

Military Platform Dependence in Canada: Big Tech Lobbying and Defense Procurement

Tanner Mirrlees

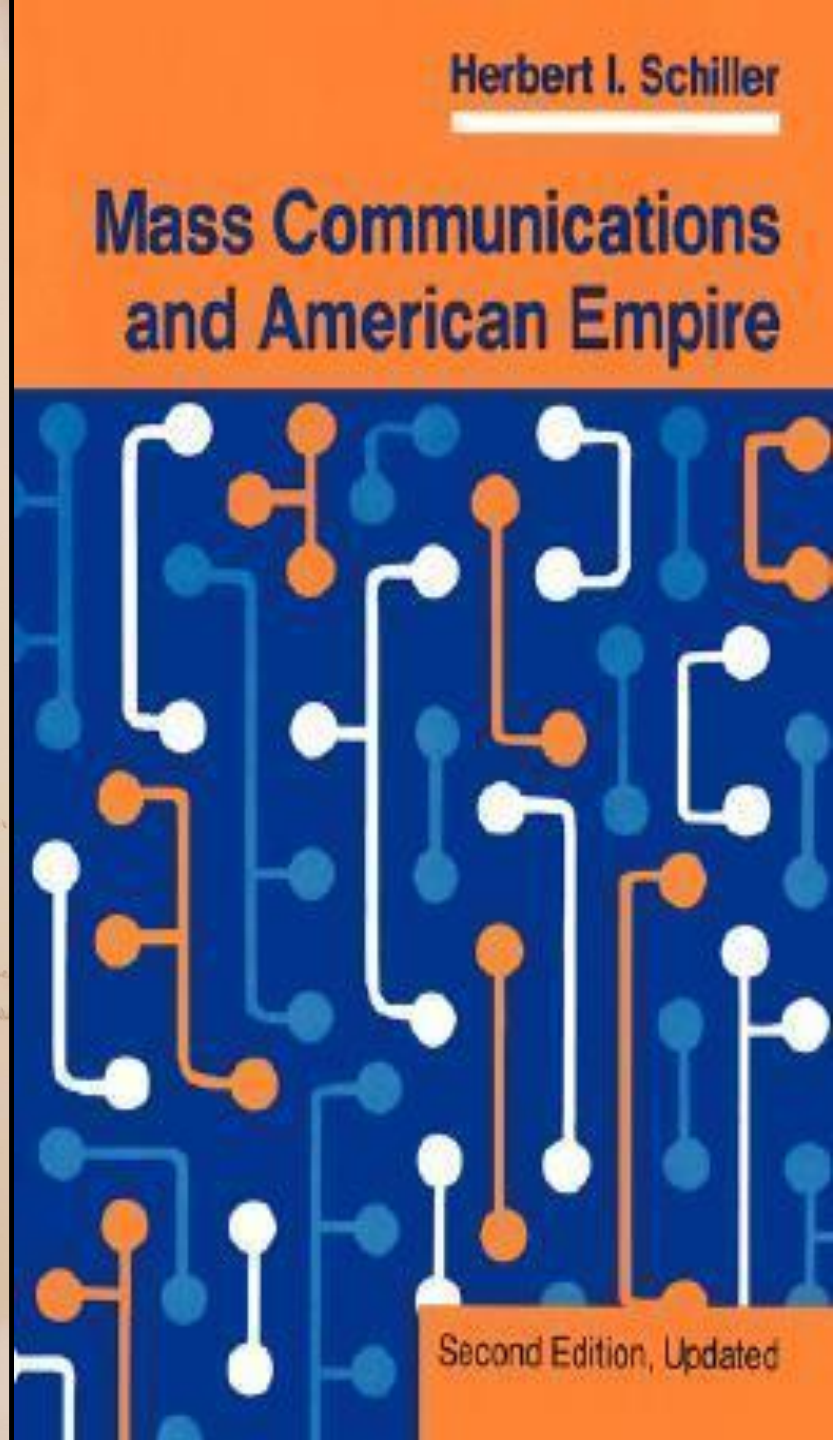
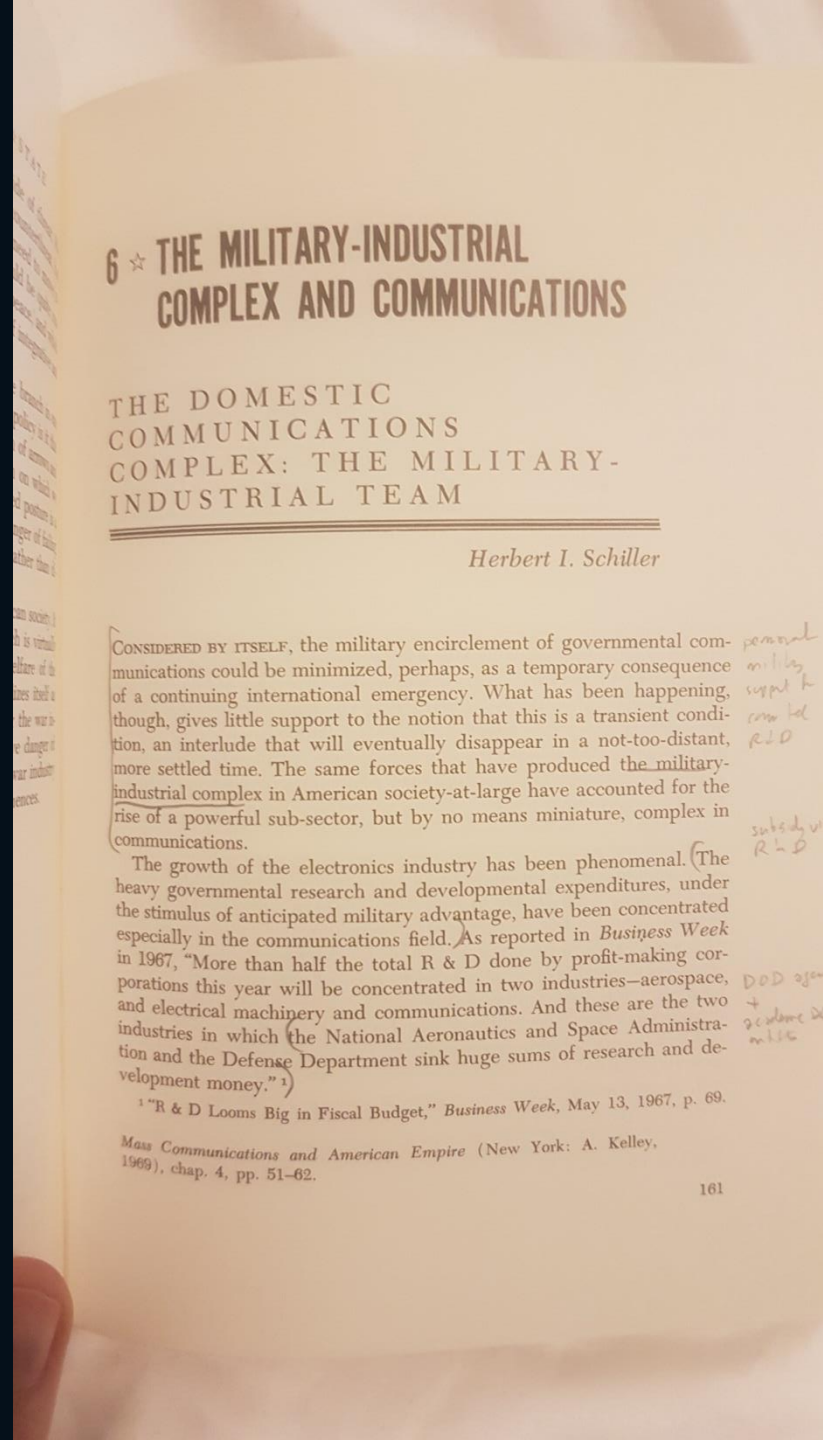
Communication and Digital
Media Studies

