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### Internet Governance

One of the greatest resources in recent time is the internet, because of its versatility and accessibility. With the internet, people have access to almost every piece of knowledge and information at their disposal, people have access to tools for project management, and people have access to communicate with people across the globe. When the internet first originated, the idea of governance was not very important because the purpose of the internet was purely for research purposes. In the 1970s the main purpose of the internet was to determine whether packets of data could be transferred between devices over a network known as the “internetting project” which became known as the internet for short (Williamson, 2020). In this case, governance was not a primary necessity but when the internet began to have different uses and made available to the public that changed everything.

As known today, the internet is a very important tool and resource. Most people know how to open a web browser, type in a web address, and press enter. Navigation of the internet was simple thanks to the first web browser from Tim Berners-Lee in 1990 (Williamson, 2020). With this, the internet began to advance with different programming languages being available for people to develop their very own websites, languages such as HTML (hypertext markup language) and PHP, a hypertext processor. The internet became widely accessible in the span of 30 or so years to the point where it has become a crucial resource for research and education. When something becomes widespread and widely accessible, there are some caveats to it.

The internet was not free reign or no regulation, but there are things that one can and cannot do. In early days, the internet was regulated by a specified group of universities, private researchers, and government projects (Policy Brief: Internet Governance, 2015). The future of

the internet was not left up to the masses who made the internet what it has become today. The debate concerning internet governance is one that should be focused on, not just by those with stake in its operation but by those who use it daily also. This is because of the power that can be held when it comes to information and the benefits that it can have when it comes to education. The internet is not only utilized by certain nations around the world, but by every nation on the planet with access to computers today. The debate boils down to private companies who wish to maintain control (Musiani, 2013) or the multistakeholder approach which removes private industry from governing one of the greatest resources known to humanity.

Today, the internet is made up of dozens of companies both advertising their brand or presenting a platform of communication, socialization, or entertainment. Other companies develop research tools and access to knowledge at your fingertips. Examples of these companies include Facebook, Google, Amazon, Netflix, Twitter, etc. These are only few examples. Private governance of the internet is important to these companies, because of the information and content that could reach the public. Some of these companies could very well be defined as gatekeepers of information and content that is placed on their own platforms (Miller, 2012). This would fall under a claim of cause, because these large companies would not want conflicting ideas represented on their platforms or the internet. A great example of this would be the recent excommunication of the social media platform Parler which was removed from the Google Play Store, the App Store and Amazon Web Services (Fung, 2021). The reasoning behind the removal of the platform is because of the larger conservative presence on the app and the role it may have played during the insurrection of the Capitol Building in January. The services removed Parler because they believe that the social media platform hosts “posts that clearly encourage and incite violence” (Fung, 2021).

There is also the opportunity to remove private enterprise from the control, the management, or the governance of the internet. This can be done through the multistakeholder approach, which values freedom and decentralization of internet governance. The idea of decentralization would remove private enterprise from controlling the contents of the internet and remove a small clique from monitoring the contents posted. This is accomplished through having a wide panel of organizations determining regulations and making sure that the internet is running smoothly. In this panel, each decision-maker can be held accountable and there could be a more democratic process when it comes to decision making (Internet Governance – Why the Multistakeholder Approach Works, 2016). Under a claim of value, the multistakeholder approach does its best to not allow a single concrete solution when it comes to internet governance. Instead, they value that the internet should be an evolving resource that goes along with time and runs dependent on the necessity of the location (Internet Governance – Why the Multistakeholder Approach Works, 2016).

The larger picture relies on a fundamental question, regarding the status of the internet today. In an era where the majority of all industries are privatized without the regard of public wellness, does the internet deserve the same treatment? Similar to that of a nation's government, the governance can either be done one of two ways and that would be in a tyrannical sense or in a more collective effort from multiple different organizations or parties. This is the main question that will be answered moving forward, because of its importance. The internet is not only concentrated to one area, but it is a vast network along multiple different locations and cultures. It is no longer an isolated resource, but a global resource that can have both social and economic impact for every nation. Which leads to the two stakeholders that are concerned with internet governance. There is the privatized governing of the internet, which aims to control the

content that is published on the platform. Then, there is the multistakeholder who firmly believes that it should be a more democratic process with a large collective of organizations managing the internet.

