

BARLOW'S REVENGE

THE
YEAR
IS
2025

This is a world in which two nearly opposite grand bargains for digital security emerge. Some countries secure the internet within their borders by essentially nationalizing it; other governments step back and cede all responsibility to corporations and the market. The middle ground of regulation and innovation that the digital world inhabited for the last 40 years is hollowed out.



GLOBAL
INSIGHTS

IN THE US: Enabling individuals and firms to 'contract' on an individual basis around security would make sense to many, as long as government can insure the integrity of that marketplace. Granular security products could match individual preferences, and get past the aggregated and evidence-light assumptions about security and privacy. But are people ready for that?

IN EUROPE: Hope fades for a meaningful (Europe-led) conversation about global cybersecurity norms. The EU would seek an internal compromise, but without strong consensus around which world 'Europeans' would rather live in, the EU could fracture further. Can Europe somehow support both Barlow and Nationalism in one political space?

IN ASIA: Robust domestic markets combined with relatively weak governance make for a dangerously ambiguous mix. What happens to diasporas (such as ethnic Chinese living outside China) and how much inequality among countries can be sustained without undermining security?

AND: Deeply embedded societal values are reasserting their importance in the digital environment and proving far more powerful than digital technology per se. The Arab Spring marked the end of the Age of Innocence about the Internet.

GDPR Faces Major Backlash in EU
October 25, 2020
THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE NEWSPAPER

Chinese Internet 'Safer than any Major Global City'
August 17, 2022
THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE NEWSPAPER

Facebook Opens Third International Embassy in Brazil
September 8, 2025
THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE NEWSPAPER

THE NEW
CYBERSECURITY
AGENDA

- ✓ Gaining visibility into the arbitrage-ready gray areas where the two differently configured worlds interconnect.
- ✓ Is there sufficient common ground to construct cybersecurity norms, or (more broadly) a new kind of trade regime, when digital economies are moving in such fundamentally different directions?
- ✓ Will security suffer if government relations become as important as technical capability for corporations and cybersecurity vendors?
- ✓ How much responsibility for the public good are large platform firms willing to undertake?

THIS WORLD
IS CREDIBLE
BECAUSE ...

- The tightrope of 'barely enough regulation that won't slow innovation' that governments and firms have been walking together feels increasingly unsustainable in most places.
- The imaginary 'digital flat world' is fracturing as cultural values drive people to different poles while the biggest players, both firms and governments, reassert their power.