Ontario Tech



Military-Industrial-Communications-Complex (MICC)

“[T]he same forces that have produced the military-industrial complex in American society-at-large have accounted for the rise of a powerful sub-sector, but by no means miniature, complex in communications”
--Herbert Schiller, 1969





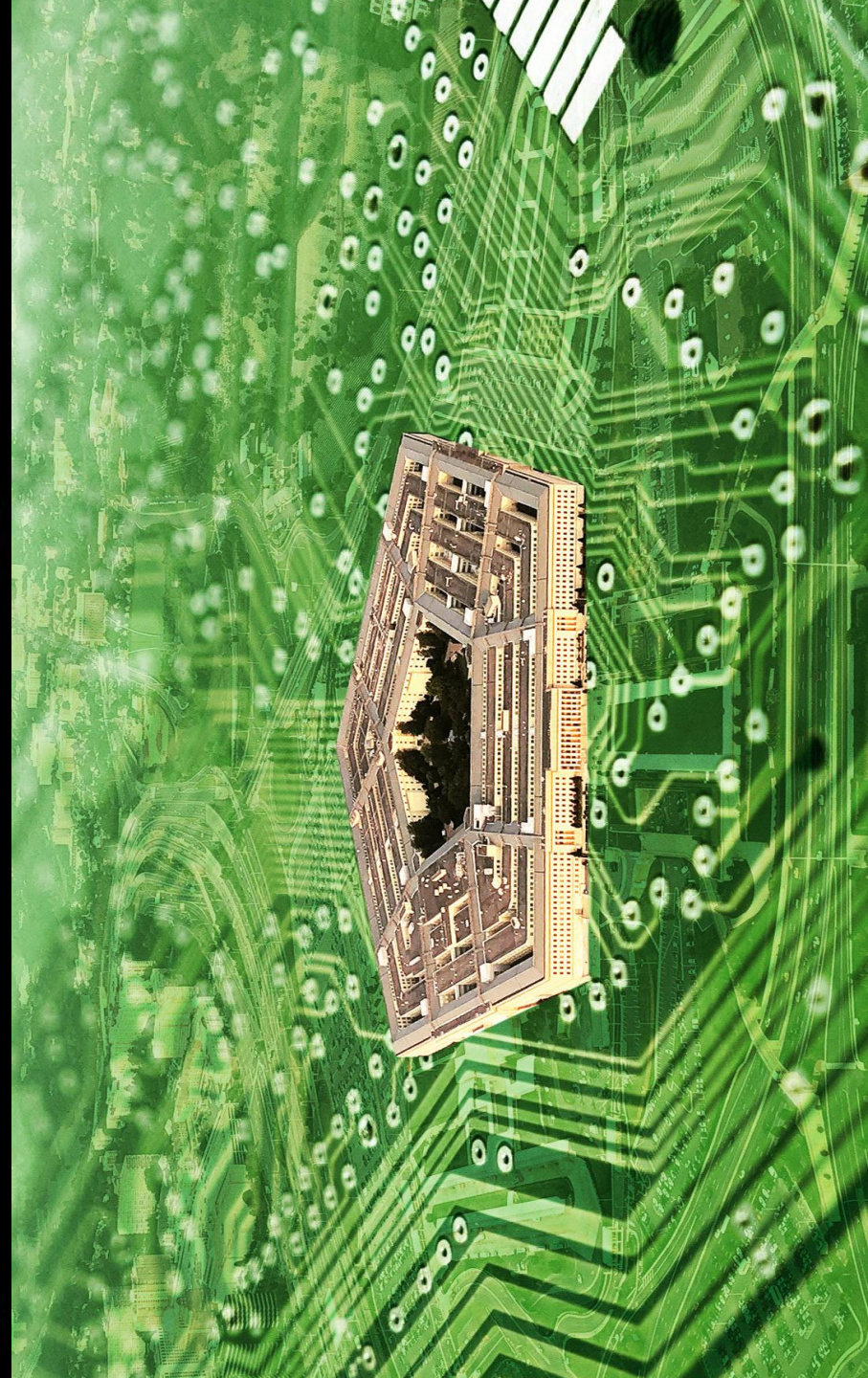
The Costs of War Project

@CostsOfWar

BREAKING: Billions of Pentagon dollars are shifting to Silicon Valley and Big Tech, according to our latest research. The top five contracts to major tech firms between 2019 and 2022 had contract ceilings totaling at least \$53 billion combined. watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/pap...

Over the past decade, the center of America's military-industrial complex has been slowly shifting from the Capital Beltway to Silicon Valley.

