

Big Tech cozied up to Trump – it's not getting much in return

For a while, it looked like President Donald Trump was going to have Big Tech's back.

Now, the tech industry is collateral damage in his global trade war.

On Thursday, European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen** floated the idea of placing "a levy on the advertising revenues of digital services" if tariff negotiations with the US go south. This would be the opposite outcome that tech CEOs like **Mark Zuckerberg** were hoping for when they threw their support behind the new administration.

To someone like Zuckerberg, Trump was supposed to be the strong-armed leader to bring the overbearing EU to heel. Instead, the rhetoric between the US and EU is ratcheting up just weeks before the EU is already set to fine Meta (and Apple) for violating its Digital Markets Act.

While certainly more of a self-inflicted wound, **Elon Musk's** popularity in the US has "inverted as his support for President Trump has increased," **Nate Silver** wrote this week. Tesla's stock price, meanwhile, has lost over a third of its value this year, and, thanks to tariffs, the company has removed the option to buy new, US-made vehicles in China.

As I predicted last week, TikTok is particularly screwed by Trump's extra-aggressive China tariffs, which the country has promised to "fight to the end." Even as it's still business as

usual for TikTok's rank and file, the app's fate in the US feels increasingly precarious. When asked this week about the extended deadline to reach a TikTok deal in the US, a spokesperson for China's commerce ministry said the government "opposes practices that ignore the laws of the market economy, plunder by force, and damage the legitimate rights and interests of enterprises."

"There's not going to be much dialogue until that's resolved," one of TikTok's aspiring bidders, AppLovin CEO **Adam Foroughi**, said this week of the tariffs. The situation is such a mess that the US stock market tanking also "drowned out the ability to infer feedback" from shareholders about AppLovin's bid, Foroughi told *Bloomberg*.

If anything, this week is a reminder that the tech industry has grown so large and influential that its leading companies are tools for leverage between countries. In times of relative peace, that influence can be beneficial for Big Tech. When things get hostile, Big Tech is put in the crosshairs.

Some noteworthy job changes in the tech world:

As always, I want to hear from you, especially if you have feedback on this issue or a story tip. Respond here or ping me securely on Signal.

Correction, April 11th: An earlier version of this article said that Google employees who were laid off received more severance than employees who took earlier voluntary buyouts. Each group received the same severance terms.

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