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Regulating Dominant Platforms: Challenges and Opportunities of Content Moderation on Jio Platforms

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Abstract: Indian multinational technology company, Jio Platforms with an active subscriber base of 467.6 million (February 2024, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India data) continues to lead the market in India. Digitisation has transformed India's governance model as deep penetration of telecom and the internet in India has laid the foundation for a digital economy. This article examines the role of self-regulation mechanisms and censorship in India's dominant platform company Jio Platforms which contributes significantly to changing the paradigm of digital governance, thereby making services seamless, and easily accessible and improving the ease of living and doing business. Facebook's investment in Jio for a 9.99 percent stake makes it the largest investment for a minority stake by a tech company anywhere in the world. With Jio Platforms and Facebook parent Meta Platforms rolling out a grocery delivery app using Meta's WhatsApp messaging service, the transnational ties are deepening and expanding, making it imperative to examine the role of self-regulation and censorship in a market that is open, diverse and the largest in a democratic governance structure. This article will examine the key concerns of data sharing and privacy, especially when the central plank of government policy is digitisation. With stricter government regulations for foreign players in the market, there is a distinct focus of the government on boosting Indian companies to capture and control the market. Data collated by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) show India's overall internet user base grew to around 936.16 million in 2023. Such a diverse and vibrant open market calls for effective regulations and restrictions on privacy, algorithms, deceptive practices, antitrust, financing, and governance. This article aims to investigate the challenges of regulating dominant platforms. It delves deep into understanding and analysing the challenges and opportunities that evolve in regulating Jio Platforms. The study will also inquire whether favourable government policies and national legislation boost the processes of digitisation and whether there is a need for a new regulatory framework laid

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by the government for platforms to abide by. India has an open market dominated by US multinational firms, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Content removal and other online censorship efforts are topics of heated debate, in academia and policy circles. This makes it arduous to ensure that data protection and privacy are safeguarded, particularly by dominant platforms such as Jio Platforms which is almost monopolising the Indian market.

Keywords: dominant platforms; Jio platforms; content moderation; censorship; self-regulation; DIA 2023

1 Introduction

The imperative to regulate global platform companies spans continents, posing challenges rooted in both platform nature and diverse political systems. Notably, major platforms such as Meta (Facebook), Apple, Alphabet (Google), Amazon, and Netflix are based in the US while Tencent and Alibaba are based in China. These two countries, the US and China hosting the largest platform companies have two contrasting and distinctly different political systems. However, the challenges that emerge from platforms such as the spread of fake news, privacy breaches, data misuse, failure in reduction of online hate speech, and failure in promotion of online harassment and terrorism, mostly remain similar and critical irrespective of the political systems they emerge from. This study aims to understand and investigate

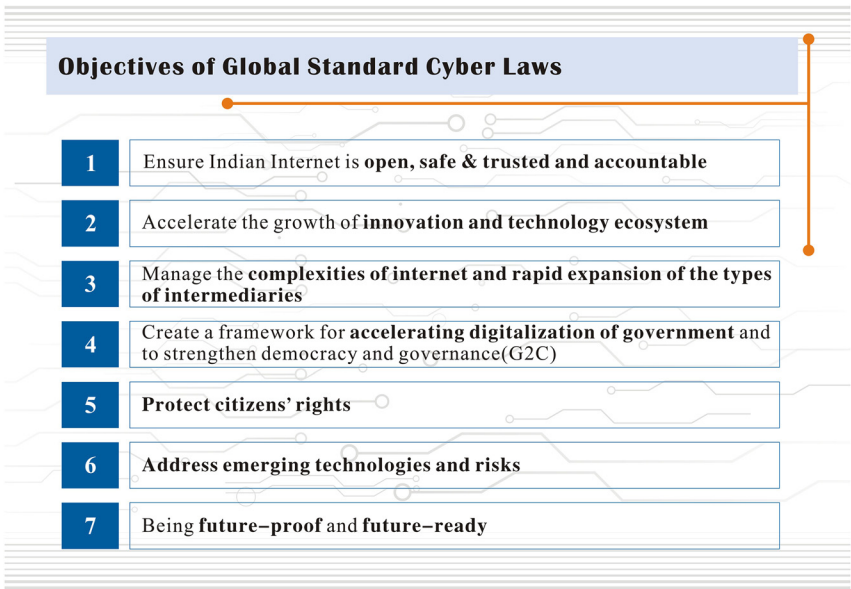


Figure 1: The objectives of global standard cyber laws; source: <https://www.meity.gov.in/>.

what these challenges are (Figures 1–4). The first research question that this study aims to investigate is: RQ1: What are the challenges in regulating dominant media platforms?