COSTS OF WAR



DARPA IS ABOUT TO LAUNCH A MILITARY VERSION OF SPACEX'S STARLINK

by DAN ROBITZSKI

UPDATED 5.12.20, 2:08 PM EDT





Microsoft and JWCC: Secure, Mission-ready DoD Cloud
Modern cloud infrastructure for classified and non-classified operations
[Explore how \(CAC required\) >](#)



JWCC continues Microsoft commitment to the DoD

The Joint Warfighting Cloud Capability (JWCC) contract gives DoD the ability to buy commercial cloud services at every classification and technology is now directly available to all of DoD in one contract in connected and disconnected environments.

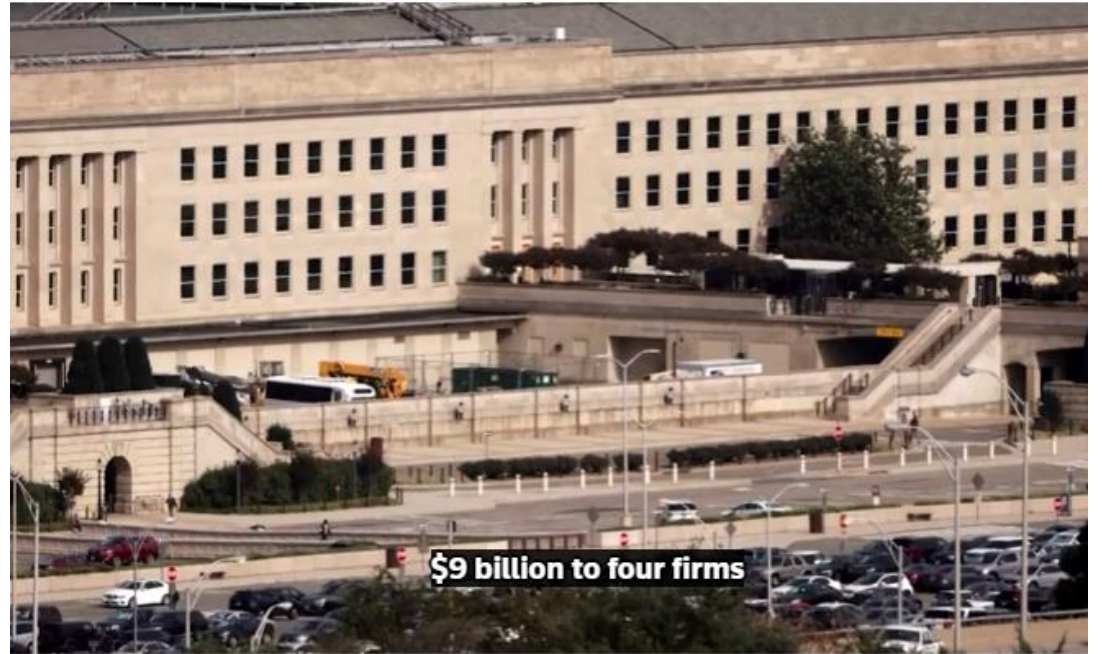
JWCC features

Warfighters can easily acquire leading-edge cloud capabilities that are fully secure, always available, and globally accessible.

Pentagon splits \$9 billion cloud contract among Google, Amazon, Oracle and Microsoft

By Reuters

December 8, 2022 8:03 AM EST · Updated 2 years ago



Dec 7 (Reuters) - The Pentagon awarded \$9 billion worth of cloud computing contracts to Alphabet Google (GOOGL.O), Amazon Web Services Inc (AMZN.O), Microsoft Corp (MSFT.O) and Oracle Corp (ORCL.N) on Wednesday.

Peter Thiel explains why his company's defense contracts could lead to less war

November 8, 2016



Peter Thiel, PayPal founder-turned-venture-capitalist, discusses his support for Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump at the National Press Club in Washington on Oct. 31. (Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images)

In-Q-Tel, the CIA's venture capital arm, reaches 800th investment



This April 13, 2016, file photo ... [more >](#)

By [Vaughn Cockayne](#)

The Washington Times

Thursday, April 3, 2025

Microsoft Continues \$22 Billion HoloLens IVAS Deal

HoloLens IVAS secures phase 2 developmental period with US Army, following governmental blockades

MIXED REALITY

LATEST NEWS

Published: September 11, 2023



Microsoft



Source ▾



U.S. Army to use HoloLens technology in high-tech headsets for soldiers



Meta joins the race to develop augmented reality for the US military, alongside Anduril

Mark Zuckerberg has once again partnered with Palmer Luckey, who designs equipment for the US military. The creator of the Oculus virtual reality headset, an early supporter of Donald Trump, left Facebook in 2017 amid controversy.