The main reasoning for keeping the internet private would be to maintain order across the resource. This would be considered as cultural relativism because private organizations would not want to go against what is widely accepted. A good example of this would be the shutting down of Parler (Fung, 2021) and the removal of WikiLeaks from EveryDNS (Williams, 2010). This can show the reliance that most private organizations use current culture to focus their efforts on regulation of the internet. Analyzing the situation with Wikileaks just a little bit further, it can be seen why they might want to remove it from their services because of the content published on the site. According to founder Julian Assange, “WikiLeaks is a giant library of the world’s most persecuted documents. We give asylum to these documents, we analyze them, we promote them, and we obtain more.” (What is WikiLeaks, 2015) Some of these documents being classified or restricted, which would of course cause some push back for being published openly to the internet not only by a small minority but by a large and vocal majority.

On the other side of the aisle would be that of the multistakeholders who believe that the maintenance and management of the internet should be decided amongst a collective or a panel of different organizations. In this sense, no small clique of companies decides the fate of content. In their argument, this would be undoubtedly for the greater good for all of those involved in a decentralized operation. This would not only allow for the internet be managed with people being held accountable but allow functionality to be dependent on the regions themselves. An example of multistakeholder at work is currently at work through the IANA or the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority. In the present, the IANA are responsible for allowing the internet

to work in a way that is both smooth and reliable to the user (IANA, n.d.). Through their example, the internet can be maintained in an unbiased form without sacrificing the quality of the service. Hence the idea of the multistakeholder being an example of utilitarianism, because it is, once again, all for the greater good. One could think of the multistakeholder approach as that of a nation's government who has both federal and state governments working hand in hand for the betterment of those involved.

My personal position aligns a lot with the multistakeholder approach, because I do believe that maintenance of the internet should remain unbiased and done as a collective effort. I have an issue with private organizations using their power in their own selfish gain or to remove a platform that disagrees with their stances. Although that may be the case, it does not mean that I believe anything, and everything should be available on the internet but within reason. I do believe that it is good to have opposing viewpoints both occupying the internet because it allows for people to analyze and determining their own points of view with the information placed before them. With a decentralized and unbiased internet, we could achieve just that because it is not a clique of very powerful organizations but a much larger collective. In this sense, there would be a much-needed form of checks and balances when it comes to decision making on the internet. Allowing for accountability to be had for all those entrusted to maintain on of the greatest resources that we have at our disposal. Then there is the idea and responsibility that comes with making sure that everyone has the same smooth and functional experience when browsing the internet. With one private organization, or a small group of private organizations, we might not have the ability to understand what needs to be done in different parts of the world. Maybe one country is having latency or connection issues, we would not have the swift capability to resolve the issue without help from other entities.

My recommendation is to leave the internet alone. If we really wanted to have the best possible internet experience for everyone and for the greater good, allow the internet to be run by an agency made up of a panel of different organizations. The system that we have in place right now is working well under the IANA and many of us can lose ourselves on the internet without any sort of performance issues, dependent on internet speed. Right now, the multistakeholder approach is at work and it is working fine. With further advancements in technology, the experience will only get better and it will continue to get better. We should not be removing content on the internet because it may differ from our views or even if the public demands it. The internet is an open environment and should be treated as such, but with limitations. To determine these limitations, it should be done by a large and unbiased panel, not by those who have profited from the use of the internet. This is because those that have profited by the advancement of the internet would prefer to continue growing said profits. The internet is and should always be considered a resource that anyone can access. They should be able to access information even if it may not align with the popular opinion, because this would help people to better formulate their own opinions and continue researching. It is not about being gatekeepers of information but being the gateway of information.

The internet is an ever-growing resource that many people use daily. Without a first or even a second glance, many users do not know what is going on behind the scenes. Some may believe that it has been one organization behind it, or it is even a collective, but there is one thing for certain and that is there needs to be a balance. The internet can be considered the greatest tool at our disposal, but there are some who believe they deserve the right to how it should be utilized and those who believe it should be maintained in an unbiased manner. I believe that it should be maintained in an unbiased manner with the multistakeholder approach which allows for checks

and balances for those decision-makers. Ensuring that the internet is a breeding ground of civil debate and civil discourse amongst the public. That the internet is utilized as it was meant to be as a tool for communication and research further connecting us to the rest of civilization throughout the world. The internet is not a personal object, but it is a community of all walks of life and should not be treated as one's own property.

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