



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on May 19, 2015

Net Neutrality 2.0: Plans to Shift Control of Internet to Internationalists

It has been a bad few weeks for freedom where the Internet is concerned. First came the news of the FCC reclassifying the Internet as a public utility; now the same federal government that wants to regulate the way Internet Service Providers (ISPs) deliver content to their subscribers is planning to hand control of assigning IP addresses and domain names over to an international body made up of governments and intergovernmental organizations. With the FCC regulating ISPs in the United States and some as yet unknown international organization assuming control of the assignment of Internet addresses and domains, we may be living in the last days of the Internet as a free and open platform for communication and dissemination of information.



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IP addresses are the numeric addresses assigned to web-servers. Domain names are the actual names of the websites. The IP address for the the server hosting WWW.THENEWAMERICAN.COM is 69.167.176.82. The number (69.167.176.82) was assigned by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and the domain (THENEWAMERICAN.COM) was assigned by a registrar via the domain name system (DNS) that is overseen by ICANN. Without this system in place, the Internet simply would not work. Multiple websites could have the same domain, and there would be no way to distinguish which of these a user was trying to reach. Anyone living on any of the streets, roads, avenues, or boulevards named Peachtree in Atlanta can understand the problem.

As ICANN's website explains it, "ICANN ... is a not-for-profit partnership of people from all over the world dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable. It promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet's unique identifiers." ICANN was incorporated in California on September 30, 1998. Before that, the functions that ICANN now handles were handled by Jon Postel, one of the original creators of ARPANET (predecessor to the Internet). As the Internet grew exponentially, it became necessary to have those duties handled on a much larger scale. ICANN was contracted by the U.S. government to assign IP addresses and oversee the DNS.

With few exceptions, the system has worked pretty well. But as is often the case, those in power can't seem to leave well enough alone. ICANN's contract is set to expire in September, and the power brokers who want to see the Internet under their control are pushing to move oversight of the organization to a "global multistakeholder community," which would include governments from several nations that have abysmal records where freedom of speech and freedom of the press are concerned.



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Fadi Chehade, president and CEO of ICANN, expressed his enthusiasm while dismissing the concerns some have voiced. “When we started we heard things like the UN would take over or China will fragment the Internet. Everyone was in threat and defense mode,” he told *Yahoo!News*. “Now that China has come to the table, and Brazil has done the same, government after government is showing support.” He says the number of countries that favor moving oversight of ICANN away from the United States and toward his “global multistakeholder community” is around 150 and growing.

While the governments of oppressive nations may support the plan, not everyone is so easily persuaded. Vint Cerf, a vice president and chief Internet evangelist at Google, says the move could lead to fragmenting the Internet into regional networks that don’t play well with each other. Nations like Germany and China favor keeping a tight lid on data crossing their borders — in either direction. Americans have the concept of valuing freedom of expression and access to information sort of baked into our DNA. The result of handing the power to assign IP addresses and domain names to a plethora of nations that don’t share those values would likely be a loss of freedom in those areas. But freedom is indivisible — losing it in any area means losing it in all areas.

As to whether he believes the freedom of the Internet is at risk, Cerf said, “Of course it’s at risk. We see countries that see the Internet’s freedom and its openness as a threat, and they will deliberately do what they can to inhibit its use.” Considering Google’s record of invasion of privacy and data-mining, it seems this is one of those cases where we find help in the strangest places.

Perhaps the most troubling part of this whole thing is the end goal. Those who seek power for the sake of power usually have a longer range plan. Chehade says that the next issue for the international community to tackle is what he calls “Internet integrity.” He asks, “When I see something on the internet written about me ... How do you know it is a high integrity item? How do you know this is the truth?” His answer is to “create a better way to ensure and protect the content disseminated on the internet,” according to *Yahoo!News*.

Chehade’s plan to regulate the quality of the content of the Internet creates more questions than it answers. As Pilate asked Jesus, “Quid est veritas?” What is truth? Who gets to decide whether information on the Internet is true or not? Having a “Ministry of Truth” for the Internet would have huge implications for news magazines such as *The New American* and activist groups such as The John Birch Society. Reporting on issues like global warming or plans for the North American Union would be impossible if the only narrative allowed to see the light of day was that which made it past the censors. Once the Internet is homogenized, it would be entirely useless for anything much more than watching cat videos.

Building on the foundation of “Net Neutrality,” this recent plan would destroy digital liberty.

While many who are concerned about liberty in the digital age — particularly as it relates to how the Internet is managed — have expressed concern over having the U.S. government involved in managing the Internet on any real level at all, transferring that authority to unaccountable internationalists is an even greater concern. Jumping out of the federal frying pan and into the internationalist fire is no solution.



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