

# Why TikTok Worries National Security Officials | Aggies GO

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The app icon for TikTok.

Jonah Carlson - New delays in a national security deal between the United States and the social media app TikTok have brought potential concerns regarding the popular platform back into the spotlight. [In a new article](#) by John McKinnon, Aruna Viswanatha, and Stu Woo, the three authors explore the geopolitical consequences of the widespread video platform.

To understand why U.S. security officials are so worried about TikTok, one needs to understand [networks](#). Put simply, networks are a series of connected “nodes” that typically transcend national boundaries. The Internet is the example of a network that almost completely ignores territorial boundaries, allowing for the transfer of both ideas and money across states. TikTok utilizes the internet to gather data about its users, which it claims is for the purpose of structuring algorithms – its this data that allows TikTok to feed you videos that you like. But U.S. national security officials have worried that data concerning U.S. citizens could be stored offshore in states like Singapore or China, where TikTok’s parent company, ByteDance, is headquartered. That data could be used to undermine U.S. intelligence efforts in the case of a conflict between China and the U.S. As negotiations between ByteDance and the Biden administration on where data on U.S. citizens will be stored have slowed, rhetoric surrounding the app as a national security concern have increased. The authors note specifically that Republican lawmakers have become especially concerned, with some even calling the ban the app in America. The authors also note

the strong effect that TikTok has had in Washington: over the course of the last year, the company has spent upwards of \$9 million in Congressional lobbying efforts.

To better understand the tension here, one needs to understand the evolution of the United States’ [geopolitical code](#) regarding China and East Asia. Tensions with China have risen significantly over the last two decades, especially on issues of economy and technology. The U.S. has increasingly tried to [bar technological exports to China](#) that could provide them equal footing in either a cyber or traditional conflict; negotiations with TikTok are ByteDance are a continuation of this new policy, trying to prevent U.S. data from reaching the PRC’s intelligence circle.

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