POLICY

'Influencers in uniform' are boosting recruiting, Pentagon says

Troops' social-media posts are "wildly popular because I think youth are looking for authenticity," says deputy defense secretary.

ARMS AND INFLUENCERS: LEVERAGING THE SOCIAL MEDIA STARS IN THE US MILITARY'S RANKS

Mike Knapp | 01.04.24



A Military-Industrial-Communications-Complex in Canada?

Patricia Mazepa

York University, Canada

Kirsten Kozolanka

Carleton University, Canada

Tanner Mirrlees

University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Canada

The goal of this special issue of the *Global Media Journal -- Canadian Edition* is to insert the study of a military-industrial-communications-complex (MICC) into the field of Canadian communication studies. At present, the MICC is a blind spot in existing communication studies research, yet is an important object of theory and analysis, as well as an entity that militarizes the structure, conduct, and output of the communication and cultural environment of Canada. In this introduction we define the MICC and its significance in the political-economy of communication tradition; foreground the need for communication studies of the MICC in Canada; and briefly outline how each paper included in the issue contributes to research in this area of inquiry. We conclude with questions suggested for future research.



Cross-Border MICC

“If an MICC exists in 21st-century Canada, it is not defined primarily by Canada national state-Canadian corporate partnerships, but by the convergence of Canadian defense with U.S.-based tech and platform giants. Thus, what exists is a *cross-border MICC*, constituted by the DND and US tech firms.”



National
Defence

Défense
nationale



TechLobby

ANNUAL REPORT: 2024

Sara Bannerman
Professor and Canada Research Chair in Communications Policy and Governance, McMaster University

Brad McNeil
Research Coordinator and PhD candidate, McMaster University

Tanner Mirreles
Associate Professor, Director, Communication and Digital Media Studies, Ontario Tech University

Helen Beny
Research Coordinator and PhD candidate, McMaster University

thetechlobby.ca

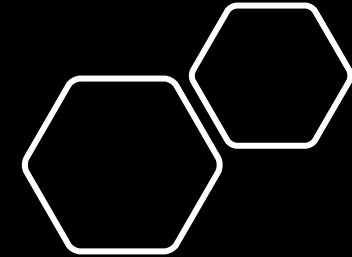
Research Questions

Does Big Tech lobby the DND, and if yes, which divisions?

Which defense policy areas do Big Tech companies prioritize in their lobbying?

What strategies and tactics do Big Tech use to try to win favor from DND agencies, as well as the civilian politicians concerned with national defense?

Does the DND procure Big Tech goods and services, and if so, at what cost?



DND-Big Tech Procurement Contracts: Lobbying Power, Platform Imperialism, and the Cross-Border MICC

Journal:	<i>Canadian Journal of Communication</i>
Manuscript ID	CJC-2025-0050.R1
Manuscript Type:	Policy Portal
Special Issue Topics:	
Keywords – enter keywords that pertain to the topic of your submission.:	Big Tech, Lobbying, Platform Imperialism, Military-Industrial-Communications-Complex, Department of National Defense, Political Economy, Procurement Contracts
Abstract:	<p>Background: Big Tech’s power is of interest to Canadian communication policy studies, but its links with the Canadian military remain underexplored. This article opens new space for research on Big Tech lobbying and military procurement contracting in Canada.</p> <p>Analysis: Drawing on a case study for The Tech Lobby Project, this article examines how American Big Tech companies secure procurement contracts with the Department of National Defense (DND), probing the power relations established and reproduced as a consequence.</p> <p>Conclusions and Implications: DND–Big Tech procurement contracts solidify a cross-border U.S.-centered military-industrial-communications complex (MICC), expanding the asymmetrical power relations of U.S.-centered lobbying, platform imperialism, platform dependency, challenging Canada’s digital sovereignty.</p>

Procurement Contracts: Big Tech- DND

Procurement contracts are formal agreements through which government agencies purchase goods and services from private-sector vendors, including tech corporations.

Procurement contracts are legal, consensual, formalized instruments through which U.S.-based tech firms integrate their infrastructure into the core operations of Canada's federal state agencies, including the DND.

