

Topic: Data Privacy - The Tik Tok Scandal

About

Hi everyone, this is a brief summary of the topic we will be discussing in our first general body debate. Please sign up for a country from this list (or add a country of your choice) using this link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PZWvCjFM4pMWn6ywcIESWJv4aJ0XTHL_IO2qIVAoCIU/edit?usp=sharing

This first debate is going to be more relaxed, informal, and fun - don't feel the need to do extensive outside research. Understanding what your country generally thinks about data privacy and reading the summary below will be more than enough preparation. Additionally if this is your first Model UN experience and you'd prefer to just sit in and listen that's perfectly fine.

Topic Summary

If you've been following the news these past few months you've likely heard about the ongoing Tik Tok controversy. Tik Tok is a short-video social media app that has recently exploded in popularity, particularly within the United States.

Tik Tok is owned by ByteDance, a company based in China. As Tik Tok became more prevalent, so did concerns about its safety. In July of 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the U.S. was considering a Tik Tok ban. This announcement came after a discovery that Tik Tok was not complying with "a privacy safeguard in Google's Android operating system to collect unique identifiers from millions of mobile devices, data that allows the app to track users online without allowing them to opt out" (WSJ).

So why is this violation of data privacy so concerning? In discussing the security threats associated with Tik Tok, Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire says "Security experts have voiced concerns that China's vague patchwork of intelligence, national security, and cybersecurity laws compel Chinese companies to support and cooperate with intelligence work controlled by the Chinese Communist Party". Accordingly, President Trump has threatened to impose a federal ban on Tik Tok if the company's U.S. operations are not sold to a U.S. company. Oracle and Walmart have reportedly reached an agreement to jointly purchase the U.S. operations but this has not yet been made official.

Finally, this past weekend "a judge temporarily blocked an order from the Trump administration that would have banned Tik Tok from being downloaded from U.S. app stores", which is significant because it suggests that the U.S. government overstepped the boundaries of its power in an attempt to reconcile this unfolding data privacy controversy.

Some questions to consider:

What does your selected country think about data privacy?

Is your country's data privacy protection policy strict or lenient?

Does your selected country have any major data privacy laws in place?

How would you recommend resolving this 'Tik Tok' controversy?