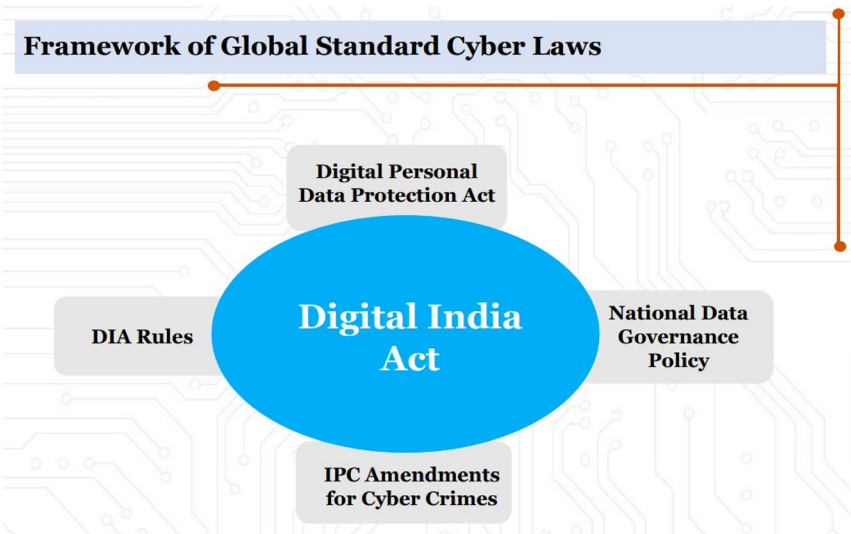


Figure 2: The framework of global standard cyber laws; source: <https://www.meity.gov.in/>.

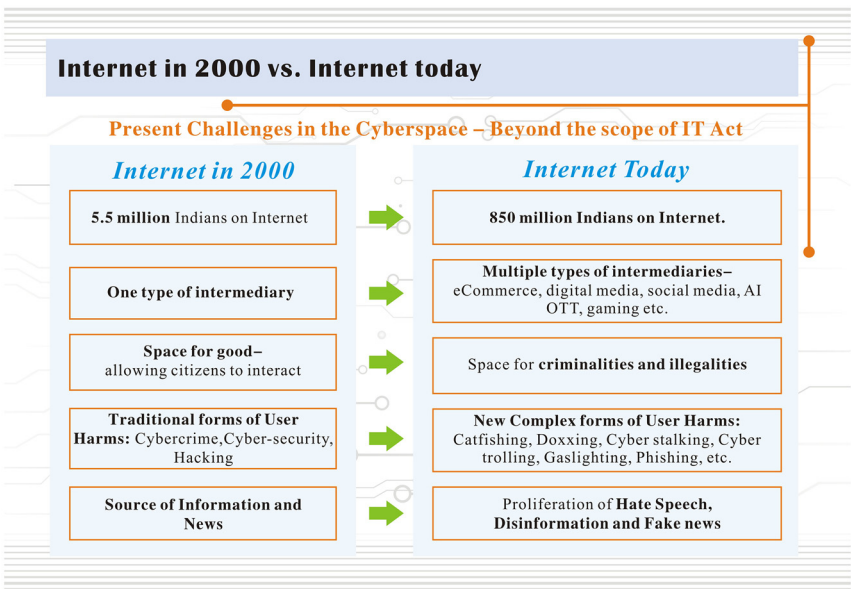


Figure 3: Internet in 2000 versus Internet Today; source: <https://www.meity.gov.in/>. *Today refers to the state of the Internet in 2024.

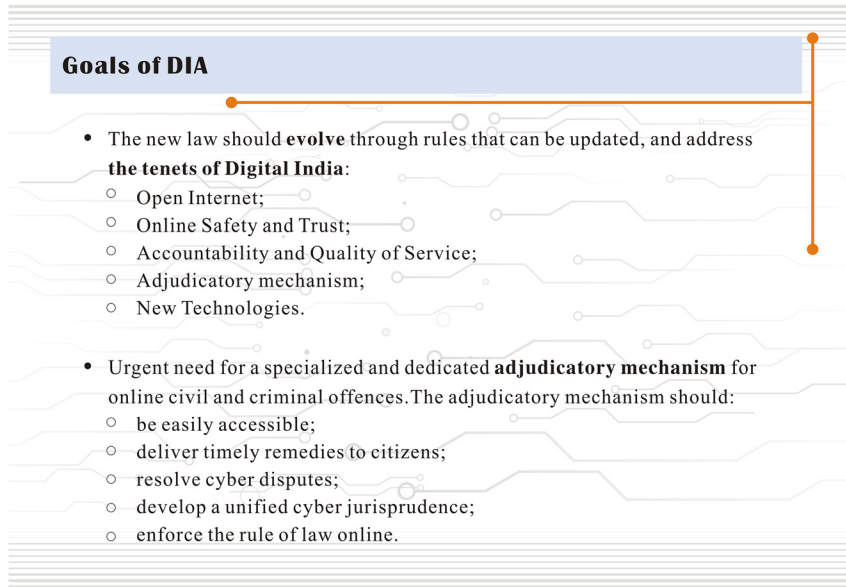


Figure 4: Goals of the proposed DIA, 2023; source: <https://www.meity.gov.in/>.

The new entrant in this array of dominant media platforms is India's largest platform company Jio Platforms. Since its launch in 2016, Jio Platforms have been growing rapidly and have become the dominant platform company in India in 2022. Apart from the business strategies such as disruptive pricing, innovation, and investments that Jio Platforms employed, the platform company had also collaborated with the Indian government to access government data of Indian citizens (accessing Aadhar API) for faster onboarding of customers digitally (when Jio Platforms launched, close to one billion people had Aadhar in India), which in effect resulted in the rapid digital transformation of India and also positively impacted the platform company's revenue. The concerns that emerge from platform companies also hold true for this new entrant. Since there has been a symbiotic collaboration between the platform company and the government from the very inception, the concerns that emerge from the nature of the platforms (as mentioned earlier) raise questions on whether content on this platform will keep into account the public-private collaboration and thereby moderate content or regulate or censor content that might negatively affect the interests of the government, the platform company or the symbiotic collaboration of the government and the platform company. Since the initial collaboration had worked in favour of national interest in digitally transforming India, this study asks the second research question: Does content

moderation on Jio Platforms works in India's national interest only, or are there other factors that affect the content moderation policies of the platform? (RQ2).

