

Technology ethical issues with a united nations governed internet essay

[Technology](#), [Internet](#)



The internet is one of the greatest things that have ever happened to mankind (Robert, 2010). It is one of the main reasons why we are in the so called digital era or era of information technology. Gone are the days where people have to travel great distances just to deliver a message regardless of how short or long it is. With the internet, almost everything can be done virtually. People from the farthest and undiscoverable areas of the world can still be traced and found and more importantly, connect with other people with the help of the internet.

The use of internet has also evolved throughout the years and although there were a lot of positive feedbacks and significant improvements that took place, there were also things that are negative in nature (York, 2011). The fruits of some strategic research studies have proven that the internet could serve as a massive virtual battlefield where cyber wars or wars on information could be held. Aside from this, there are also other issues concerning the use of the internet. Perhaps the hottest issue concerning the regulation of the use of the internet today is the issue about the United Nation's possible intervention in governing the originally and preferably free flow of information in the vast global system of interconnected machine networks that we call the internet.

Some experts say that letting the United Nations or any other politically-affiliated third-party entity govern and regulate the flow of information across the entire global network of computers could be a serious threat to the citizens of the world's human rights and can also be considered unethical (Yao & Zhang, 2008). This is actually a serious and highly controversial topic

that needs proper research and analysis. It would therefore be important for every people, especially those who are concerned with the freeness of the flow of information on the internet, to know the things that might happen if the U. N. will go on with its plans to moderate the internet, if any other third-party entity will take that same role, or if the internet will remain the same.

The objective of this paper is to discuss preferably all angles surrounding that issue to be able to come up with a strong and research-based conclusion and ultimately, a reaction to that issue. This paper will mainly focus on the possible violations in the people's human rights and other ethical issues that may arise should the worst thing—the U. N. will govern the flow of information across the internet, happen.

Statement of the Problem

This problem trying to be solved here cannot actually be considered a problem but an issue because it is not even present yet and no one knows as of now whether the United Nations will be able to push their plans through despite the likelihood that many government and private organizations worldwide will try their best to prevent that plan from happening.

After the controversial review, in terms of human rights violation and ethics, of two bills that, according to major corporations whose revenues depend on the freedom of information on the internet such as Google and Wikipedia, may potentially cripple the future of the internet and all of its users, SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act) and PIPA (Protect Internet Protocol Act), it appears

that there is another arising threat to the free flow of information on the internet, the United Nations (Chai et al., 2009).

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) which is one of the arms of the United Nations has expressed its concerns regarding the current way of managing the overall flow of information on the internet today. Part of their concern was to take the responsibility of managing the flow of information on the internet. Now, there are certain procedures that the ITU and the opposing parties will have to undergo before the transfer of responsibility to ITU could be initiated and finalized. Anytime in the next months to come, a debate regarding this particular issue will be held in Dubai.

It may come to our senses that the intentions of the United Nations International Telecommunications Union are clean and clear. Well, they actually are. However, there will surely be a huge and strong force that will oppose ITU's plan to take the responsibility of managing the internet by pulling its own set of strings (it is directly involved with the UN) due to a wide range of reasons. Why are there so many people, and government and privately-owned organizations that are against such movement? Do their motivations really stem from the maintenance of the essence of the internet or are their actions just motivated by personal and organizational interests such as money, politics, power, and influence? These types of information will be the focus of the next chapter.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

The ICANN is a non-profit organization that was established in the third quarter of 1998 and is based in the U. S., specifically in Los Angeles, California. Its purpose was to perform the internet-related tasks that were originally performed by the U. S. government and other internet-related organizations during the early years of the internet (Travis, 2005). One particular organization whose responsibilities it has assumed was the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA). ICANN is now responsible for the regulation of domains and domain identifiers in the entire internet. Their toughest job so far is the coordination of Internet Protocol Addresses (IP) and simultaneously assigning address blocks to their respective Internet registries. These two functions are vital to the smooth, secure, and stable flow of information on the internet. Without the ICANN, loading webpages and seeing them in front of a computer screen after a boot-up will not be possible (Geoff, 2003).

What the International Telecommunications Union Attempts to do

The ITU, an organization that is directly related to the United Nations wants to convince the international community that the internet users' experience could be greatly improved if a third-party government-related entity like itself will be assigned and held responsible for the management and regulation of the internet which all boils down to possible affectations in the flow of information.

