

On the Politics of Standards

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Today

- 1 Why do this?
- 2 Current described positions
- 3 Other issues already identified
- 4 Questions and discussion

Appeared to be a Basic Issue for RG

- “Protocols are political” was an important claim in draft-irtf-hrpc-research
- Not a claim everyone can agree with

Goal 1: lay out the possible positions

Goal 2: distinguish as much as reasonable among positions

Goal 3: answer the question of whether protocols are inherently political (maybe)

Technology Is Value Neutral

- Values are all in the uses
- The political considerations live with the human users, not the technology as such

Some Protocols, Sometimes

- Under some circumstances, protocols are inherently political
- Can only decide case by case
 - current words need fixing

Network Has Independent Values

- This view regards the network itself as having independent needs from its creators
- Similar to the logic of traffic or mass media development
- Either requires a redefinition of “political” or else acceptance that the story is more complicated
- This section very weak in -00
- May be some views are categorized wrong

Protocols Are Inherently Political

- Protocols have, as their very nature, a political element built in
- That political element reflects political decisions in their creation
- There may be parts of this text that could be interpreted to reflect some of the views in the previous section

'Politics' and 'Political' Not Defined

- It is going to be tough to complete this discussion without saying what this means
- It could be that the discussion shows there's no disagreement except about a term
 - Politics (from Greek: Politiká: Politika, definition "affairs of the commons") is the process of making decisions applying to all members of a group. More narrowly, it refers to **achieving and exercising positions of governance** or **organized control over a community**. Furthermore, politics is the study or practice of the **distribution of power and resources within a given community** as well as the interrelationship(s) between communities.

Additional Example(s) Should Be Considered

- Raven process and RFC 2804
- More discussion of RFC 6973?
- Other cases that need consideration?

Are there protocol police?

- Document says the IETF is not the protocol police
- True in that IETF can't force anyone to do anything
- No method for forcing parties is not the same as no power
- Is effective control over a protocol a political position?
- Where there is no such protocol (e.g. single vendor end to end), does that change the politics?
- What to do in ambiguous cases?

So?

- Is this at all useful?
- Would anyone else review it if updated?
- Anyone think this is actively harmful?
- What (else) have we missed?