

## Internet governance and the role of Russian Federation in its reform

The Internet is often described as a “network of networks” because it is not a single physical entity, but hundreds of thousands of interconnected networks linking hundreds of millions of computers around the world. As such, the Internet is international, decentralized, and comprised of networks and infrastructure largely owned and operated by private sector entities. As the Internet grows and becomes more pervasive in all aspects of modern society, the question of how it should be governed becomes more pressing.

Like global trade and environment policy, Internet governance has become a point of international conflict among states and target of transnational policy advocates from business and civil society<sup>1</sup>. As truly noted by ICANN CEO Fadi Chehade, we are at a time when the Internet plays a key role in economics, politics, social stability, and world peace<sup>2</sup>. Unlike the early Internet period, when we asked can the Internet be governed. The question now is whether there is something new and different about the way we do so? Now is the time to think of some answers.

There are two main approaches in relation to Internet governance. The current model led by a United States based organization known as the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers which manages and oversees some of the critical technical underpinnings of the Internet such as the domain name system and Internet Protocol (IP) addressing. ICANN makes its policy decisions using a multistakeholder model of governance, in which a “bottom-up” collaborative process is open to all constituencies of Internet stakeholders. This model of internet government is supported by the most Western democracies, including Canada.

The opposite approach is a government-led, United Nations-style model under which countries such as China and Russia could assert greater control over Internet governance. Indeed, Russia has pointed out the need for establishment of an international organization to end US control.

The main difference between the two approaches is the issue about trust. Given that all governments have become more vocal about Internet matters, the debate was never over whether

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1 Mueller, Milton L., *Networks and States: The Global Politics of Internet Governance* (Information Revolution and Global Politics) (The MIT Press, 2013), p.1

2 Internet Governance ICANN CEO Fadi Chehade Points to Korea as Role Model on Internet Governance (Korea’s Business Portal, 4 October 2013), available at <http://www.businesskorea.co.kr/article/1582/internet-governance-icann-ceo-fadi-chehade-points-korea-role-model-internet-governance#sthash.EWB5cPOo.dpuf> accessed November 17, 2013.

government would be involved, but rather about whom the global Internet community trusted to lead on governance matters.

This is especially important in the light of extensive internet and phone surveillance by the US National Security Agency. Starting with the first disclosures in early June 2013 about the collection of phone metadata, the past few months have been marked by a dizzying array of reports that reveal a massive U.S. surveillance infrastructure that covers the globe and seeks access to virtually all Internet-based communications. The surveillance programs include phone metadata collection that captures information on billions of calls, access to data from Internet giants such as Google, Facebook, and Microsoft (which may even include user passwords), and the monitoring of Internet traffic through undersea cables around the world.

This affects the international community to respond from it. Indeed, information and communications technologies cannot be the new battlefield between States. Time is ripe to create the conditions to prevent cyberspace from being used as a weapon of war, through espionage, sabotage, and attacks against systems and infrastructure of other countries<sup>3</sup>. ... For this reason, it is important to establish a civilian multilateral framework for Internet governance and use of the Internet and to ensure the protection of data that travels through the web<sup>4</sup>.

In that connection the following questions will be discussed:

- How should the Internet be governed?
- Mapping the future of internet governance from a global perspective: split of the Internet; a new better model of governance; no real change, etc.?
- The process of shaping of Russia's position on global internet governance: what are strategic national goals and underlying values?
- Diverging approaches of Russia and Western states to the issues of global internet governance: what are the ways to overcome major contradictions and what is the price of consensus?
- Whether and how the government of the Russian Federation should continue to support proposals for an increased role by international governmental institutions such as the United Nations?

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<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Malcolm, "Brazil Summit heralds major Internet governance reforms" (Digital News Asia, Oct 28, 2013), available at <http://www.digitalnewsasia.com/insights/brazil-summit-heralds-major-internet-governance-reforms#sthash.XvB1ErL5.dpuf> accessed November 17, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

- Global internet governance in the context of international security and development: how do technological and geopolitical shifts of architecture of the Net influence its security, resilience and incentives for further development of private IT-sector?

In my opinion, the Internet governance should reflect the interests of all parties involved. Indeed, the Internet cannot be owned by a government, organization, or technical group. All parties need to gather to discuss the optimal management model.