It becomes, therefore imperative, to understand the central role, that dominant platforms, such as Jio Platforms in India, play, in mediating public discourse. Content moderation in Jio Platforms not only aims to minimize aggression and anti-social behaviour, but it also aims to protect vulnerable audiences (such as children) from inappropriate, illegal, obscene, or harmful content. As this operates in a self-regulatory context, it raises concerns around the platform's "discretion" whereby certain social conventions, religious practices, and political ideologies may either get promoted or moderated depending on the discretion/value system of the dominant platform. This study, therefore, aims to investigate whether the political system needs to intervene in legislating an overarching framework for platform companies to abide by. The third research question that this study seeks to investigate is: Will content moderation require national legislation? (RQ3).

This article aims to inquire whether favourable government policies to boost digitisation help or hinder tech platforms such as Jio Platforms in shaping strategies for self-regulation through content moderation or whether there is a need for a new regulatory framework laid by the government for platforms to abide by.

2 Internet Platforms: Evolving Definitions, Typologies and Business Models

Platforms, products of parallel digitisation and globalisation, revolutionize connectivity. The amalgamation of technology and infrastructure defines a new era, converging content, devices, networks, and app ecosystems, laying the digital foundations of nations.

The concept of platforms, as defined by several scholars, embraces modular software architectures and economics converging at a double-sided market (Flew et al., 2019). Annabelle Gawer's (2014) definition of technological platforms as evolving organizations or meta-organizations that: (1) federate and coordinate constitutive agents who can innovate and compete; (2) create value by generating and harnessing economies of scope in supply or/and in demand; and (3) entail a modular technological architecture composed of a core and a periphery (Gawer, 2014). Tarleton Gillespie (2018) defines platforms as online sites and services that host, organize, and circulate users' shared content or social interactions for them, without having produced or commissioned the bulk of the content and are built on infrastructure, beneath that circulation of information, for processing data for customer service, advertising and profit. Gawer's (2014) definition of platforms

derives from two streams of academic literature which are industrial economics and engineering design (Gawer, 2014). The industrial economics literature conceptualises platforms as two-sided markets, multi-sided markets, or multi-sided platforms (Armstrong, 2006; Evans, 2003; Rochet & Tirole, 2003) where the platforms behave as special kinds of markets that create demand with a focus on competition, where communication exchange takes place between different types of consumers which would not have been possible otherwise, in the lack of such a market, or platform. The other stream of literature emerges from the engineering design conceptualisation of platforms which views platforms as technological architectures that supply communication exchange with a focus on innovation (Jiao et al., 2007; Krishnan & Gupta, 2001; Meyer & Lehnerd, 1997) not necessarily linked through a buyer-supplier relationship but providing an essential function to a technological innovation ecosystem which can further develop complementary products, technologies, or services (Gawer, 2009). Therefore, the conceptualization of platforms essentially includes three major constituents, which are technology, regulations, and businesses.

The conceptualization of platforms involves three major constituents: technology, regulations, and businesses. Scholars' definitions allow platforms to be international, transnational, or global, adapting across countries and political systems (Chalaby, 2016). Adaptation is crucial, considering the evolving landscape of technology and regulations.

Platforms as a concept also need to be understood based on their types and business models. Jean K Chalaby categorizes platforms into streaming platforms and virtual Multichannel Video Programming Distributors (vMVPDs) (Chalaby, 2023). Streaming platforms aggregate content by acquisition and commissioning while vMVPDs are “aggregators of aggregators who use the internet to bring together third-party branded streaming services with live and on-demand content for the viewers” (Chalaby, 2023). Some of the market leaders in the vMVPD category are Amazon Fire TV, YouTube TV, Hulu Live, and Fubo TV which operate in multiple markets, aggregate content conducive to the individual markets they operate in, and adapt to the choices and demands of the viewers in the different territories where they operate.

In the realm of streaming platforms, those with a large user base such as Netflix, Disney+, YouTube, Twitch, and Roku aggregate content by acquisition and commissioning, but their typology differs from those of platforms such as Airbnb, eBay, and Uber. Studies have highlighted that the discourse on platforms is far from unified (Chalaby, 2023) and it becomes imperative to understand the different types of platforms based on their organization of assets and inherent structures.

