

G7 2019 Analysis

Adam Stammer

Technology remains drastically under-regulated largely due to its ever changing nature and relatively new adaptation. This however doesn't change the fact that the lack of regulation has led to many problems, be it terrorism, hate speech, weapons, crime, etc. Connect that technology to the internet and the problems become global. So it's no surprise that attempted solutions are also global. In many ways it feels overdue, but there are plenty of challenges with that as well.

Of the agreements that came out of G7 2019 the first thing that really stood out to me was the vagueness to it all. "Request" and "Encourage" were the leading words in many of the agreements which not only have no enforcement but are extremely hard to define. In many ways that discredits the goals and accomplishments of summit but it does make a statement and it's about time countries make a stand against these threats. If nothing else it's a start.

Another issue regarding enforcability and varying definitions is the repeated "target" of these agreed encouragements were Internet Service Providers. For some of these countries that means a part of the government itself but for others, ISPs are private organization. That adds another layer of varying laws and powers to actually enforce or even encourage anything. This also aligns with preexisting legal, ethical, and political debates already surrounding the power, abilities, and expectations of said ISPs, especially here in the United States.

Possibly the biggest wrench in the outcome of the summit regards the age old security vs. privacy debate. "[T]o establish lawful access solutions for their products and services, including data that is encrypted...". This suggests back doors to encryption used both by companies and by common citizens. I can certainly understand the legal values of such an action but it diminishes the privacy rights of everyone, something already in short supply. It also largely increases the powers of both ISPs and governments, even more so if the ISPs are not private organizations. This also falls under the vagueness aspect of varying definitions between countries and cultures. What is "lawful" in Canada

isn't necessarily the same as the US, let alone non western countries like Japan. It also an abusable security threat by both the dictating powers and malicious third parties. There's no such thing as a "safe backdoor". The greatest defense in any backdoor is people not knowing it exists, and that is inherently not possible in this instance. That leaves the entire populous at risk by such a move, in more ways than one.

Up until now all censorship of terrorist communications on the internet have almost entirely been done only by private organizations. Social Media websites are known to shutdown various terrorist forums and hat speech but that simply isn't enough. Governments need to make official action against it, but where do we draw the line? How much security are we willing to give up to be safer, and beyond that how do we enforce it? The G7 2019 summit has some rather scary implications, and it may not be what we need, but at least its a start.