# Houston Area Model United Nations
# General Committee

# SPECPOL




Chair | Kiersten Hua

Topic B: Addressing Foreign Control and Corporate Monopolies over Critical Digital Infrastructure in Developing States

Houston Area Model United Nations 52

February 4 & 5, 2027

Atilgan Ozdil/Anadolu Ag

# Chair Letter

**Delegates,**

Welcome to the 52nd Annual HAMUN, and the best committee, SPECPOL!

My name is Kiersten Hua, and I will be serving as your chair! I am a sophomore at Southern Methodist University (pony up!), majoring in Biology and minoring in Business, on the Pre-Dent track. Throughout high school, I took part in numerous conferences, both as a delegate and chair. I also served as treasurer for my school's MUN club! After graduating, I wanted to stay involved with MUN, so I joined the awesome at HAMUN staff! Last year, I served as the World Bank chair. Needless to say, I love Model UN, and if you do not already, hopefully, after this conference, you will too!

HAMUN is not only an incredible experience, but also a chance to explore international politics, make meaningful connections, and a time practicing skills that will benefit you long after high school. I implore you to take advantage of all the opportunities this two-day conference has to offer.

My advice for delegates is to start strong and early, even if it seems scary or overwhelming! Everyone makes mistakes, whether it's their first conference or last. Just try your best, learn from failures, and you will be golden! Good luck, and I can not wait to meet you in February!



**Kiersten Hua**
Chair of SPECPOL
kiersten.hua@icloud.com

# Vice Chair Letter

**Delegates**,

Welcome to the 52nd Annual HAMUN, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to SPECPOL!

My name is Daniela Gonzalez Landino, and I will be your SPECPOL vice chair for this conference! I am a freshman at the University of Texas at Austin, and I am a Government and Plan II major. I was a delegate for Model UN at my high school for all four years, mostly staying within DISEC, so I'm excited to join a new committee for my first year as a staffer! Being able to continue with something I've enjoyed so much for the past few years is amazing, and I hope I can make sure you all have fun too.

HAMUN definitely helped strengthen many of my skills, including my paper-writing, research, and public speaking skills. Hopefully, this conference will bring you all some of this same help like it did to me and many others before you.

My advice for delegates is to not be afraid to do something new. Regardless of how big or influential your country is, everybody has a role and can do equally well. All you need is a leap of faith and (preferably) something to write notes on so you know what you're talking about. Good luck to all delegates!

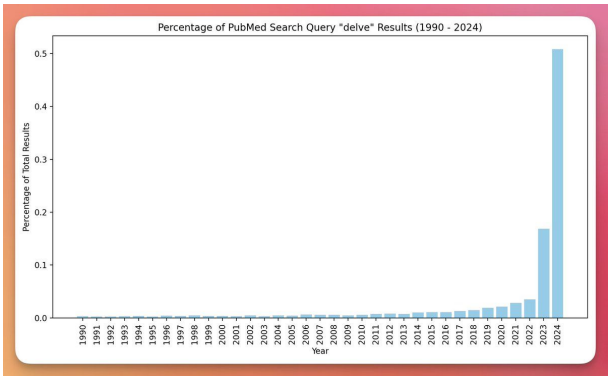


**Daniela Gonzalez Landino**
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SPECPOL
Chair | Kiersten Hua
**Houston Area Model United Nations 52**
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# Background Information

**What does the word "delve"** have in common with "explore", "tapestry", "testament", and "leverage"? OpenAI's ChatGPT uses these words far more frequently than the rest of the internet. No, this is not a word game. Those words are actually used very often- just not the internet as a whole- but in one specific subset of the web: African cyberspace.[1] But why?




de Zwart, Hans. "Racist Technology in Action: Outsourced Labour in Nigeria Is Shaping AI English." Racism & Technology Center, 29 Apr. 2024, racismandtechnology.center/2024/04/29/racist-technology-in-action-outsourced-labour-in-nigeria-is-shaping-ai-english/.