Gawer and Cusumano (2014) present a classification of platforms into internal (company-specific platforms) and external (industry-wide platforms). Internal platforms are assets organised within a company to efficiently develop and produce

derivative products. External platforms, in contrast, serve as foundations for external innovators within an innovative business ecosystem to develop complementary products, services, or technologies. Another crucial typology is the multi-sided platform (MSPs), crucial in the digital economy, embracing networked businesses, multiple suppliers, and customers across various levels of the economic value chains (Alt & Zimmermann, 2014). Multi-sided platforms have responded to the digital economy with powerful business models and have witnessed unprecedented success, mostly because of their “ability and adaptability to handle complexity, rapid scale-up, and value capture” (Abdelkafi et al., 2019). Examples of two leading MSPs are Google and Apple, which have had unprecedented success, with other new entrants preparing to find their share in the market. Gawer’s (2009) five types of platforms can be distinguished as (a) internal platforms, (b) supply chain platforms, (c) industry platforms, (d) multi-sided platforms, and (e) transaction platforms. The understanding of the different typologies of platforms will prepare the ground for us to understand and analyse India’s new entrant, Jio Platforms, into this platform ecosystem.

Platforms structure their business model around core content strategies for revenue generation and service delivery. Jean K Chalaby outlines three business models that platforms adopt to pursue their distinct content strategies (Chalaby, 2023). Chalaby distinguishes these business models of platforms as the Subscription Video on Demand (SVoD) model, Advertising-based Video on Demand (AVoD) model, which includes Broadcast Video on Demand (BVoD) model and the third category is the video-sharing business model of platforms (Chalaby, 2023). Examples of SVoD platforms include Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, and Apple TV+, to name some of the market leaders. Leading international AVoD platforms include Facebook Watch (owned by Meta/Facebook), Pluto TV (owned by Viacom CBS), Tubi (owned by Fox), and Viki (owned by Rakuten). The leading international video-sharing platforms are YouTube (owned by Alphabet/Google), TikTok (owned by ByteDance), Dailymotion (owned by Vivendi), and Twitch (owned by Amazon) (Chalaby, 2023).

The SVoD business model of platforms allows viewers to consume content from an entire catalogue, as much as they desire for a set monthly fee. The SVoD business model allows super-aggregators like Amazon, Apple, and Disney to use their digital content and video services to successfully monetise a range of their other products and generate revenue, thereby creating a vast portfolio of products and experiences. Some of these include retail sales for Amazon, hardware sales for Apple, and theme parks, resorts, and cruise ship experiences for Disney, to highlight a few. This model allows for large-scale international expansion and global outreach at an extraordinarily fast pace, which effectively facilitates revenue generation and global expansion of SVoD platforms.

The AVoD business model does not charge any fee to the consumers to access videos. In exchange, the consumers have to subject themselves to the advertisement(s)

that are run in front of, alongside, in the middle of, or at the end of the video. These platforms are digitally delivered over the internet, and they often adopt a hybrid monetisation model in which they offer ad-free premium versions of the video content at a price, that is otherwise available to the consumer at no cost but with the embedded advertisements (Chalaby, 2023). While some scholars keep YouTube in the AVoD arena (Lindstädt-Dreusicke & Budzinski, 2022), YouTube has evolved as a complicated media outfit where a more complex business model is being observed as the platform is evolving, moving from a video-sharing platform towards a new model that takes from both SVoD and AVoD models.

Video-sharing platforms such as TikTok and Twitch hinge on advertising for revenue, generating economies of scale for the platform and economies of scope are generated for participants (Chalaby, 2023). YouTube, while traditionally a video-sharing platform, is evolving with an innovative model. There is also the Transactional Video on Demand (TVoD) model, which charges consumers to access on-demand content or live streams on a pay-per-view basis, where consumers can pay once to gain permanent access to the content (also known as electronic sell-through or EST) or the consumers can access the content for a limited period after paying a smaller fee and downloading the content (also known as a download to rent or DTR). Some examples of TVoD include Apple's iTunes, Sky Box Office, and Amazon's video.

The varied typologies and business models of video on demand e platforms cultivate consumer interest, a cornerstone for revenue generation on the platforms. Larger and more diversified platforms possess greater potential to dominate the market, aspiring to generate revenue in the billions and trillions, with ambitions of market monopolization. This, however, needs to be saddled on advanced technology, infrastructure, and regulations that regard digital platforms as public goods centring on the two principles of non-rivalry and non-exclusion. Scholars define digital global public goods as “digital goods designed as non-rivalrous, non-excludable, locally relevant on a global scale, and displaying positive network effects” (Nicholson et al., 2022). Striking a balance between achieving business goals and positioning themselves as public goods is an evolving challenge for the dominant platforms. Innovative business models can be one kind of response to that challenge, while the other can lead to holding internet freedom hostage to revenue generation.

3 Challenges of Regulating Dominant Platforms

Scholars conceptualize platforms as interfaces embodied in products, services, or technologies that mediate between different sides, such as buyers and sellers or complementors and users (Evans, 2003; Gawer & Cusumano, 2002; Rochet & Tirole,

2003). Dominant platforms, experiencing colossal growth in scale, scope, and market share, wield significant economic power, impacting political communication globally (Fukuyama et al., 2021). The majority of these platforms, the world's largest, are based in the US (Meta, Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, and Netflix), with others in China (Tencent and Alibaba). The political systems governing these economies, the US and China, differ starkly.

