The Paradox of Decentralized Technologies: Government Adoption and the Reaction of Cryptocurrency Users

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On my honor as a University Student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment as defined by the Honor Guidelines for Thesis-Related Assignments

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Introduction

Though the majority of the public may think cryptocurrency investors and users would be enthusiastic about the federal government adopting blockchain solutions, the community is much more nuanced, with many enthusiasts of the technology stating that they believe that blockchain should stay out of the federal government and are worried that the government may utilize the technology improperly. I approached this topic first by exploring the cryptocurrency community in Reddit, specifically within a subreddit called r/Cryptocurrency. Following the collection of data from Reddit, I moved on to a second social media platform, X (formerly Twitter), where I gathered user opinions on similar topics, but found different content within the platform. The question I seek to answer is as follows: If one of the main principles of cryptocurrency is decentralization, meaning there is no central authority to enforce policies or assign value, why do governments choose to adopt this technology and how do cryptocurrency users and developers reconcile the expectation of decentralized financial systems with increasing government involvement and regulation? In this paper, I intend to use the user opinions found on Reddit and X to formulate a tentative conclusion to this ongoing topic.

Background and Context

To begin discussion about cryptocurrency and blockchain technologies, we must first describe what they are. First, the concept of blockchain and cryptocurrency revolves around decentralization: which is when an organization, object, or activity is not controlled by one central place, but instead by many different places, evenly distributing the power of control to the many. Blockchain builds upon this concept, adding privacy and security on top of the decentralized aspect. A blockchain can be likened to a decentralized digital ledger where information is stored in a series of blocks, each linked to the previous one in a chain-like

structure. Each time new data is added, a new block is created and linked to the chain. Lastly, the data is distributed across a network of computers (called nodes) rather than being held in a single, centralized location. Each node holds a copy of the entire blockchain, meaning the information is highly secure, resistant to tampering, and transparent. If someone were to alter information in a single block, it would no longer match copies held in other nodes, revealing inconsistencies (Li, 2025).

The appeal of blockchain technology stems from its decentralized structure. Unlike traditional systems where data is held by a single centralized authority, creating a single point of failure that if compromised, could lead to massive data leaks, blockchain's distribution of information means that compromising a single node typically doesn't expose the entire dataset. However, it's worth noting that while blockchain offers this structural security advantage, it introduces different security considerations, as the integrity of the overall system depends on consensus mechanisms and proper implementation of cryptographic protocols.

Cryptocurrency once again builds upon blockchain's decentralization, privacy and security by introducing currency into the combination. Cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum are digital/virtual currencies secured by cryptography[1], making them nearly impossible to counterfeit. Unlike traditional currencies issued by governments, cryptocurrencies operate on blockchain networks without any centralized authority such as a bank or a government. Instead, transactions typically occur directly between users (peer-to-peer) without an intermediary, potentially reducing fees and processing times for international transfers. Each cryptocurrency transaction is verified by network nodes through cryptographic techniques and recorded on the blockchain, creating a transparent yet private financial system. The value of cryptocurrencies is not typically backed by physical assets (like gold), but instead is supported by factors such as

[1]The practice of writing or solving coded information, in this case writing

utility, scarcity (as many currencies have a fixed maximum supply), market demand, and perceived value. The volatility of cryptocurrencies leads those interested in monetary gain to engage in trading, investing, and speculation, hoping to capitalize on price fluctuations to generate profits. This decentralized monetary system represents a shift from traditional financial structures, offering both new opportunities like an alternative monetary storage location to banks and challenges such as price volatility and regulatory concerns.

Recently, blockchain technologies and cryptocurrency have been making headlines once more, as the Trump administration has been advocating for the usage of blockchain in government. Some recent headlines include “The Trump Administration Wants USAID on the Blockchain” (Elliot, 2025), “Trump Goes All in on Crypto” (Iyengar, 2025), and “At Crypto Summit, Trump Says U.S. Will Be ‘the Bitcoin Superpower’” (Yaffe-Bellany, 2025). With the recent pushes for the utilization of cryptocurrency to this extent, it becomes apparent that the technology will eventually become a significant component of the U.S. financial and governmental infrastructure, influencing regulations, economic policies, and mainstream adoption.