By examining these contracts, we see not only how data is collected from users downstream, but how the foundational digital infrastructure is embedded upstream.

Microsoft	Total Value: \$427,500.00
Contract Date:	Jan 26, 2021
Original Value:	\$427,500.00
Work Description:	License/Maintenance fees for application software (including COTS) and application development and delivery software
Instrument Type:	Contract
Commodity Type:	Service
Comments:	This contract was sole sourced.
Additional Comments:	License/Maintenance fees for application software (including COTS) and application development and delivery software, NCR
Organization:	National Defence
Microsoft	Total Value: \$1,888,000.00
Contract Date:	Apr 1, 2021
Original Value:	\$1,888,000.00
Work Description:	License/Maintenance fees for application software (including COTS) and application development and delivery software
Instrument Type:	Contract
Commodity Type:	Service
Comments:	This contract was sole sourced.
Additional Comments:	License/Maintenance fees for application software (including COTS) and application development and delivery software, NCR
Organization:	National Defence
Microsoft	Total Value: \$17,217.50
Contract Date:	Mar 31, 2020
Original Value:	\$17,217.50
Work Description:	License/Maintenance fees for application software (including COTS) and application development and delivery software
Instrument Type:	Contract
Commodity Type:	Service
Comments:	This contract was omitted from a previous public disclosure. This contract was sole sourced.
Organization:	National Defence

Method

- The Government of Canada's Open Government Portal tracks procurement contracts valued over \$10,000.
- I searched for contracts between DND and the U.S.'s biggest Big Tech firms: Google (Alphabet), Apple, Meta (Facebook), Amazon and Microsoft.
- After downloading the aggregate data, I manually recorded the total number of contracts, the types of goods and services procured, the time span of the procurement relationship, and the cumulative value of all contracts awarded.