**ChatGPT is a large language model (LLM)**, which is a subset of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that responds to input by generating human-like written responses. While it is primarily built by analyzing pre-existing information, such as books, research papers, and academic journals, it only creates an amalgamation of raw data, without nuance or flexibility in responses.[2] After all, LLMs do not actually understand the info they are given; they simply recognize patterns and respond based on what is most probable. This leads to the introduction of human trainers, who essentially provide feedback, ask questions, and offer instructions to the AI. This aids LLMs in making decisions and responses faster and more accurately.[3] For ChatGPT's human trainers, the San Francisco-based company paid a contracting group in Nigeria to develop their AI, leading to the prevalence of words often found in the Nigerian English dialect. The reasons behind this are more extensive than one may think.

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1. Hern, Alex. "TechScape: How Cheap, Outsourced Labour in Africa Is Shaping AI English." The Guardian, 16 Apr. 2024, www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/apr/16/techscape-ai-gadgest-humane-ai-pin-chatgpt.
2. "AI Demystified: Introduction to Large Language Models | University IT." Stanford.Edu, 2024, uit.stanford.edu/service/techtraining/ai-demystified/llm.
3. Kingery, Ken. "Training AI Through Human Interactions Instead of Datasets | Duke Pratt School of Engineering." Duke Pratt School of Engineering, 3 Dec. 2024, pratt.duke.edu/news/training-ai-human-interactions/.
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**"If you take the deal, you're going to be exploited. If you don't take it, you're going to die"** - Frank Ssekamwa

**The Era of Colonialism has ended**, but the time of digital neocolonialism is here. Colonization used to occur through foreign occupation, and once it ended, the colonized countries were left disadvantaged because of a lack of infrastructure as well as high levels of socio-political and economic instability. When the Third Industrial Revolution began, and the internet took the world by storm, More Developed Countries (MDCs) had the finances and security to invest in this new revolutionary technology. As letters became telephones and telephones became smartphones, this new field of technology became a necessity in global affairs. While MDCs were at the center of this technology, Less Developed Countries (LDCs), unable to fund this expensive new infrastructure, were left behind. Under the guise of "helping" these LDCs catch up, foreign companies and governments gave them access to this new technology and its infrastructure, but there is a catch. Those foreign governments and corporations now own and control the aforementioned technology that runs society. This is what is called digital colonialism, a method that MDCs use to maintain their hold on LDCs through indirect means. These means include outsourcing, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), wage and regulatory arbitrage. The dilemma of accessing this new technology or maintaining sovereignty is a paradox that keeps many LDCs within its grasp. Frank Ssekamwa, a Ugandan attorney and digital rights expert, explained it like this: "If you take the deal, you're going to be exploited. If you don't take it, you're going to die."[4] The dawn of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is here, and this digital divide will only perpetuate the cracks in infrastructure remaining from the centuries of

4. Lerner, Sharon, and Anna Maria Barry-Jester. "'Digital Colonialism': U.S. Demands to Access Africans' Data Raise Privacy, Sovereignty Concerns." ProPublica, 17 June 2026, www.propublica.org/article/trump-state-department-africa-uganda-aid-medical-data-privacy.

colonization.

**Labor is cheaper in developing nations,** and companies, especially technology companies, exploit civilians in these countries to lower costs and avoid regulations. Even though the skill a job requires is the same whether the worker is in India or Germany, due to the difference in relative income in these countries, a high, competitive wage in India is still lower than what is competitive in Germany. This is known as wage arbitrage. Another critical inequality is regulatory arbitrage, or when companies move their factories to nations with weaker workers' rights protection laws to exploit workers legally. This all-encompassing method of utilizing foreign organizations, or subcontracting to reduce operating costs, is classified as outsourcing.[5] It is prevalent in Big Tech, particularly in outsourcing data and call centers, technology support, and cloud services.

