and reinforcing their **influence**. The GAFAM, with their vast revenues, invest heavily in **lobbying** to **influence regulation** and ease rules that might slow their activity, aiming to shape laws and preserve an economic environment favorable to their models.

The **revolving door phenomenon** is common, with high-ranking government officials taking leading positions in GAFAM-connected companies and vice versa, **transferring expertise and deepening public-private interdependence**. In France, for example, several former top officials now hold key roles in GAFAM lobbying.

Governments also cooperate with the GAFAM on national security and technological innovation challenges. While this collaboration yields state advances, it also increases **vulnerability to economic pressures from these digital giants**. Today, the delicate balance between collaboration and control is marked by regulations such as the Digital Markets Act in Europe and oversight by bodies like the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and the European Commission.

Fun fact (not very fun): In 2021, Google reportedly spent 114 million dollars on lobbying. This amount is much higher than what entire traditional industries like the automobile industry spend. Because of this, Google played a role in canceling two major law projects that aimed to limit its competitive advantage in the search engine market. CEO Sundar Pichai and other top executives attended private meetings in upscale clubs in Washington.

In Asia especially in China many factories producing components and finished products for companies like Apple, Google, Amazon, and Microsoft operate under harsh conditions. For instance, **Foxconn factories** that manufacture iPhones for Apple are reported to **impose long working hours**, insufficient breaks, very low wages, and have faced workplace accidents and harassment.

Moreover, the situation in Xinjiang is particularly alarming. Several human rights organizations report that some suppliers, delivering electronic components for these companies, resort to **forced labor involving Uyghur workers** a practice these companies often deny, yet one that raises significant ethical questions about their supply chains.

It is **paradoxical** that products used by governments and Western consumers are manufactured under such unacceptable conditions, which starkly **contrasts with the modern and innovative image these companies project**.

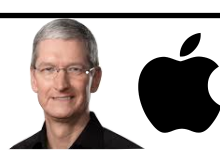
Furthermore, digital giants like Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft base their business models on massive personal **data collection**. In exchange for “free” services, they exploit this data to **target advertising**, tailor offers, and sometimes influence user behavior. Although the enforcement of **GDPR** since 2018 has enabled groups such as La Quadrature du Net to file several complaints against these companies for privacy violations, regulators still struggle to keep pace with rapid technological advances and **opaque data practices**.

The connection between the public sector and the GAFAM

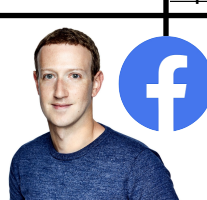
Corporate ethics and working conditions



In July 2018, Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google, oversaw a Cloud AI launch where engineers worked over 80 hours a week, revealing the intense pace behind the polished image.



On October 15, 2010, at Foxconn's Zhengzhou factories in China, at least 15 worker suicides in one month exposed brutal 12-16 hour shifts and very low wages. Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, was linked to the controversies over these working conditions.



During the Cambridge Analytica scandal in early 2018, Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, pushed teams to boost engagement by 40% in six months forcing some to work up to 80 hours a week.



In 2018, Amazon warehouses in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, reported 11-hour shifts, penalties for a 30-second extra restroom break, and a 30% higher accident rate at overtime-heavy sites.



In mid-2019, a survey at Microsoft's Bellevue division revealed 55-hour workweeks and burnout symptoms in 35% of employees, highlighting pressure despite Satya Nadella's push for a humane culture.

Articles to check out :
-Big Tech's Reckoning: How Google's 16-Second Earnings Expose Its Monopolistic Grip
-Chrome Antitrust Paradox: How Google's Browser is the Silent Weapon in Its Quest for Market Domination
-Shattering the Silicon Veil: Big Tech's Obscene Earnings and the Hidden Costs of Monopolies

***Possible questions :**

-To what extent do GAFAM lobbying and interference distort market competition?

-How does GAFAM data collection violate privacy, and what solutions exist?

- Does GAFAM economic and data dominance threaten democracy, and how can regulation restore balance?