Microsoft

224 DND Contracts \$316 million



Apple

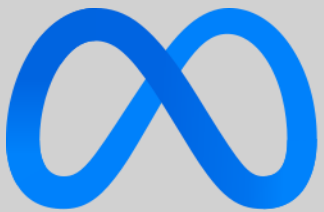
47 DND Contracts \$24.7 million

amazon

50 DND Contracts \$23.1 million

Google

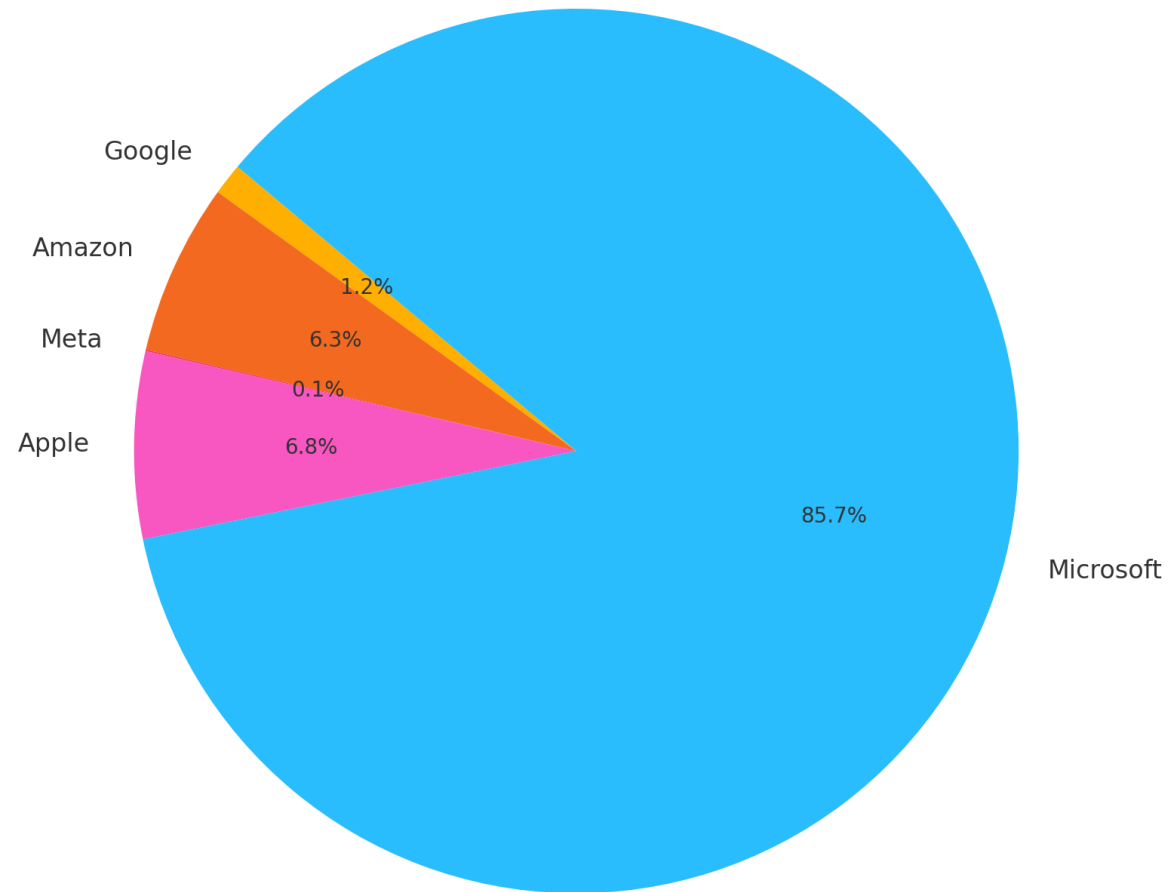
13 DND Contracts \$4.2 million



Meta


3 DND Contracts \$186,000

Share of Total DND Contract Value by GAFAM Company (2005-2024)



Canada's Department of National Defence using U.S. cloud services for 'mission critical' applications

National Defence spent \$4.57 million on Amazon Web Services, another \$8 million on Microsoft services and \$835,691 on Google services.

Updated Sept. 19, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. | Sept. 19, 2025 | 2 min read |   (14)

Microsoft Deepens Its Commitment to Canada with Landmark \$19B AI Investment

Dec 9, 2025 | [Brad Smith - Vice Chair & President](#)



Power

- Relational power terms: A gets B to do what A wants.
- Here, A is American Big Tech firms and B is Canada's DND.
- Seeking profits through government contracts worldwide, Big Tech aims to secure the DND as a stable foreign buyer.
- By embedding proprietary systems deep within Canada's defense establishment, these firms make their technologies indispensable to Canada.

Influence

- Big Tech-DND relationship expresses a form of political influence in Canada.
- These companies lobby the government to not only try to shift Canadian policy and regulatory frameworks to their liking, but also, to win contracts from numerous government agencies, including DND.
- Big Tech's lobbying activities can shape agendas, set agendas and frames in communication and media policy and regulatory debates, and align foreign interests with Canada's "national interest" and vice versa.

Platform Imperialism

- The Big Tech-DND relationship bolsters U.S.-centered platform imperialism.
- U.S. technology companies that control the world's largest digital platforms—often supported by the geopolitical power of the U.S. state—expand into other countries, integrating their digital infrastructures and superstructures while reproducing an “asymmetrical power relationship” between the U.S. and smaller countries (Jin 2020, p. 190).

Tech and Platform Service Dependency

- Tech and service *dependency*: countries lacking powerful domestic tech and platform firms become reliant on those based in other more powerful countries.
- Canadian government agencies purchase hardware, and software and platform services, from U.S. Big Tech. Lucrative contracts, revenues, and even user data flow to American firms rather than remaining within Canada.
- DND procurement reinforces this dependency, and itself becomes dependency on American-owned tech and platform infrastructure and services to conduct operations.
- It also reproduces *governance dependency*, since DND operates under terms of service and governance frameworks shaped by U.S. tech companies and laws.