China, notably, has built an alternative platform ecosystem under state guidance, creating a parallel online universe with state intervention influencing information dissemination and political coordination (Keane, 2016). “Platformization” or the rise of platforms as the dominant infrastructural and economic model of the social web which entails the extension of these dominant platforms into the rest of the web and their drive to make external web data “platform ready” (Helmond, 2015) has not only affected production, distribution, and circulation of cultural content (Nieborg & Poell, 2018), in China's context, it has also weaved and designed relations between the state, market, technological innovation and the society. Unlike the situation in China, the dominant platforms in the US (which are also dominant platforms in several countries across the globe) were initially celebrated as vehicles of “participatory society” and the “sharing economy” (de Kloet et al., 2019) but scholars have argued that the dominant platforms in the US and other countries where they freely operate have been undermining democracy, stability, and sustainability. Governments in these territories, be it in the US, Europe, India, Sub-Saharan Africa or other states have started to feel the negatives of the “emancipation” feature of dominant platforms and this has prompted policymakers, governments, corporates, and civil society organisations to approach the issue steadfastly to find a holistic framework through which content can be moderated or regulated on these dominant platforms.

Dominant platforms leverage modern digital infrastructures and user behaviours to amass data, a critical resource enhancing services and innovation (Gawer, 2021). This immense power raises concerns about potential market monopolies and the platforms' ability to influence and intervene in political systems, either by further strengthening it or by making inroads to dismantle existing structures.

Enormous data contributions from billions of consumers globally have transformed dominant platforms into formidable entities, posing challenges for states to regulate effectively. While constructing a legal framework may provide some control, it falls short of optimizing the operations of these behemoths as public goods. The United Nations Working Group on Internet Governance, back in 2005, had proposed models to create three new bodies (the Global Internet Policy Council or GIPC, the World Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers or ICANN and the Global Internet Governance Forum or GIGF) to manage internet-related public policy issues and ensuring that the internet stays competitive, secure,

stable and interoperable while bringing together views and proposals from various stakeholders for discussion on public policy issues around the internet. In the absence of any uniform global regime of Internet governance (which is also an improbable proposition in a world governed by distinctively different political systems), the challenges of regulating dominant platforms need an approach that regards freedom of expression in the context of the social, cultural, economic, and political settings in which these dominant platforms operate. This approach does not imply the inclusion of terrorist organizations or non-state actors in multi-stakeholder discussions. The national judiciary or legal framework should define stakeholders identified as terrorist organizations and non-state actors. By limiting state presence and minimizing the government's role in such labelling, the judiciary maximizes fairness in bringing diverse groups together for debates, discussions, and policy formulations.

In his speech at the Internet Governance Forum in November 2018, French President Macron articulated the challenges that dominant platforms pose and how they differ in different political systems. Macron said,

“Only 30 years have passed since the birth of the World Wide Web, and only 50 years since the first message was exchanged between two computers which paved the way for the premise of the Internet. Today, in 2018, half of humanity uses it ... the change brought about by the Internet is both faster and more widespread ... the last 2 years have seen the creation of 80 per cent of all the data ever created since the beginning of humanity ... The Internet has made life more intense by giving the impression that every human being could live a thousand lives at once. It is therefore more than a technological change, it is a cultural, social, and philosophical revolution that has weaved its way into every layer of human activity ... we are seeing two types of Internet emerge ... there is a Californian form of Internet and a Chinese Internet. The first is the dominant possibility, that of an Internet driven by strong, dominant, global private players, that have been impressive stakeholders in this development, that have great qualities and with which we [European Union] work, but which at the end of the day are not democratically elected ...” (Elysee, 2018).

On the other side, there exists a system where governments play a significant role; this is characteristic of the Chinese-style Internet: an Internet where the government influences innovations and regulations. Governments have been engaging with stakeholders in debates and discussions to come up with policy proposals to regulate dominant platforms. Digital Services Act/Digital Markets Act (DSA/DMA) is one such proposal that came from the European Union and Germany passed the Network Enforcement Act (Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz, NetzDG) (Stockmann, 2022) which brought dominant platforms such as Facebook within the garb of existing legal obligations under which the dominant platform can be made accountable and responsible for any violation. While such proposals are put into practice by the governments of the day, they invariably face resistance and hostility from opposition

political parties who push for amendments or demand repealing the law. Although the process is non-discriminatory and transparent (as it involves debates, discussions, and policy proposals from multi-stakeholders), it is lengthy, cumbersome and remains a potential threat where the state can still wield power unidirectionally through the interpretations of the laws. Even if the coercion from opposition political parties is discounted once the law has been passed, the dynamic nature of the dominant platforms with their evolving technologies and business models can require upgradation or further amendments of the law. This can make the process even more time-consuming which can be a major disadvantage to regulate dominant platforms where content is transmitted at lightning speed. Regulating dominant platforms can effectively result in content moderation which can involve different types of actions such as deactivating comments, removing content, or blocking users (Gillespie, 2018; Roberts, 2019) thereby disabling harmful, illegal, and hateful content from reaching the consumers at large. Community guidelines, national laws, value systems of the dominant platforms, and the value systems of the consumers catered to, may aggregate in arriving at a regulation decision that the dominant platforms adopt. The situation is not merely smooth even for democracies where internal domestic politics often result in problematic internet freedom practices (Shahbaz et al., 2022).