One of the flaws in the current system of managing the internet that it has identified was the ICANN's decision to allow the expansion of the top-level domain network system. ITU fears that overexpansion on this domain system could lead to the creation of at least hundreds of new domains; that is the suffix the surfers can see right after the dot following the website name. The development of these new domains could later on lead to a more chaotic and confusing internet environment. This is basically what ITU is trying to avoid, at least based on their statements in the most recent media interviews. Now some people may already believe that this is really and perhaps one of the main reasons behind ITU's attempt to take control of the internet.

Judging from an unbiased point of view, there are indeed possibilities that the ITU will use its newly-acquired authority over the most powerful media in the society (internet) for political and other miscellaneous purposes. If there is indeed some truth about these allegations against the ITU, then there is something that internet users and those who make tons of profit from internet traffic should do to prevent any organization like ITU's plans from happening because surely, the degradation of the internet will not only affect one nation or on a larger scale, a continent but the billions of people who rely on the internet for updated and general information about virtually all topics thinkable.

The Internet and the Uninterrupted Flow of Information

Never has it happened that the internet has been controlled or managed by a government-related third party entity (Divine & Moscardelli, 2007). Since the beginning of the history of the internet which dates back to as early as

the 1950s until a few years ago, no single entity has managed or attempted to manage the relatively free flow of information on it. Yes, internet users were regularly bombarded with different bills and laws like SOPA and IPPA that have also significantly impaired their ability to share whatever they wanted to share (John, 2012).

And more often than not, these bombardments violate their human rights such as their right to express their feelings and to share information and are done in an indirect manner (Lipford, Besmer, & Watson, 2009). What's more agitating is the truth that the authorities are trying to mask these unethical practices into something that is legal or has a legal basis (Mulligan, n. d.). Like in the case of SOPA and IPPA, the U. S. Congress have declared that these two bills aim to protect the rights of every internet users and of every organization who owns any form of shareable material that may be subject to Copyright and Fair Usage Policies. IPPA got approved while the legislation of SOPA is still being reviewed. Hundreds of websites were shut down which caused massive unrests throughout the entire internet. Wikipedia and Google, in an effort to convince the U. S. government that what they are trying to fulfill is a threat to the integrity and stability of the internet, launched their own form of propaganda against the approval of these two bills. Independent bloggers and website owners have also done the same. In the current case, it is highly likely that the same set of events will follow. The internet has existed for so many years without the "proper management and regulation" they are referring to yet it was able to evolve into a very powerful and useful tool for all of its users. Now, the United Nations

International Telecommunications Union is trying to convince the people that the internet needs to be carefully watched and managed in order to improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of it.

The Internet and the internet users certainly do not need the management intervention being proposed by ITU because if the internet was able to survive and evolve without any form of intervention, it will definitely be able to continue doing so without any form of management or regulatory intervention by some third party government-linked entity. Besides, when that proposition is passed, the ITU can basically do whatever they want, manipulate and control things conducted via the internet. Each internet user's right to privacy and confidentiality will also be potentially violated because the ITU, once their propositions have been approved, can literally detect and monitor everything that is being sent to and from one location to another or from one person to another.

It is not only dangerous but also impractical to leave the already-successful and actually steady-growing internet together with all the established websites in it to some third party entity (Cranor, 1998) or to the people of the United Nations. Even the United States is against such notion because they know for a fact that their rights, at some point not only can but will be violated.

Conclusion

At some point, it may be beneficial for the entire population of the world to allow the ITU to take control of the management of the internet. With this,

other service arms of the UN will be able to make more coordinated plans in their anti-terrorism, anti-cyber-crime programs. More importantly, they promise a more organized and neat internet to so many people who have experienced it grow from such a small thing into something so big. But indeed, the internet is too much a price to pay for something that can be more effectively done by spies that hack into computers or by a new organization that will scour the internet for any incidences and evidences of cyber-crimes such as scams and frauds. The ITU can almost always coordinate with the non-profit organizations behind the stable and speedy internet connections that we have should they have something special to request from them. There can be a lot of alternatives that are less violating to the code of ethics and also to the rights of those who have used the internet for so many years.

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