Should the governments regulate the internet?

In 20th centuries, number of net citizen is growing fast around the World. Survey conducted by Internet Usage Statistics shows that over twenty-five percent of world population are internet users [11]. Because of the internet popularizing trend, the importance of Internet censorship has also risen. As a result, I believe that the Internet should be regulated by the Governments.

This article is going to discuss mainly three areas. They are social, economical and political. Exploring the advantages and disadvantages on implementing regulation on the Internet, by reviewing current situations between United States, China and Hong Kong, what regulation have been done on the Internet. I picked Hong Kong as my studied area, as it is my living place, it is necessary to be concerned. While Hong Kong is executing " One Country Two System", my motherland China, carrying out one system only, is also reviewed in this article. United States, which is claimed to be a model country of advocate people's freedom, is chosen for comparison as a role of foreign country. There would be different aspects and outcomes of regulating the Internet within these three countries. Followed by, my reason on supporting " Government should regulate the Internet".

Firstly, I am going to discuss social issue. Public health is one reason supporting regulation on the Internet. Nowadays, many pornography sites can be accessed easily by just clicking " I'm above 18.". Children would get sex and harmful information from these sites easily without parent guidance. Thus, Internet control has become important to protect children. In United States, Communications Decency Act (CDA), established in 1996, regulates on offensive and obscenity content [23]. For Hong Kong, there is also law for obscene and violence control. It is called " Control of Obscene and Indecent

Articles Ordinance" (Chapter 390) [14]. According to South Sina News (2007), a Hong Kong netizen, Mr. Woo, was sentenced as he published obscene links on the Internet [13]. When compare to Chinese Government, they only have some agreements on Internet control, there is no a concrete law that the internet censorship should follows. Thus, internet censorship in China is mainly held by filtering systems, or firewall. A common blocking system in China would be Green Dam Youth Escort (Green Dam) [20]. It is designed to filter illegal contents. Start from May, 2009, the software is required to pre-install in personal computers produced by China. The system protects children from violence and pornography.

Problem of cyber-bullying is also one factor affecting public health. It causes psychological harm to netizens. In America, Megan Taylor Meier was committed suicide because a friend's mother, Lori Drew. She humiliated Megan. Drew created a male account named " Josh Evans", and bully Megan on the Internet. After investigation, Lori Drew was caught. This is not the only case that would cause psychological harm. In Hong Kong, net citizens would post person's data on the internet when they think the person is misconducted. Privacy like phone numbers, address, working place, etc., is exposed. Daily lives of many victims are badly affected. They are afraid to be recognized outside home. Tsui Yu Hin [5] is one of victims in Hong Kong. He was insulted by netizens pushing his pregnant girlfriend down elevator. Netizens setup a facebook group blaming his misbehavior. This affair was interrupting Tsui's living, he kept receiving disturbing phone calls. Cyber-bullying would cause victims more depression, negative impact on working

or academic performance, extreme violent behavior such as murder or committed suicide.

To prevent cyber-bullying, American has established the " Megan Meier Cyber-bullying Prevention Act", this is one of the first cyber-bullying laws that protects children and adults from disturbs. This is a case that showing netizens are needed to take consequences for what they have done on the internet. I believe it is a good way to lighten the problem of cyber-bullying. Chinese and Hong Kong Government should follow the actions taken of U. S.