Dominant platforms boast user bases surpassing the populations of some of the world's most populous countries around the world. According to January 2023 Statista data, Facebook commands a staggering 2.9 billion users, surpassing the combined populations of India and China, the two most populous countries (Dixon, 2023). YouTube follows with 2.5 billion users, while Whatsapp and Instagram each boast 2 billion users. Wechat serves 1.3 billion users, and TikTok claims 1.05 billion users, exemplifying the substantial user presence on dominant platforms. The three major constituents of dominant platforms, being, technology, businesses, and regulations (as mentioned earlier) work around different political systems that function in countries around the world to harness economies of scope and scale, ensuring services, advertising, and profit, with new innovative technology aiding the businesses. Regulations, also another major constituent, are left in the lurch.

4 Jio Platforms and Content Moderation: Factors Affecting Moderation policies

Examining content moderation on Jio Platforms, India's largest platform, demands a critical understanding of its emergence and the unique context of a vast and diverse democratic nation. India, now the most populous country, harbours a dynamic

population, with 65 % aged under 35 (“India becomes the most populated: A dividend or a damper?” *The Economic Times*, 2023). The platform’s design decisions, driven by user experience, reflect homophilic dynamics, potentially leading to ageism and discrimination against older users (Rosales & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2020). This dynamic is particularly significant in India, where familial bonds are deeply embedded in the socio-political and cultural fabric of the nation and most often, individual and collective decision-making reflect that familial bond which essentially is a mix of youth and experience.

Jio Platforms, a Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) subsidiary, serves as the holding company for India’s largest mobile network operator Jio. Jio offers 4G and 4G+ services all over India and 5G service in many Indian cities and the company is working on its 6G service. Publicly launched in 2016, Jio’s active subscriber base stood at 394 million (TRAI, 2023) as it continues to lead the market in India. Facebook’s investment in Jio for a 9.99 per cent stake (*The Economic Times*, 2020) makes it the largest investment for a minority stake by a tech company anywhere in the world. Jio Platforms and Facebook parent Meta Platforms collaboration will also roll out a grocery delivery app in India using Meta’s WhatsApp messaging service and this will effectively be deepening and expanding the transnational ties. With stricter government regulations for foreign players in the market, there is a distinct focus of the government on boosting Indian companies to capture and control the market. Data collated by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) show India’s overall internet user base grew to 824.8 million in March 2022. Such a diverse and vibrant open market calls for effective regulations and restrictions on privacy, algorithms, deceptive practices, antitrust, financing, and governance.

This article contends that examining content moderation on Jio Platforms can contribute novel insights to the global discourse on content moderation, self-regulation, and censorship. The context of this new Indian entrant, in a country like India, poses new opportunities and challenges for how scholars and policy-makers have been addressing the subject, primarily in the US. The only other country, apart from the US where dominant platforms are based, is China which has the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) which regulates platforms (Feng, 2022). The dominant platforms in China employ content moderation teams that “match the scale of their service” and the new cross-border data transfer regulation enforced by the CAC from September 2022, requires all platform companies to fill in and submit documents to the CAC for review (Shen, 2022).

India, a country witnessing the rise of online platforms as a new institutional form (Frenken et al., 2021), the need for comprehensive regulation is evident. Apart from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) which is a regulatory body set up by the Government of India under Section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997, India has the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines

and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, a piece of delegated legislation under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000. It is a two-decades-old IT law which regulates the telecommunications sector in India. In 2023, the Indian government intends to replace the IT law with a comprehensive Digital India Act (DIA), 2023 which the government believes will put in place adequate guardrails to transform India into a one trillion-dollar digital economy by 2030. Without adequate guardrails, the potential misuse of Artificial Intelligence, cybercrimes, deep fakes, and online criminal and civil offences can become rampant. The lack of comprehensive provisions to address evolving challenges that emerge from dominant platforms and inadequate regulatory approaches to address harmful and illegal content in the extant IT law has created a void and a necessity for a more comprehensive DIA 2023 (Business, 2023). The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of the Government of India has proposed the Digital India Act, 2023 which will go through the necessary stages of legislation before it becomes a law. The proposal has been a result of extensive consultation and it proposes a strong framework of openness, user safety, and trust as its guiding principle. The proposal lays out the objectives and framework of Global Standard Cyber Laws, with the government's vision to transform India into a one trillion-dollar digital economy (Figure 1).

Dominant platforms exert immense influence on political communication and also on the economic, social, and cultural lives of the people of a nation. In the context of Jio Platforms, which has openly praised the government and has collaborated with the government to achieve its consumer onboarding targets during its launch, having a framework of global standard minimises chances of collusion between vested interests of big businesses and big governments, maximises the possibilities of upholding highest standards of professional and business practices and most importantly guarantees national security and data privacy of the citizens of the nation (Figure 2).

Jio Platforms wield power through its extensive infrastructure strategically investing in shaping India's digital foundations. In a hungry Indian market, the robust infrastructure has guaranteed connectivity for Jio Platforms, and in the process, it has also cemented its trust in the government which sees it as a driver of its Digital India vision. With foreign investments coming in from global behemoths like Facebook and Google, Jio Platforms has created an environment of minimising competition and maximising collaboration when it comes to controlling its power over content (Athique & Kumar, 2022). India is home to one of the cheapest data rates in the world and with Jio rolling out 5G services across India and the cost of hardware (or the smartphone which is 5G compatible) being gradually made affordable to a large section of the Indian population, Jio Platforms is creating an extensive digital ecosystem of services which will not provide the Indian consumers with many options but to onboard the dominant platform. Apart from the three

structures through which Jio Platforms can wield power, there is the fourth factor which is capital. Being the largest business conglomerate in India, operating across various sectors such as petrochemicals, refining, oil and gas exploration, retail, telecommunications, and media, the dominant platform successfully controls credit creation. Platform power found in these four C's (connectivity, content, consumer, and capital) (Evens et al., 2020) works favourably for Jio Platforms. There is a fifth C which includes policy and regulatory framework and this is about context. The challenge is in deciphering whether consistent decision-making works well for regulatory framework or contextual decision-making favours the approach and makes it more holistic.

