

Kiggins Dissertation Abstract:

In 1997, the United States government claimed ownership of the root zone file and the domain name system (DNS) on which the functioning of the Internet depends. This U.S. decision constructed the internet as a global commercial medium rather than as a global public communications medium. Either vision of the Internet is compatible with efficient management of the system. Whereas the extant literature on internet governance is predominantly focused on the public policy and technical issues of direct network control, governance regime evolution, and network security understood as network integrity, my study poses an analytical and historical question: why did the U.S. government promote the commercial vision over the alternative public communications vision of internet governance? Domestic imperatives, explained by the pursuit of commercial expansion and U.S. technocentrism, directly shaped U.S. preferences for a private market-based bottom up, rather than, a top down Internet governance regime.