

International Policy Management

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Introduction

The world is witnessing rapid technological advancements and the internet is connecting people from all corners of the globe. According to statistics published by Leftronic for 2021, about 40% of the world's population has access to the internet and a staggering 90% of the world's data was generated in the past two years alone[4]. IT companies are no longer confined to a single country, instead, most of them have international headquarters and data is constantly flowing across geographical borders. Consequently, the data accumulated by these organizations are no longer governed by a single set of policies and data privacy regulations. Instead, they need to be managed based on the policies of the various server locations in different countries, each with its own set of laws. This presents a new set of challenges that we have never faced before. To tackle this issue, an intergovernmental organization like the United Nations could be the solution. They could oversee the creation of standardized policies and ensure that data privacy and management laws are streamlined, making it easier for businesses to expand globally.

Audience

The implementation of a unified and regulated cyberspace requires the involvement of multiple nations. The United Nations can play a vital role in bringing these nations together and ensuring smooth data flow, as well as conflict resolution. Throughout the years, the United Nations has been instrumental in providing aid and assistance to various nations, contributing to their economic development[1]. The UN has also proven to be capable of effectively handling international policies and agreements. Therefore, the UN can spearhead an effort to unite cyberspace, which would be beneficial for all member nations.

The Problem

Data privacy and management laws vary significantly between different countries, each with its own set of unique issues and regulations. These regulations are enforced based on what each country believes is best for its citizens. The field of cybersecurity is no exception, where data privacy and data regulation laws differ between countries. Some countries prioritize the privacy of their citizens and have established data privacy laws to regulate how IT companies should collect, store, and manage customer data, as well as how to share that data with third parties. The European Union[2] is a good example of this, with its policies on the protection of individuals regarding user privacy and personal data processing.

On the other hand, some countries allow the collection of personal data and mass surveillance of their citizens to act quickly on any potential threats to the country. North Korea, China, and Russia are examples of countries that adopt this principle[3].

There are also countries that lack comprehensive data privacy laws and regulations due to their underdeveloped status. With such a diverse set of policies across the world, it is challenging to implement strong data and privacy laws that everyone can accept and implement.

However, all countries share a common interest in their dependence on businesses. Each country wants to expand its business infrastructure to increase its economy. The tech industry is currently one of the fastest-growing industries globally and is highly dependent on businesses moving online^[7]. IT companies such as Facebook and Google are among the biggest players in the tech industry and are expanding globally to increase their customer base.

Collaboration between governments and private companies is essential to enable these companies to operate within their respective countries and allow governments to grow their economies. However, when these companies share user data across the internet to servers located in different countries worldwide, it creates legal loopholes due to the differences in policies and regulations. This leads to situations where data privacy laws can be neglected, potentially risking the safety and privacy of individuals. This is unexplored territory in terms of policies, as never before has so much personal data been collected and transported across geographical boundaries and stored in different parts of the world.

Rapid Cyberspace vs Established Cyberspace

Governments are taking action on data policies and sharing data with other nations. They have a choice to work individually or collaborate with other nations. Working individually gives them complete authority over policies and laws, making it easier to impose restrictions and monitor data flow. This also ensures that they become one of the leading countries in terms of policies, laws and managing their cybersecurity issues. However, this approach makes conducting international business more difficult as they cannot enforce their policies and laws throughout those businesses, leading to the nation closing itself to international businesses that do not comply with their policies and seriously impacting their own economy.

Imposing restrictions on the data that can enter and leave countries would be extremely difficult to implement and would severely restrict the capabilities of the internet. As Bruce Schneier put it "The internet works differently ... Communications between Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon might be routed through Florida. Google doesn't store your data at its corporate headquarters in Mountain View; it's in multiple data centers around the world" ^[5]. The other option is for governments to collaborate and work on a standardized set of data laws. This could lead to a less cluttered set of regulations and data privacy laws that seamlessly align with the different data laws in place in different countries. Working together with multiple nations would allow for a more robust cyberspace. This option would be more effective in the long term when most of the nations catch up with each other.

The incentive for more advanced countries to share common international data policies with their less-developed counterparts would be to establish their own businesses over them. The less-developed nations would agree to this because they will get the opportunity to adopt robust cybersecurity policies and regulations as well as establish common data laws with the more developed nations, speeding up their own development.

Recommendation

As we have done in the past with different territories like land, ocean, and space, cyberspace is not much different. With good policies and regulations, data flowing through nations can also be managed properly. The UN is one of the few bodies that has successfully handled past international conflicts and issues, making them more than capable of handling cyberspace conflicts and creating standardized policies.

The UN could take the first step in unifying different nations and setting forward a set of policies that are agreed upon by different nations. They can preside over international agreements made by countries to agree on how data should be shared among each other, as well as oversee the data shared between different governments ensuring that data privacy laws are maintained.

Having a central standardized set of policies would benefit every member nation that is part of this agreement, since this would allow faster implementation and changes as newer technologies get adopted. Since every member nation would comply with these policies, businesses between these countries would no longer need to navigate through complicated obstacles.

Member nations would be able to work together and collectively vote on changes and modifications of these policies, and any disagreements and issues that arise would also be remediated effectively with the UN acting as an intermediary. We are already seeing similar collaboration initiatives like the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation that standardized the privacy policies for many countries in Europe.

The UN could simplify and standardize the policies applied to data regulation, making it easier for international companies to implement privacy policies that are inviolable. This could also prove useful in instances where governments have to work together and share their data and resources.

As described by Josephine Wolff in chapter 4 regarding Operation Tovar, international governments came together and collaborated to combat the GameOverZeus botnet[6]. Governments would also be incentivized to associate themselves with these standardized policies, as it would allow them to expand their business and boost their economies, while also building a much safer and securer cyberspace.

This implementation would not be cheap and would require large investments and various governments to work alongside each other. However, this could unify us as a society. It could also take us one step closer to creating a simpler and safer version of the internet, while also providing us with a long-term solution to international relations concerning data and privacy.

References

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