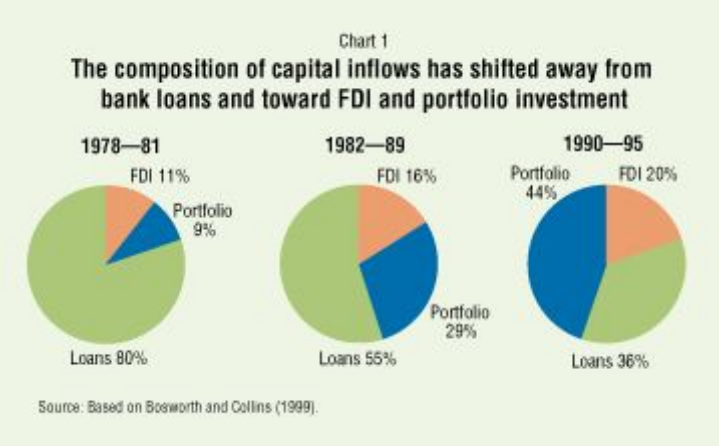
**"Workers in Northern America (US 4.70 per hour) and Europe and Central Asia (US 3.00 per hour) earned more than workers in other regions, where earnings varied between US 1.30 (Africa) and US 2.22 (Asia and the Pacific) per hour of paid and unpaid work."** - International Labor Organization.

**In the AI industry alone**, human input is required at nearly every stage of LLM training, and where do their companies source this labor from... developing nations. These invisible workers, who complete digital labor, are known as "ghost-workers." There are millions of "ghost workers" completing these digital tasks around the globe. While these types of workers are in nearly every continent, because they can work anywhere with a wifi connection, they are still more widespread in LDCs.[6] This is because there are fewer workers' rights and often lower, if any, minimum wages, allowing foreign corporations to get the same labor for far cheaper. The International Labor

5. Twin, Alexandra. "Outsourcing: How It Works in Business, With Examples." Investopedia, 2024, www.investopedia.com/terms/o/outsourcing.asp.
6. The. "Dehumanization, Discrimination and Deskilling." Dehumanization, Discrimination and Deskilling, 2020, www.techimpactonworkers.iccr.org/6-exploitation-of-data-workers.

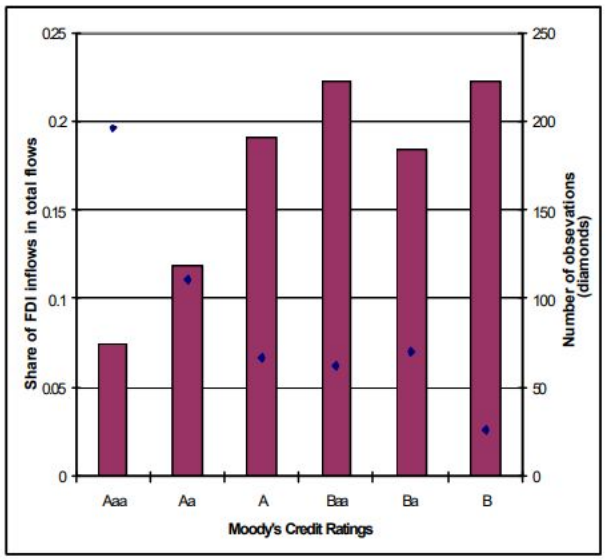
Organization (ILO) states that "Workers in Northern America (US 4.70 per hour) and Europe and Central Asia (US 3.00 per hour) earned more than workers in other regions, where earnings varied between US 1.30 (Africa) and US 2.22 (Asia and the Pacific) per hour of paid and unpaid work."[7] This is just an example of how large technology corporations are able to further financially abuse developing nations as more advanced technology reaches LDCs.

**It is more than just underpaid workers**. This is just one part of the phenomenon known as the digital divide. The digital divide is the gap between those who can access, freely use, benefit from, and train with technology.[8] This is just another difference felt between citizens of LDCs and those who live in MDCs. This aforementioned exploitation by Big Tech companies leaves many LDCs with technological infrastructure, like cloud services and call centers, but that technology is owned by foreign corporations and not available to the general public. There are also many foreign companies that use their extensive resources to dominate and eventually monopolize entire fields in certain LDCs. Compared to the strength of international, trillion-dollar companies, new and local businesses cannot keep up, which leads to further foreign control over technology in these developing nations.




Loungani, Prakash, and Assaf Razin. "How Beneficial Is Foreign Direct Investment for Developing Countries?" Finance and Development | F&D, June 2001, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2001/06/loungani.htm.

7. Berg, Janine, et al. Digital Labour Platforms and the Future of Work Towards Decent Work in the Online World. 2018, www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_645337.pdf.
8. "What Is the Digital Divide? Meaning, Causes & Impact." iSchool | Syracuse University, 29 Jan. 2026, ischool.syracuse.edu/what-is-the-digital-divide/.

