

Guest editorial

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Special issue on digital trade vs cyber nationalism

Cross-border trade in digital products and services is both a rapidly growing element of the economy and an increasingly controversial policy domain. The growth of a digital economy brings with it a new set of issues in political economy, even as it replays classic debates over protectionism and national sovereignty.

Trade in data and information services is at the center of many policy controversies: from China's cybersecurity law restricting outward information flows and inward foreign investment, to the massive adjustments triggered by Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), to Trump's trade war on China and renegotiation of NAFTA, to the contested effects of "e-commerce" chapters and data localization provisions on human rights.

This special issue of *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance* explores various aspects of the conflict between an open, globally interconnected internet and current trends toward protectionism and cyber-nationalism. While there is a growing amount of scholarly literature on digital economy and trade, few scholars are looking at the issue holistically, in a way that includes issues in trade theory, measurement and definition of digital trade, national security and human rights, as well as trade policy. The papers in this issue try to span all of those dimensions.

In their paper "Data flows and Digital Economy," Milton Mueller and Karl Grindal analyze a new source of empirical data about the direction of global Web data flows and map its relationship to other forms of trade. In an attempt to situate information flows in trade theory, they find striking correlations between "imbalances" in Web traffic and trade balances in goods and services. In her paper "Digital trade in Latin America: mapping issues and approaches," Carolina Aguerre takes a broad overview of the way internet governance and digital trade policy are interacting in a major region of the developing world. Annegret Bendiek's paper "Externalizing Europe: The Global Effects of European Data Protection" explores the way Europe leveraged its data interdependence with the USA to export its stronger privacy protections to the world.

Papers by Martina Ferracane and Karl Grindal explore the relationship between digital trade and national security. Ferracane's paper, "Data Flows & National Security," proposes a conceptual framework to assess restrictions on data flows under the GATS national security exception. Grindal's analysis of "Trade Regimes as a Tool for Cyber Policy" also provides a conceptual framework to assess the use of trade policy tools to promote cybersecurity goals.

Most of the papers in this issue were developed for and presented at the annual workshop of the Internet Governance Project at the Georgia Institute of Technology, which took place in Atlanta May 24 and 25, 2018. Together, they constitute a solid contribution to one of the hottest issues in digital policy, regulation and governance.

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