Understanding the cryptocurrency community’s input on blockchain and cryptocurrency is essential because these technologies are built upon the principles of decentralization and public participation. Additionally, community perspective influences core aspects of cryptocurrencies, such as network upgrades, governance decisions, regulatory decisions, and more, shaping how these systems evolve. As governments and institutions adopt blockchain, recognizing the concerns and support of the broader community ensures that developments align with the interests of users, developers, and stakeholders rather than just centralized entities.

Methods

To collect the relevant data to my research question, I explored two different social media platforms that are typically used for discussing topics: Reddit and X. On each platform, I took note of users that were either critical or in support of governmental usage of cryptocurrency. However, some content that I deemed unsuitable for research included content that did not include mention of blockchain or cryptocurrency, and content that was overly negative/not constructive. Additionally, while I did not decide to use bot generated content for my research, I chose to take note of the amount that had been generated. The reason this decision was made was due to the reasoning that if there was bot activity present, there must be some portion of the community that has the same sentiment of the bot. Lastly, for the purposes of anonymity, apart from the original creators of the post, usernames will be omitted from this paper.

For the data collection portion on Reddit, my data stems from news sources and the accompanying Reddit posts about said news sources. To acquire this information, I scrolled through the Cryptocurrency Subreddit, paying attention to the posts with the "GENERAL-NEWS", "POLITICS", or "REGULATIONS" tags. From there, I quickly read the article the post was talking about, summarized it, then scrolled through the comments to find what users generally agreed on. I noted all this information down in a separate document, quoting each user's opinion directly. In total, I looked through 4 separate articles and posts, along with 2+ posts that I deemed unfit for research.

For the data collection portion on X, my data stems from X posts and the accompanying comments within said posts. To determine which posts to select information from, I went to X.com and then searched the titles of the Reddit articles I had previously selected. Then, I chose Tweets from those selections that attracted a large amount of attention (more than 2000 likes)

and scrolled through the associated comments to find what users generally agreed on. I focused first on replies with high engagement, then looked at other tweets in the replies that mirrored similar sentiments. I noted the users' comments verbatim in a separate document, researching 3 posts that were related to the original four found on Reddit. Any information omitted did not fit one or more of the criteria listed above.

Theoretical Framework: ANT

The methodical approach to data collection described above aligns with the fundamental principles of the Actor Network Theory (ANT): a framework used to understand technological development that views technology and society as inseparable, examining how both human and non-human "actors" form networks that shape technological outcomes (Latour, 1992). ANT provides a helpful perspective for examining the possible differences between user opinions on blockchain and cryptocurrency found on Reddit and X, as each platform hosts distinct users, engagement mechanisms, and discourse patterns.

One of the key differences between the two platforms is user demographics and platform culture. Reddit tends to host users who engage in long-form discussions and value constructive input on a given topic. One such example of a subreddit that fosters that mentality is R/AITA, where users can go to figure out whether they are in the wrong based on community input. In contrast, users on X tend to engage more reactively, often shaping discourse through concise statements rather than extended conversations. This is in part due to X's character limitations in a given post.

A key component of ANT's perspective is the role of non-human actors on a given technology. Regarding Reddit and X, some key non-human actors are both bot activity and algorithms. On Reddit, bot activity is typically limited to moderation or automated responses,

with relatively less influence on shaping discourse and dialogue. In contrast, X has a higher prevalence of bot-driven engagement, where automated accounts amplify specific narratives. Lastly, the algorithm behind each social media platform is responsible for pushing out each post to different users, dictating what gets seen and what does not. ANT proposes that these non-human actors contribute to shaping the network of discourse, meaning that bot activity on X activity would reflect and reinforce existing sentiments within the community, even if not originating from real users. Additionally, from ANT's perspective, the algorithm would also shape conversations by showing users posts that they would want to see.