Secondly, the economy issue is discussed. Foreign-invested enterprise, such as Google, Yahoo, Facebook, etc., that are widely-used, has potential to strengthen the links between countries and global economy. Businesses such as mobile phones connecting Google, are being popular. Besides, companies can gain from owning the copyright. Protecting copyright would help providing a fair competition environment. As a result, Governments establish laws to accuse infringing on Copyrights currently, including film industry, music industry, etc., mainly related to creativity. One law in United States, Anti-cybersquatting Consumer Protection Act (ACPA) of 1999, [21], legislate the registration of domain names with trademarks. Though Hong Kong does not have same law, there is another potential law for protecting rights of trademark owners. The Intellectual Property Department [7] is set up to handle copyright, designs, personal intellectual properties and trademarks. Rules correlated to Trade Marks Ordinance, Patents Ordinance, and Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance are introduced to protect creativity and balance the interest of the right owners and society. CHAN Nai Ming, a Hong Kong citizen, was jailed as he uploaded Hollywood films onto the Internet, while it is

violating the copyright. While in China, there is also copyright registry on the website of National Copyright Administration of the People's Republic of China [12]. It is clear that regulating internet by the Government could be beneficial to economy factor.

Lastly, political issue is discussed. Sensitive contents, mainly related to religion and politics, are usually filtered. In United States, Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) was introduced on May 18, 1977. [22]. It limits foreign governments, groups, or individuals (e. g. spies), that would cause international terrorism, and attacks. It prevents citizens to perform illegal activities. In China, filtering is required for protecting citizen from misconduct contents. MySpace China is one of the samples applied filtering. [2]. Sensitive topics are filtered, for example, Taiwan independence. In MySpace China, there is an abused report function for users. Abused account would be block when found that the abuse is true. This could help catching illegal netizens. Chinese Government would even interfere in administration of company or limit individual's freedom. Huang Qi [10][18], a website owner criticized the role of government in the student massacre June 4th 1989 in his website. Government considered his website content as illegal, as a result, Huang Qi was arrested on 3 June 2000, and facts stated on his website were blocked.

In 2009, thousands of protesters took to the streets in Xinjiang Riot. Officials reported that protesters made use of Twitter/Facebook to gather themselves in Xinjiang Province. Many unauthorized postings on local sites and Google were limited by censors during and after the riots.

Based on BBC News, search engine Google was blocked by China [1][3]. It was because China requested Google to filter controversial materials but Google denied. As a result, there is no Google. cn found on the internet. This shows that, when filtering or blocking is carried out, information transmission is limited. This would be beneficial to the Government. By controlling the access right, negative information about the government can be blocked.

By looking at the cases in China and America, they show that filtering and setting up laws can help protecting national security, keeping netizens away from getting offending information. However, on the Internet users' point of view, filtering would have an impact on getting updated news because filtering may block more than expected. Lots of useful information may be blocked. The regulation is far from perfect. Though there is such disadvantage, I believe internet should still be regulated by the government.

When compared the level of internet censorship between Hong Kong and China, it is less strict in Hong Kong. Net citizens in Hong Kong have rooms to criticize the Government on the Internet, which would help monitoring the Government. When Hong Kong Government was introducing " 2012 Act Now", net citizens were teasing by creating similar slogan and logo " 2012 All Wrong". Though the censorship level is lower, there are still laws managing the disciplines on the internet. According to Ming Pao Newspaper (2008), netizen spread the message " Hong Kong will become a city of SARS" [4][6]. Large numbers of people were frightened and thus bought and stored rice bulkily. The netizen was sentenced " Access to computer with criminal or dishonest intent" [9][24]. It shows that net citizens are still required to take responsibilities.

To summarize, internet censorship would be beneficial on social, economical and political areas, protecting privacy and intelligence property, keeping social order and public health. It is clear that Internet-censorship is necessary as Governments in different countries are already taking actions to control the Internet. Despite the advantages, in my point of view, Governments should regulate the Internet because it is more effective to carry out the disciplines from top-down strategy. Followed by, having the cooperation from other roles, such as webmaster. To me, an effective regulation should extend to set up laws only. Citizens would know that he/she need to take consequence even on virtual world. Person violating laws would be arrested, where there is room for the freedom of speech on the Internet.

In conclusion, regulation is beneficial on many aspects. It could help protecting privacy and intelligence property, keeping social order and public health. Though Internet censorship is a difficult task to perform, it is a necessary action taken.