EU's stance on the global domination of a technocratic mindset in the political economy.

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

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Introduction

The growing domination of Big Tech elites in China and the United States is familiar to us, since their technological creations have become an indispensable part of our daily lives. We are at a stage where we subconsciously and unintentionally contribute to the growing hostile dominance of "technocratic" companies such as Meta and OpenAI in the economy, and wealth has never been so concentrated in the hands of a few elites. Nevertheless, this should not be perceived as if they are exclusive competitors in the free market and be exempt from political commentary. Absolutely not! In this decade, where neoliberal macroeconomic principles are still at the center of economic practices, we have started to see more technocrats share power

with governments and bring their technocratic mindset into the political arena.

This phenomenon substantially affects market regulation, taxation systems in various respects, and, importantly, labour rights around the globe. In short, the dynamics of economic management are changing. Since the rise of Big Tech and the technocratic mindset has redefined the practices of socio-economic policies, it raises the question of how the European Union preserves its democratic and social principles in economic regulation in the age of the technocratic mindset?.

How could technocracy be defined?

The concept of technocracy has long been at the center of defining new economic and political phenomena. Yet, its roots trace back to utopian socialism, in which thinkers favoured governments implementing policies based on technical-scientific rationality (Cole, 2022). However, the term technocracy has also evolved and become observable in practice. It falls short if we define technocracy solely by the use of expert and technical knowledge in crisis management, the political, and the administrative stages. It is vital to take into account the substantial economic influence, exceptionalism, and implications of technocratic elites and their widening practice patterns. For example, market norms tend to evolve from traditional practice under technocratic influence; now we see substantially increased demand for market deregulation to attract more investors. These investors typically rely on experts charged with accelerating the innovation of new ideas in digital ecosystems such as generative-AI models.

Additionally, because the material and monetary outcomes of this expertise are effective at convincing the general public, the knowledge of these technocrats is depoliticised and avoids democratic political criticism. Amongst these newly defined practices, for instance, there is a less-checked bureaucracy. As Jacqueline Best has described it very well, the doctrine of central bank independence has justified a politics of "technocratic exceptionalism" with more neoliberal articulations that suspend ordinary democratic politics in order to be swifter and more practical in the policy choices and prevent the distributive claims of citizens (Cole, 2022). The commonality of less egalitarian taxation programs, less distributive policies and growing neoliberal practices would not surprise us at all, since we have already started to pave the way for the quicker so-called "technical" expertise of technocrats.

Therefore, it is understood that technocratic leadership is a system of governance where crucial decision-making and policy-making are assigned to specialised technical experts. It is grounded in rapid solutions, scientific principles, and efficiency rather than elected politicians or figures who are responsible for accountability, democratic scrutiny, and criticisms of public opinions. This is indeed harder for the technocratic figures since there is

a lack of direct transparency in their activity that masks the fundamental political, and self-serving agendas by those who assign them.

The EU's position and involvement

The European Union has emerged as the norm maker on the global stage. However, today, norm-making practices are explicitly jeopardised by influential political figures who defend the interests of these technocrats. It raises the question: where does the relationship between technocratic tech elites and technocracy in politics come from? Basically, they are substantially intertwined and influence each other through their interactive relationship in common practices in specific areas, such as the politico tech, and world government summits that aim to bring technocrats and politicians onto the same platform. They also transform the norms of global economic governance by bridging technical expertise with political-economic strategies.

The EU is the only supranational organisation that maintains its liberal-democratic foundations, and it is very strict and committed to its democratic and distributive principles in economic management. Furthermore, the EU's stance on rapidly growing tech innovation is evident in enforced regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Digital Markets Act (DMA), and the Digital Services Act (DSA) (Passchier, 2026). However, the EU encounters a few great power actors such as the United States, who recently started to put more pressure on the counter-action plans of the EU in terms of the regulations for rapid digitalisation and neoliberal expansion. The US declared these acts as "discriminatory" and as contrary to innovation but they play an important role as scrutinising mechanisms that limit their overall market control and supervision (Jenkins, 2025). The European Union, meanwhile, is also dependent on these companies for financial transactions, and as a consequence, the essential functional democratic mechanisms are systematically subordinated to their control.

Accordingly, the EU's position in this case can be debated from multiple angles because technocratic thinking is a diffuse form of power that spills across all levels of multi-level governance in the EU. Since the norm-changing practices shape institutional behaviour subtly and indirectly, we should not take the digital act laws for granted; instead, we need to identify patterns of avoidance of technocratic mindset from the crisis management, the extent of public participation and democratic governance actions in the EU. For instance, it would not hurt to categorise technocracy as an ideological mechanism that bolsters the neoliberal tendencies in the economy. During the Eurozone crisis, the European Central Bank (ECB) utilised digital solutionism and algorithmic governance, under which countries are obliged to follow strict fiscal targets and limits while avoiding traditional democratic accountability. Hence, the Eurozone solution mechanisms il-

lustrate a simple example of the dominance of a technocratic mindset where representation of citizens and social welfare programs are substantially undermined within the EU's framework.

Thus, after the crisis, more power shifted into the hands of unelected technocrats who can act rigorously within the neoliberal economic system. The assumption that technocratic expertise is formidable in new-age technological innovation and market competition remains predominant among political figures in Europe. Because this is also framed and narrated as indispensable to national interests and betterment of societies in global politics, techno-oligarchic elites use this opportunity to gain positions on the political stage and spread neoliberal tendencies without considering societal impacts, while evading democratic scrutiny.

Is the EU capable of counteracting this?

It is important to question the redundancy of the EU's principles when the case involves shifting norms of global governance and political economy. It is arduous to identify and set the counteraction plan for norm-changing threats; therefore, an adaptable democracy that does not deviate from the EU's rooted interests and founding pillars remains crucial. An adaptable democracy should function meticulously against ever-expanding technocratic influence in economic policy. The EU is in fact maneuvering as one of the major actors in transitioning away from the set of practices of technocratic mindset that is mainly expanding in North America. Perhaps, the commonality of European Pillar of Social Action Plan and pluralist representation of political and social groups on the stage will inspire the political sphere to reduce the impact of technocratic mindset in the political economy. More concretely, activities such as "social dialogue" integrate trade unions and associations into the economic decision-making process; thus, the EU enables outside voices of workers and citizens to be represented at the table. Additionally, competition policies that protect local businesses and prevent abusive monopolies in the economy are a few of the crucial regulatory mechanisms that reflect societal values in the EU's political economy.

Consequently, to provide a clear answer to this "capability" question, the EU can offer multiple responses by adhering to the Union's core founding pillars. While it is hard to counteract the diffusion of power of a technocratic mindset, an understanding of adaptable democracy can deliver alternative solutions to the management of this expanding power threat.

Sources

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