Through the lens of ANT, these differences in how Reddit and X construct different networks where both human actors and non-human actors come together to shape the discourse on different topics, such as governmental cryptocurrency usage. Reddit promotes structured, community led discussions, while X promotes engagement based, real time, raw content that tends to be more reactionary than critical. These platform specific features shape how governmental use of cryptocurrency and blockchain technologies are discussed on each platform, leading to varying sentiments on the topic depending on the platform the discussion is hosted on.

Theoretical Framework: SCOT

Furthermore, to analyze my main findings, I utilized the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework, which emphasizes that technology does not grow independently, but is instead shaped by social processes (Pinch & Bijker, 1984). SCOT proposes that technologies acquire meaning and value depending on the interpretations of relevant social groups, which can be communities of users, developers, institutions, and other stakeholders who interact with the technology in different ways.

A key concept in SCOT is interpretive flexibility, which refers to the idea that a single technology can have multiple meanings depending on the social group engaging with it. Over time, however, these meanings often converge in a process called closure, where debate and contestation about a technology's purpose or design subside and a dominant understanding stabilizes.

Interpretive flexibility about blockchain technology inherently relates to the research I have done, as I have identified three relevant social groups that are producing discourse on governmental blockchain usage. SCOT helps me analyze these groups, as within each of these groups, blockchain means a slightly different thing. Within Group 1, blockchain is seen as a haven for decentralization, where the users maintain the most power over the technology. Governmental usage of it is frowned upon since it infringes upon the decentralized aspect. Within Group 2, blockchain is seen as an entry point for cryptocurrency, where users are hopeful that the government will provide more opportunities for the general public to use the technology. And lastly, within Group 3, blockchain is seen as a political weapon or a means for self gain. All three of these groups view the same technology in a different way, illustrating the concept of interpretive flexibility in action.

As the government continues to increase its usage of blockchain technology and add more rules and regulations regarding it, the community might move towards closure. As the nuance and newness of the technology begins to wear off, closure dictates that controversies and discourse begin to settle, and a long term definition of a technology begins to take shape. However, as new stories and headlines continue to publish, closure has yet to take effect, suggesting that the sociotechnical meaning of blockchain remains open and actively contested. The persistence of differing perspectives among stakeholders highlights that blockchain is still

undergoing a process of negotiation; its identity, value, and purpose are still being shaped by the interactions and power dynamics between social groups. SCOT enables us to understand that this is not merely a technical evolution, but a social one, where meaning is not fixed but fluid. By applying this framework, my research shows that the debates surrounding governmental blockchain usage are part of an ongoing discussion over control, access, and vision for the future of the technology. Until one group prevails over the rest, the discourse over the technology will likely remain broken and dynamic.

Relevant Social Group 1: The Critical Group

The influence of platform design on user discourse becomes increasingly evident when examining the contents of user discourse, where more detailed, critical opinions were portrayed on Reddit than on X. In the Reddit Post “Musk has confirmed he wants to put the U.S. Treasury on a blockchain”, the supporting article states that Musk posts to X that "Career Treasury officials are breaking the law every hour of every day by approving payments that are fraudulent or do not match the funding laws passed by Congress,” and that it has to stop (Bambrough, 2025). Additionally, when Musk was asked if the Treasury should be put on a blockchain to prevent fraud from happening, he replied “Yes!”. While most cryptocurrency users might be enthusiastic about mixing the U.S. Treasury with Blockchain, the ones on Reddit replied to this news with heavy criticism. The most popular comment of the discussion exclaimed “a centralized blockchain... how is that any different from a traditional database?”, and was agreed upon by a vast number of people, totaling 3800+ upvotes at the time of research. Others were quick to chime in with similar sentiment, with another user stating that “a centralized blockchain is just an inefficient database. This is so stupid. What’s the grift?[2]”. One user on X deliberating

[2] A petty or small-scale swindle

the same topic about Musk expressed doubts about the integrity of the blockchain, noting that "with the amount of spending we have been doing, it would break the shyt out of the chain".

