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Data Empires vs Digital Democracy: Who Rules Global Governance in the Age of Algorithmic Trade and Tech Titans?

Abstract

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the digital age, global governance frameworks are undergoing a profound transformation driven by the intersection of trade liberalization, technological innovation, and intensifying market competition. The emergence of data as a critical economic asset has redefined traditional notions of sovereignty, regulatory authority, and competitive fairness, placing digital platforms and multinational technology corporations at the center of global economic power. This paper critically explores how contemporary systems of global governance are adapting or failing to adapt to the challenges posed by cross-border data flows, algorithmic decision-making, and digital monopolies. It examines the tensions between national regulatory regimes and international trade obligations, particularly in the context of e-commerce, digital services, and competition law enforcement. The study further interrogates the role of international institutions such as the world trade organization and emerging plurilateral agreements in shaping norms around digital trade and competition. It highlights the growing divide between developed and developing economies in accessing digital markets and influencing rule-making processes. Additionally, the paper analyzes how antitrust frameworks are being reimagined to address platform dominance, data concentration, and anti-competitive practices in the digital ecosystem. By integrating legal, economic, and policy perspectives, this research underscores the urgent need for a coherent and inclusive global governance architecture that balances innovation with accountability, and market efficiency with equitable participation. The paper argues that the future of global governance in the digital age hinges on reconciling competing interests state sovereignty, corporate power, and consumer welfare while fostering a fair and competitive digital economy that is responsive to the complexities of a hyper-connected world.

Keywords: global governance, digital trade, competition law, data economy, antitrust regulation, cross-border, digital sovereignty, e-commerce law, tech monopolies, international trade law.

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