L'usage de tout système électronique ou informatique est interdit dans cette épreuve

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Keep the Internet free

STOCKHOLM

Beyond the headlines, a critically important battle for control of the Internet is being played out.

On the one side is the United States, which wants to retain supervision of the Internet and has managed to get the reluctant support of most of the global Internet community, which sees America as the least bad of the possible ultimate guardians of the system.

On the other side is a collection of states keen on getting as much control as possible in order to curtail the Internet's power to undermine their regimes. With […] Iran as the standard-bearer, this group brings together Saudi Arabia, China, Cuba and Venezuela. North Korea is probably keen to join in as well.

The European Union seems to be in the middle, wavering back and forth — and in its wavering it has recently come down with a position that has brought it enthusiastic applause from Tehran, Beijing and Havana.

The battle is part of the run-up to the World Summit on the Information Society, scheduled to be held in Tunis. […] Much verbiage will come out of these talks, but at the end of the day they're all about the struggle for control.

The Internet is as strange as it is important. Its evolution from its origins in American research labs has been carried forward by a global community of dedicated individuals. Gradually, its governance has evolved as a network of institutions that brings experts, stakeholders and public interests together in a system that is controlled by no one but open to everyone. It's an innovative, although not necessarily perfect, new approach to global governance of vital assets.

And it has worked. The Internet is fast becoming as important to our globalized economies and societies as water is to life. The fact that innovation, transparency and reliability have gone hand in hand in this revolution over the past decade shows at the very least that the governance structure of the Internet isn't deeply flawed.

It would be profoundly dangerous to now set up an international mechanism, controlled by governments, to take over the running of the Internet.

by Carl Bildt,
International Herald Tribune,
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