In a second post titled "Coinbase pushes US regulators to let banks offer crypto services once and for all", the associated article explained that Coinbase (a cryptocurrency exchange platform where users can buy, sell, store, and manage various digital assets) is pressuring US regulators to let banks offer crypto services to consumers (Hamid, 2025). They were able to do this because the Trump administration is scrapping previous Biden-era anti-crypto policies and Congress is investigating claims that the Biden administration pressured banks to shut down accounts related to cryptocurrency (Hamid, 2025). User sentiments on Reddit were similar to the last post, with most users being critical about the centralization of a decentralized technology. One user commented that Coinbase is "push(ing) to centralise what is intended to be decentralized" and that "greed conquers all". Another user emphasized that "Coinbase is by no means a friend of decentralization". Both of these comments received a high amount of upvotes on the posts they were commented on, indicating that a large amount of the community agreed with them. Though Reddit houses most of critical content on centralized blockchain usage, a related X post titled "COINBASE IS PUSHING US REGULATORS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR BANKS TO OFFER #BITCOIN AND CRYPTO SERVICES" was received with mixed results. Some of the more critical commentary mirrored the voices of those found on Reddit, with some users stating that they've "heard the same bs before" or that "Coinbase obviously has a plan to get their greedy hands on more (money)". Though X seemed to have typically more supportive views on widespread cryptocurrency usage, this post notably contained both positive and negative opinions.

A third Reddit post titled “Cardano Founder predicts, Blockchain Technology may be used throughout the US within the next 5 years, for voting, payments, identification, and more” sparked discussion about how the founder of Cardano (a smaller blockchain and cryptocurrency with functionalities similar to Ethereum) predicted that “The US government is going to be in the next five years one of the largest procurers of cryptocurrency and blockchain technology. It’s entirely possible. Our voting systems, our government procurement systems, our payment systems, our identity systems, and our central bank function” (Buckley, 2025). Additionally, the article indicates that cryptocurrency investors believe that D.O.G.E may choose a blockchain network that is private for U.S. records. The community on Reddit seemed mainly pessimistic about this post, with one user saying that they’ve “been hearing this since 2011”, and another user lamenting that “if the government keeps flip-flopping on this every 4-8 years, there is no stability in daily use of crypto”. Though this post received some optimistic comments with a user contesting that “at least now we're seeing it (blockchain technology) start to become more widely adopted and with more governments being friendly to crypto. I think it's very possible”, at the time of research, the optimism was not well received, and user received a net of 1 down vote.

Within Group 1, the general consensus between users was skepticism and negative sentiments about government and other centralized entities utilizing cryptocurrency and blockchain technology. The main reasons for negativity and criticalness include concerns over centralization, inefficiency, and potential ulterior motives. Many users view blockchain technology as a tool meant to promote decentralization, transparency, and individual financial autonomy. When governments or large corporations propose integrating blockchain into their own systems, skepticism naturally follows. The prevailing belief among Group 1 is that centralized blockchain implementation contradicts the fundamental benefits of decentralized

technology, leading to inefficiencies without any meaningful transparency or security improvements.

Relevant Social Group 2: The Supportive Group

Unlike the highly critical perspectives observed in Group 1, the supportive group (Group 2) demonstrates an opposing perspective to blockchain and cryptocurrency integration, while also being filled with additional nuance. Within this group there are another two sub groups, the optimistic supporters and the cautious supporters. The optimistic supporters are characterized by unconditional support for large corporations and governments beginning to utilize blockchain technology, seeing it as an opportunity for the technology to grow. The cautious supporters are characterized by a carefully measured hope that the technology might be utilized correctly by centralized powers, but retaining a portion of skepticism regarding the feasibility that centralized institutions will implement blockchain without compromising its core principles.

Revisiting the case of Musk's proposal to put the U.S. Treasury on a blockchain, perspectives within Group 2 offer a contrasting take compared to the skepticism seen in Group 1. One user who received 1000+ upvotes hypothesized that it could go well "if they use blockchain properly to enhance efficiency, cut cost, and increase security. And potentially add transparency and remove corruption. But are they really gonna use blockchain properly the way it was meant to? Or is it just hype and buzz again?" Another user that did not get much approval on Reddit, only receiving 6 upvotes, hoped that "if it's a centralized blockchain with a public block explorer[3], it could be good for transparency. Government could make payments via their own blockchain and contractors will bridge or cash the payments out to pay for their cost". On Reddit, posts in support of Musk or the governmental adoption of blockchain typically did not receive