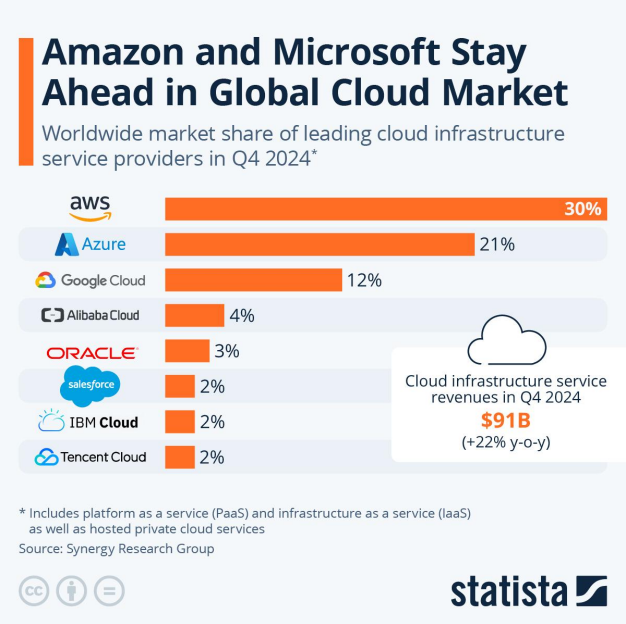



Albuquerque, Rui. "The Composition of International Capital Flows: Risk Sharing Through Foreign Direct Investment." Journal of International Economics, vol. 61, no. 2, Dec. 2003, pp. 353–83, https://doi.org/10.1016/s0022-1996(03)00013-8.

**How else does foreign monopolization occur?** In addition to outsourcing and regulatory/wage arbitrage, another main method is FDI. An FDI is a long-term investment in a project or company by foreign persons, governments, or corporations.[9] This form of capital is seen as stable, even in times of financial crises, which is often the case in many LDCs. This has led many countries to shift to this specific type of foreign investment over others (*see first image above*). There are many benefits to both countries, such as an increase in tax revenue, competitive rates, and overall strengthening of economies in a more permanent method than aid or loans. However, like all things, there are drawbacks. One key issue is the exchange of foreign leverage for financial development. While this enhances the local market, the local market is no longer local; part of it is now owned and managed by foreigners. When this share gets too high, non-citizens can be controlled financially, which complicates stability not only in economics, but also in politics and governance. This can escalate unrest and also create an opportunity for a developing nation's people to be exploited, as it can cause asymmetric competition between local businesses and large, international corporations, creating potential monopolized markets. It has also been noted that there is a correlation between a country's worsening credit score and a higher share of FDI in its domestic

9. Hayes, Adam. "Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): What It Is, Types, and Examples." Investopedia, 8 Aug. 2025, www.investopedia.com/terms/f/fdi.asp.

economy (*see second image above*).[10, 11]




Meneses, Mariana. "Digital Sovereignty: Cutting Dependence on Dominant Tech Companies - the Quantum Record." The Quantum Record, 29 Mar. 2025, thequantumrecord.com/philosophy-of-technology/digital-sovereignty-cutting-dependence-on-dominant-tech-companies/.

**Today, Microsoft controls 70% of the world's computer operating systems**,[12] with 6 billion computers running Windows. The online world is controlled almost entirely by just a few Big Tech companies, like AWS, Apple, or Meta, which are based in the United States or other MDCs. These companies have almost unlimited resources, and when they enter LDCs, they are able to overrun local businesses. After all the competing companies are out of business, they hike prices, and consumers are left struggling to keep up with what is now required in modern society. Over time, more and more foreign companies have monopolized the digital landscape in LDCs, and soon it may not just be the online web but the country as a whole. In South Africa, Google controls about 70% of online advertising, followed by Facebook at 12%. Only 8% is left for all of South Africa's main media outlets, including major news services. The South African internet seems to no longer be South African at all. By prioritizing Big Tech companies and their services, foreigners dominate cloud services, telecommunications, and digital platform infrastructure in LDCs. This is not just capitalism, but neocolonialism.[13]