Jio Platforms encounters a myriad of opportunities and challenges, operating within the intricate fabric of India's diverse socio-cultural landscape. Unlike platforms facing challenges across various global contexts, Jio Platforms navigates complexities uniquely concentrated within the sovereign boundaries of India. Apart from the heterogeneous communities, which make up 1.4 billion Indians, there are constitutional bodies which are heterogeneous institutions, that work with the government. Maintaining the democratic and pluralistic fabric of an entire population, a major section of whom are consumers of the dominant platform, is an uphill task and a colossal challenge. The diversities are deep-rooted and entrenched in India which has been a civilisation state and any distortion or disturbance to create an imbalance can adversely affect systemic transformations. Upholding inclusivity and the plurality of ideas, experiences, and consumer behaviours in the fields of science, technology, education, health, economic stability and prosperity, climate change, and overall human welfare of the citizens of India, where national security of India and data protection of every Indian citizen are of paramount importance, is no easy task for Jio Platforms. That is a colossal challenge.

Corporate entities and governments forge partnerships, collaborating towards shared visions or goals, when the alignment serves mutual interests – business objectives for corporations and political aspirations for governing parties. If that vision articulates a transformative growth story of a nation, that has the potential to uplift the plight of its citizens, systemic transformations take place. Systemic transformations push much more regulatory thinking than rights-based thinking (Douek, 2022). Such a scenario can bear the burden of having individual casualties of the regulatory framework but in the robust process of bringing about systemic transformations for nation-building, such casualties will be overlooked or sidelined. I argue that a mix of consistent decision-making and contextual decision-making can position Jio Platforms not only as an inclusive and humane dominant platform but also one that is consistent with the best global standards and frameworks. It was in 2016 that Mukesh Ambani [the Indian business mogul and chairman and managing director of the Indian business conglomerate Reliance Industries Limited

(RIL) of which Jio Platforms is a subsidiary had openly congratulated Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi for his vision of “Digital India” when he said, “Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision for Digital India is a life-changing moment. Jio is a dedication to that Digital India dream of the Prime Minister ... In the next 20 years, we will collectively achieve more than what has been achieved in the last 300 years (Kapila, 2016).” With visible government support and the proposed DIA, 2023 Indian dominant platforms like Jio Platforms can become global ambassadors of India, travelling across the Indian borders and catering to consumers in countries and territories around the world. That is an opportunity.

5 National Legislation for Content Moderation: Need to Re-examine Regulatory Framework

Scholars from diverse academic disciplines may interpret content moderation differently, but the core concept remains consistent. Evelyn Douek defines content moderation as platforms’ systems and rules that determine how they treat user-generated content on their services (Douek, 2022). A more elaborate understanding of content moderation, as proposed by Sarah T. Roberts, states that “content moderation is the organized practice of screening user-generated content (UGC) posted to Internet sites, social media, and other online outlets, to determine the appropriateness of the content for a given site, locality, or jurisdiction (2019, p. 44). The process can result in UGC being removed by a moderator, acting as an agent of the platform or site in question.” The quantity, velocity, and variety of content on the dominant platforms are “stratospheric” and users are connected by algorithms and social graphs much more than they are connected by communities (Gillespie, 2020). Tarleton Gillespie highlights that “Content moderation on social media platforms often involves large and small components articulated into a single, functioning apparatus: small policy teams overseeing large populations of human moderators; short lists of guidelines fitted with large lists of procedures and exceptions; enormous populations of users attached to flagging mechanisms that produce tiny bits of data about many, many violations.”

At the heart of content moderation lies user data, the key currency for dominant platforms. This dehumanizing perspective transforms individuals into commodities for the platforms’ growth. Despite this, certain jurisdictions provide immunity for platforms, such as Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act in the US and Section 79 of the Information Technology Act in India. However, these immunities are not absolute and must comply with local laws, adding complexity to the matter.