[3] A web application that allows users to view, search, and analyze data on a blockchain network, such as transactions, blocks, and addresses

much attention and were also refuted against by other users. However, while examining an associated X post titled “BREAKING: Elon Musk proposes putting the Treasury on a blockchain for full spending transparency. People could track Government spending in real time.”, I found that this post was met with overwhelming support. Users were especially supportive of transparency, with one user commenting that “transparency is key. We should know how money is being spent. It's our country too after all!” and another exclaiming that there “should be total transparency”. Furthermore, there were optimistic skeptics found in this X post too, with one user questioning “who’s in charge of the keys?”, while another pointed out that “the average constituent has no clue what blockchain is. Doesn't mean it's not a good idea. Permanent solutions move people, not money”. These varied responses across both platforms highlight the quantity of users who remain optimistic about the usage of blockchain, yet cautious of its implementation.

In the aforementioned X post titled “COINBASE IS PUSHING US REGULATORS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR BANKS TO OFFER #BITCOIN AND CRYPTO SERVICES”, optimists stated that “that’s awesome to hear! The more banks get on board with crypto, the better for all of us . Let’s keep pushing for that mainstream adoption!” or that they were “very excited to see banks getting into crypto”. Furthermore, a minority of users on Reddit were hopeful, believing that “this is a good thing. (banks) offer(ing) crypto services should mean offer(ing) an on-ramp[4] to crypto, which means an off-ramp from fiat”. Lastly, it was notable that in this post, there was a great increase in artificial support in bots compared to Reddit, specifically a company called PublicAI which shared mindlessly positive sentiments about Coinbase.

[4]On-ramp crypto refers to the process of exchanging fiat currency (such as US dollars) for cryptocurrencies. Off-ramp crypto refers to the process of exchanging cryptocurrencies for fiat currency

The last X post analyzed was titled “FED CHAIR POWELL JUST DROPPED A BOMBSHELL US Banks can now serve crypto to customers 🤯 The floodgates are OPEN! $XRP 🚀🚀”, which was accompanied with a video of Jerome Powell, which in summary stated that banks are perfectly able to serve crypto customers so long as the banks understand cryptocurrency. Sentiments to this post mirrored the last, with members of Group 2 expecting that banks would be the “tipping point” for cryptocurrency entry for more people. One user even exclaimed that “serv(ing) crypto to customers” was akin to “peeled grapes”, implying that banks being incorporated with cryptocurrency would greatly decrease the entry complexity associated with obtaining cryptocurrency. In this analogy, peeling a grape is analogous to peeling back a level of complexity for users, with the peeled grape being the “good parts” of cryptocurrency without need for a higher difficulty threshold to understand, purchase, or navigate the underlying technology. This perspective of simplifying currency access reveals the underlying desires of Group 2: a pathway to mainstream adoption of blockchain technology without compromising the technology’s fundamental principles.

Within Group 2, the overarching belief was one of cautious optimism and strategic support for blockchain and cryptocurrency integration. Their primary motivations included hopes for increased transparency, reduced complexity in financial systems, and potential efficiency gains through technological innovation. While members of this group displayed a more nuanced perspective compared to Group 1, they collectively pushed for a careful and principled approach to blockchain adoption. Their support was characterized by a combination of support for increased usage of the technology, and an awareness of potential implementation challenges, leading to an aspiration of mainstream blockchain adoption that preserves the technology’s core values of decentralization and transparency.

Relevant Social Group 3: The Self-Interest Group

Group 3 marks a stark change in characterization compared to Group 1 and Group 2, as Group 3 is unified by a fixation on their own self-interest. I noted two different types of groups within Group 3, similar to Group 2. First, there is the politically self-interested group: a group interested in using blockchain technologies for political purposes, without much care for the actual principles of blockchain. Second, there is the monetarily self-interested group: a group interested in further the usage of cryptocurrencies with the aim of furthering their own wealth. While both groups may be different in surface intent, they both prioritize their own wishes, following whichever narrative suits those desires most.