**How can developing states achieve digital sovereignty?** There are many ways, but for

10. Loungani, Prakash, and Assaf Razin. "How Beneficial Is Foreign Direct Investment for Developing Countries?" Finance and Development | F&D, June 2001, www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2001/06/loungani.htm.
11. Ali, Najabat, et al. "Does FDI Foster Technological Innovations? Empirical Evidence From BRICS Economies." PLOS ONE, edited by Jabbar Ul-Haq, vol. 18, no. 3, Mar. 2023, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0282498.
12. THE GEOSTRATA. "How Does Big Tech Dominate the Digital World?" The Geostrata, 30 Sept. 2024, www.thegeostrata.com/post/big-tech-tightens-its-grip-how-companies-like-apple-and-google-dominate-the-digital-world.
13. Kwet, Michael. "Break the Hold of Digital Colonialism." Mail & Guardian, 29 June 2018, mg.co.za/2018-06-29-break-the-hold-of-digital-colonialism/.

clarity, the solutions below will be categorized into three groups: legislation, democratization, and investment.

**"Concerning data and privacy, 66% of countries have legislation. The share is 96% in Europe, 69% in the Americas, 57% in Asia and the Pacific and 50% in Africa"** - UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

**Developing nations must strengthen legislation** surrounding technology independence. Many LDCs lack the laws that help regulate or manage technology. According to the UN Trade and Development, "Concerning data and privacy, 66% of countries have legislation. The share is 96% in Europe, 69% in the Americas, 57% in Asia and the Pacific, and 50% in Africa."[14] It is vital that LDCs begin drafting laws that ensure their citizens and businesses cannot be exploited. The United Nations Global Digital Compact is a textbook example that demonstrates how to do this. The Global Digital Compact is outlined by the United Nations as "A comprehensive global framework for digital cooperation and governance of artificial intelligence." Intended to uphold international law and human rights online, the Global Digital Compact hopes to promote collaboration and publicize data and cloud services. This would primarily be achieved through policy and augmenting facilitated access to the internet.[15] Other solutions include expanding regulatory legislation surrounding data sovereignty to ensure that its citizens' information is not being taken outside of the state's borders. Likewise, raising restrictions around foreign corporations' expansion into their country, particularly concerning subcontracting and outsourcing, is imperative.[16] They also must limit the amount of FDI within their domestic markets, such as those that risk monopolization or too much power in foreign hands. In addition, legal loopholes that allow these problems to fester must be

14. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. "Data and Privacy Unprotected in One Third of Countries, Despite Progress." Unctad, 29 Apr. 2020, unctad.org/news/data-and-privacy-unprotected-one-third-countries-despite-progress.
15. "Homepage | Global Digital Compact." Google.Com, 2024, www.un.org/global-digital-compact/en.
16. "Avoiding the Data Colonialism Trap." Www.Data4sdgs.Org, www.data4sdgs.org/blog/avoiding-data-colonialism-trap.

eradicated. Overall, legislation is a crucial tool to be leveraged while developing nations battle for their digital independence.

**Democratization is a process** in which the public is given access to something, in this case, digital tools, data, and infrastructure. With the implementation of free and public access, corporations become substantially weakened, as they can no longer use advanced technology as leverage to influence local businesses and people in LDCs. Moreover, the increase of digital public goods (DPGs) and digital public infrastructure (DPI) can aid in emergencies by distributing and managing critical information. Together, DPI and DPGs create Open Digital Ecosystems (ODEs). ODEs help connect governments and their services to their citizens.[17] It is also essential because it provides unlimited education in the form of the internet, enhancing the marketable skills people can get for free. This in turn enriches job opportunities. It closes the digital divide that LDCs face, as it equips people with indiscriminate access to essential digital tools. Thus reducing inequality between those who can afford access and those who cannot, and "leaving no one behind," as iterated in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[18]

**"In Ethiopia, digital education platforms have provided over three million students with access to quality education"** - UN: Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries

**"In Bangladesh, mobile financial services have brought banking to seventy million people, including marginalized women and rural communities, fostering economic empowerment"** - UN: Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries

**Investment is the final pillar to create digital sovereignty**. These solutions are

17. Massally, Keyzom Ngodup, and Varad Pande. "How Digital Public Goods Could Tackle Big Global Dilemmas." World Economic Forum, 2 May 2022, www.weforum.org/stories/sustainable-development/digital-public-goods-open-source-technology-ecosystem/.
18. "Reducing Inequalities Through Digital Public Goods and Youth Collaboration for the SDGs | United Nations for Youth." Www.Un.Org, www.un.org/development/desa/youth/news/2022/01/reducing-inequalities-through-digital-public-goods-and-youth-collaboration-for-the-sdgs/.

focused on the future more than anything else; after all, the day you plant the tree is not the day you stand in its shade. In that respect, investment is a concentrated effort to build Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education and develop digital infrastructure. By providing more people with the skills to understand and utilize technology, a wide pool of perspectives and ideas is built. It fosters innovation within a country from its own citizens. Furthermore, this breaks down LDCs' dependency on Big Tech companies and their global standardization- a system that is primarily based on MDCs' cultures and threatens many LDCs' regional cultures. This premise of broadening the many fields of technology based on the unique cultural, biological, and linguistic differences around the world, especially in the Global South, is embodied in the theory of technodiversity.[19] In countries that prioritize education in STEM and investment in independent digital infrastructure, there has been incredible growth. The United Nations (UN) recorded that "In Ethiopia, digital education platforms have provided over three million students with access to quality education" and "In Bangladesh, mobile financial services have brought banking to seventy million people, including marginalized women and rural communities, fostering economic empowerment." [20]

**"A State in the grip of neo-colonialism is not master of its own destiny. It is this factor which makes neo-colonialism such a serious threat to world peace."** - Kwame Nkrumah

**These three main pillars- legislature, democratization, and investment**- contain the majority of solutions; however, there are a plethora of ideas not mentioned, or that may not be included in those groupings. While it is critical to explore all possible venues, time is running out. As AI takes over global cyberspace, corporations' control is

19. "Technodiversity as the Key to Digital Decolonization." Unesco.Org, 14 Jan. 2022, courier.unesco.org/en/articles/technodiversity-key-digital-decolonization.
20. "Powering Development With Science, Technology and Innovation - the Case for the Least Developed Countries | Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries." Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, 2024, www.un.org/technologybank/en/news/powering-development-science-technology-and-innovation-case-least-developed-countries.

expanding over these LDCs. In the next few years, the growth, or lack thereof, in digital independence will be decisive in many developing nations' futures. If they are unable to achieve this sovereignty, they are at risk of their unique ethnic, national, and cultural heritage suffocating under the hands of Big Tech. The digital divide must not only be closed, but LDCs must also restrain foreign control over vital digital infrastructure. In addition, it is fundamental to limit FDI, outsourcing, wage and regulatory arbitrage. If not, colonialism, and its many forms, may never lose its hold. In his book, *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*, former prime minister and president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, wrote, "A State in the grip of neo-colonialism is not master of its own destiny. It is this factor which makes neo-colonialism such a serious threat to world peace."[21]

21. Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism by Kwame Nkrumah Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism. mirror.explodie.org/nkrumah.pdf.

## TOPIC B: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How can developing states reduce their dependence on foreign companies for critical digital infrastructure such as internet networks, data centers, and telecommunications systems?
- What policies can governments use to prevent a small number of corporations from gaining excessive control over a country's digital infrastructure?
- How can developing states attract foreign investment in technology while ensuring that foreign companies do not have disproportionate control over critical infrastructure?
- What role should the United Nations and international organizations play in helping developing countries build independent and reliable digital infrastructure?
- How can governments protect sensitive national and citizen data when digital infrastructure is owned or operated by foreign corporations?
- What regulations should be placed on multinational technology companies to prevent monopolistic practices while still encouraging innovation and investment?
- How can developing states build domestic technological expertise and companies so they can manage more of their own digital infrastructure?
- What financial and technical support can wealthier countries provide to help developing states establish secure and locally controlled digital networks?
- How should countries respond if foreign corporations control infrastructure that is essential to communication, banking, healthcare, education, or government services?
- How can developing states cooperate with one another to create shared digital infrastructure and decrease dependence on powerful foreign governments and corporations?



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