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Commission on Science and Technology (CSTD)
Topic 1: Privacy Rights
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The convergence of commercial innovation, digital infrastructure, and national security has made data protection integral to international diplomacy. Commercial technologies with both civilian and military applications, particularly consumer drones and high-resolution remote-sensing satellites, collect vast amounts of biometric and operational data. Although these tools often serve peaceful functions in logistics, agriculture, and infrastructure monitoring, their intelligence-gathering capabilities can create severe privacy risks and national security vulnerabilities. Regulatory frameworks like the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) establish strict requirements to govern data minimization and consent. However, enforcing these protections becomes exceedingly difficult when telemetry streams cross international boundaries into jurisdictions with extrajudicial data access laws, such as China's National Intelligence Law.[1]

This unrestricted access to information directly intersects with intellectual property rights and sovereign security policies. As technology companies collect proprietary spatial datasets and develop flight algorithms, national governments increasingly leverage export control regimes, such as the U.S. Export Administration Regulations (EAR) and the American Security Drone Act, to restrict foreign access to core hardware components and data feeds.[2] These security controls frequently overlap with intellectual property disputes over sovereign data rights, creating trade friction between tech-exporting powers and developing markets. Furthermore, reliance on software platforms means users worldwide must regularly forfeit location and sensor data to corporate entities in exchange for access to technology, expanding corporate surveillance across international borders.[3]

1 European Parliament, 2019; U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2020
2 National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, U.S. Congress, 2023
3 Zuboff, S. (2019). The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power. PublicAffairs.
4 Technology and Innovation Report 2023: Opening green windows. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
5 World Trade Organization (WTO), 2021. TRIPS and Public Health / Environment.
6 International Energy Agency (IEA), 2023. Global EV Outlook.

Patent monopolies held predominantly by multinational firms in advanced economies severely restrict developing nations from acquiring, scaling, or manufacturing clean technology locally.[4] Patent protections under the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) often limit technology licensing flexibility, forcing emerging markets to pay steep royalties or import finished goods rather than building local manufacturing capacity.[5]

To balance technological security with equitable innovation, global governance must address digital exploitation directly and give developing nations direct access to vital climate data and technological tools. Establishing open-access environmental observation databases, reforming compulsory licensing for green patents during climate emergencies, and enforcing strict international guardrails against unauthorized data extraction are essential steps toward building an equitable digital and ecological order.

To guide you in your research, please see the following questions:

- What international standards should be established to prevent the unauthorized collection, transfer, storage, and use of sensitive data across national borders, particularly when domestic laws may conflict?
- How can the international community hold private technology companies accountable for data exploitation while ensuring that states retain sovereignty over sensitive national, environmental, and infrastructure-related data?
- How can the international community prevent data governance rules, patent protections, and export restrictions from reinforcing technological inequalities between developed and developing countries?

The CSTD must act to prevent dual-use technologies and patent monopolies from exacerbating global inequalities: achieving an equitable digital order requires consensus that balances national security with data privacy and technological sovereignty.

Please remember to represent your country's position, not your own personal perspective, and to utilize legitimate, credible sources. Finally, when drafting your position papers, please follow YU's UG1 policy on the use of artificial intelligence: you may use AI to check and correct the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and mechanics of text you have already written. AI may not generate, rewrite, or restructure your content.

1 European Parliament, 2019; U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2020
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If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out! My email is elsamuel@mail.yu.edu.

Sincerely,

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Chair, Commission on Science and Technology for Development

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1 European Parliament, 2019; U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2020
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