

# Linux in Government: Outside the US, People Get It

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Major governments outside the United States either have adopted Linux and open-source software or have begun the process that will lead to adoption. Open-source software, especially Linux, has spread globally to countries and regions that regard it as the best model of software development and an engine of economic growth. Governments see adoption as a way to exploit a promising trend.

Interestingly, the US government appears to favor a company it deemed a monopoly over Linux and open-source software. While technically educated Linux and open-source work forces have grown in Germany, China, Brazil, India and Hungary since 2001, the US government has done nothing to keep pace with the rest of the world. Only a decade ago, the US held a technological edge over Europe and Asia in all areas of IT. Today, the once burgeoning IT industry in the US has given way to its competitors, especially China and India.

In my travels and work with governments, I have seen only one organization oppose Linux and open-source software. Regardless of where I go, Microsoft shows up and argues against open source. If the opposition doesn't call itself Microsoft, then it calls itself the Business Software Alliance or some other alter-ego.

One would think that the United States government eventually would conclude that not only has it lost its lead in technology, but perhaps the ugliest American of them all shows up as our de facto representative. Personally, I would rather have Condoleezza Rice's State Department showing up at technology hearings in foreign governments rather than Microsoft.

Finally, one might consider that by destroying its competitors, Microsoft has weakened the US technology sector rather than strengthening it. Look around and we see a technology sector suffering so badly that US universities have seen enrollment in computer sciences drop to nil. Additionally, the once well-trained US information technology workforce has aged, moved into other industries and suffered from the influx of foreign competitors.

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