When reviewing the X post about Jerome Powell and banks serving cryptocurrencies, many users were upset about how Powell did not mention XRP, a specific cryptocurrency. With a notable user-base (10+ different users) being upset about Powell's choice of words, I decided to take note that XRP users should not "be excited, they (banks or the government) will further suppress the price of XRP despite all the good news. Not for XRP". There were also some users that were just interested in the glamour of the word "cryptocurrency" with one user asserting that they "still don't understand crypto 😅 guess (they'll) have to figure it out now lol". This group of users interacting with this post had a single track mindset, with them wanting XRP to be specifically mentioned by the government to boost the visibility and value of the cryptocurrency in the eyes of the general public.

Lastly, the political group made its presence felt in the X post about Elon Musk proposing to put the Treasury on a blockchain. The political group was unified by hostility towards the Democrats and seemingly blind support for Musk's proposition, without displaying any true care for blockchain or its core values. Users would express that "Elon is going to break the psyche of

the deep state" or that "they are going to hate this. The dems are going to claim he is stealing our money", purely agreeing with the policy because it would "anger the dems" or "own the libs". This emotional response against the left epitomized this group's prioritization of partisan antagonism over substantive policy analysis or genuine technological understanding.

Within Group 3, the underlying motivation was a pursuit of self-interest, noted by either commentary on political manipulation or personal financial gain. Whether driven by the desire to leverage blockchain for a partisan agenda or to capitalize cryptocurrency profits, these groups demonstrated neglection of the technology's foundational principles of decentralization and collective empowerment. Their engagement was characterized by a focus on immediate personal or ideological benefits, sacrificing understanding of the technology and its advancements for short-term gratification.

Conclusion

This research has highlighted the complex and nuanced perspectives of user sentiments surrounding governmental utilization of blockchain and cryptocurrency technologies across different social media platforms. By examining user discourse on Reddit and X, three distinct groups emerged: critical skeptics who viewed governmental involvement as a fundamental contradiction of blockchain's decentralization principles, cautious supporters who see potential for technological innovation, and self-interested individuals motivated primarily by political or financial gains.

The critical skeptics, mainly vocal on Reddit, expressed deep concerns about the potential for centralization to undermine the core principles of blockchain technology. Their arguments revolved around how a centralized blockchain would be no better than an inefficient database that detracts from the technology's original purpose. In contrast, supporters, mainly on X,

demonstrated a more optimistic outlook, hoping that governmental and institutional adoption could bring increased transparency, reduced complexity to use the technology, and mainstream adoption of cryptocurrency. The most concerning perspective was the self-interested group, which revealed how political partisanship and personal financial motivations can corrupt the original purposes of a technology and detract from meaningful conversation between conflicting ideals. Whether driven by partisan anger or hopes of personal financial gain, these actors demonstrated little genuine understanding of blockchain's transformative potential, instead viewing the technology as a means to an immediate end.

Looking forward, my opinion is that the future of blockchain and cryptocurrency will likely be defined by how successfully we can balance institutional adoption with technological integrity. The research suggests that most users are critical of centralized usage of blockchain technologies, however there may be merit and opportunity if utilized correctly. Any governmental approach must prioritize the core principles of distributed control, transparency, and individual financial autonomy that built cryptocurrency to where it is currently. Additionally, I believe that governments may find a use in the transparency of blockchain technology, though it would require educating their citizens how to properly use the technology.

Future research should continue monitoring user opinions on the latest news stories to develop about increasing governmental blockchain integration, as user perspectives and sentiments continue to change as each headline is made. Researchers should develop more detailed methodologies for understanding cross-platform discourse on emerging technologies, and possibly look to incorporate different outlets, such as news articles or Instagram threads. The goal should be to conduct studies that track how user sentiments evolve over time, as ideally, decentralization leaves the power to the users.

In conclusion, the path forward requires a delicate balance. As blockchain technologies continue to mature, the community and governmental institutions must find a common ground that respects the technology's original vision while addressing the legitimate needs for regulation and stability. The ongoing dialogue between the community will be essential in determining the transformative potential of blockchain technology in governance.

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