A pending lawsuit, *Gonzalez versus Google*, in the US Supreme Court could reshape scholarly and regulatory perspectives. The case involves Google's defence against allegations that its algorithms and recommendation systems facilitated the viewing of so called "Islamic State" recruitment videos on YouTube, leading to a terrorist attack. Google's reliance on Section 230 for defense has prompted a re-examination of legal provisions and regulatory frameworks. The lawsuit's outcome holds the potential to transform the internet and prompt a critical re-evaluation of existing legal safeguards, including Section 230 in the US. Owners of dominant platforms understand the imperative of legislation in regulating both themselves and the broader internet. Facebook owner Mark Zuckerberg stated that new regulations are needed in the areas of harmful content, election integrity, privacy, and data portability, Zuckerberg has said, "We believe legislation should be updated to reflect the reality of the threats and set standards for the whole industry" (The Guardian, 2019). Jio Platforms owner Mukesh Ambani has said, "We are confident that the government will introduce a sound new data regulation framework to ensure data privacy" (The Economic Times, 2020). Ambani has highlighted that the Indian economy and society would generate data at an "explosive and exponential rate" which will help transform India into a premier digital society. This confluence of technology and businesses has a third essential component, regulations, which I mentioned at the outset of this article. Studies have highlighted the need for strengthening effective antitrust enforcement in digital markets, which might seem to meet with reluctance from dominant platforms. This may not be the case as such legislation only comes into existence and effect, long after the dominant platforms have established their infrastructure, investments, and advanced technologies and are focussing on ways to advance them. Any new competition for the dominant platforms will require, not just equal wealth for investment and infrastructure to put in place (which is time-consuming), but also the curiosity, necessity, and consent of the digital population to migrate from their existing dominant platform to a new platform in the market. Dominant platforms and lawmakers understand these dynamics which get reflected in the mood of dominant platforms who are not perturbed by legislations that promote openness and antitrust measures to discourage any monopoly or duopoly. The concerns of the dominant platforms on antitrust issues can rather be on competing against each other in markets outside and away from their home countries, under different jurisdictions and legislations. While Jio Platforms can be viewed as the putative rentier of "Digital India" due to the "tryst" between India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Reliance Chairman Mukesh Ambani (Athique & Kumar, 2022), it does not indicate that the government in India will not embrace investments from other dominant platforms who would aim to

participate in India's transformative journey towards digitisation. Soon after he met with Prime Minister Modi in India in April 2023, Apple's chief executive Tim Cook tweeted, "Thank you Prime Minister [Narendra Modi] for the warm welcome. We share your vision of the positive impact technology can make on India's future – from education and developers to manufacturing and the environment, we're committed to growing and investing across the country" (The Indian Express, 2023). This tweet was shared by Prime Minister Modi with his response which stated, "An absolute delight to meet you [Tim Cook]! Glad to exchange views on diverse topics and highlight the tech-powered transformations taking place in India." (The Indian Express, 2023) The proposed Digital India Act of 2023 mentions the transformation that the internet has witnessed in the last two decades (Figure 3).

The government-proposed legislation, based on extensive consultations and deliberations, reflects the government's vision of transforming the nation. India's Information and Technology Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar claims, "The Digital India Act will deal with the whole ecosystem of technology. Previously, data privacy conversations in our country used to start and end with the GDPR. It was almost a trend to regard anything foreign as the best. But we decided to design an Indian bill ground up instead of deriving inspiration from the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We have looked at the Indian internet with the 830 million Indians who use the internet, and by 2025 to 2026, it will be 1.2 billion Indians. We are the largest connected country in the world. We deserve to be setting our standards in any conversation about technology for the future rather than borrowing anything from the EU or US" (PIB Delhi, 2023). This legislation can pose promise and challenge for India's dominant platform, Jio Platforms to ensure inclusivity and plurality of ideas. The proposed legislation has laid out goals that are realistic, ambitious, and futuristic (Figure 4).

National legislation in India which has diverse cultures and traditions, bears the hallmark or core values of being representative, accessible, accountable, effective, open, and transparent. The processes are consultative, collaborative, and cooperative where a confluence of ideas, proposals, objections, and suggestions poured in from thinkers, policymakers, academic and industry experts, lawmakers representing various diverse communities, bureaucrats and technocrats, business leaders, human rights groups and civil societies. A product of such a fertile and rich confluence of ideas results in well-intended regulatory provisions. With changing contexts, the legislature can bring about amendments to update and upgrade (or downgrade) the legislation. The concern that remains with national legislation is not with the law itself but with the execution of it in certain contexts where well-intended legal provisions can run the risk of being ill-interpreted and used in ill-intended purposive acts.

6 Discussion

The diverse operational modalities of dominant platforms, coupled with the intricate challenges and opportunities they present, demand deeper exploration not only for governments worldwide but also internally, as platforms forge their value systems, visions, and aspirations of being identified as public goods. This necessitates continued research into the dynamics and politics inherent in platform interactions.

The synergy between Jio Platforms and the Indian government's "Digital India" vision is contingent on the continuity of the ruling party. Symbiotic collaboration between one big corporation and one government neither guarantees nor discards possibilities of similar symbiotic collaboration if there is a new government in power. Several factors result in such collaborations where the political goals and ideologies of the political parties require an alignment with the business and ideological goals of the big corporations. Political parties, when voted to power by the electorate, form the government. In India, the government has the responsibility to uphold the Constitution and govern a country of 1.4 billion people where national security and data privacy are of paramount importance. Governments around the world have expressed the need to develop digital public goods that are both nonexcludable and non-rivalrous. Dominant platforms like Jio Platforms (which is openly close to the government of the day, in India) need to explore whether they can adhere to data privacy, domestic and international laws and follow best practices, and function as a digital public good.

Further research is imperative to assess whether innovative business models offer a viable solution. Can dominant platforms safeguard revenue and growth while simultaneously operating on key fronts of national interest and security as non-revenue-generating entities, treating information as a public good? This complex proposition requires a nuanced approach that balances information consistently and contextually.

While aligning government and dominant platforms in thought, process, and vision is crucial for national security, it beckons further exploration to ascertain whether such alignment can catalyse the emergence and evolution of dominant platforms as digital public goods.

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