STAR COLUMNISTS

Opinion | Canada needs to wean itself off its relationship with the United States. Here's how

Feb. 5, 2025 | 3 min read | [Comments](#)

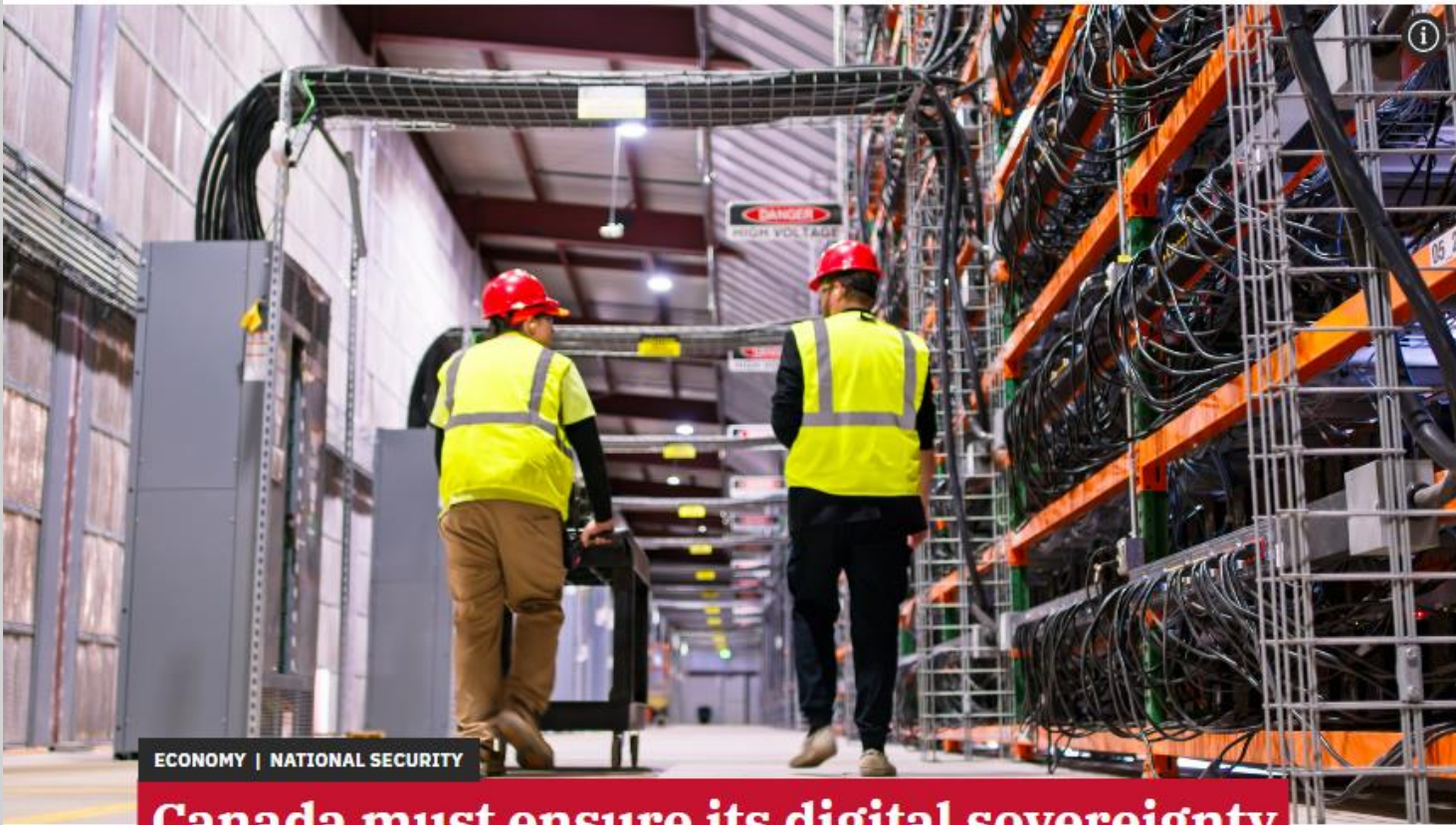


The Canadian Chamber of Commerce says a decision by U.S. President Donald Trump to delay the implementa... [▼](#)

By Mark McQueen

Mark McQueen is a Toronto-based entrepreneur, a former board chair of two federal agencies and an adviser in Brian Mulrooney's PMO and a columnist for the Star. Follow him

...e Minister Mark Carney hosts U.S. President Donald Trump and the rest of the G7 next we
...of middle powers like Canada can become less dependent on America by diversifying the
...which we do business, writes Joseph Wong.



ECONOMY | NATIONAL SECURITY

Canada must ensure its digital sovereignty in the face of U.S. threats

Canada should follow the EU's lead in asserting digital independence and building resilient national infrastructure.



by [Natasha Tusikov](#)

May 8, 2025

