

# The strict internet censorship of china



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Undoubtedly, the Internet has played an active role in the average Chinese life (Internet Content Control in China, p. 3) The Internet is expected to enable Chinese to have more chances to access wide-ranging information sources, which are essential for democracy. As a main way of accessing to information, search engine has played a crucial role in the process of building public sphere in china. According to the survey, in the first half-year of 2010, the utilization rate of search engine among all net citizens has increased by 3%, to 76. 3%; the number of users for search engine has reached 320 million and. Since 2009, search engine had entered into a period of rapid development of new cycle. Internet users have applied search engine more frequently and turned to Internet and search engine as to the acquisition of all information in life more (CINIC, 2010).

Google is the largest search engine company that supplies global information services in the world. In 2006, Google began to operate google. cn for Chinese public. As a global available search engine, Google can provide more sources outside of china to Chinese. In 2005, 32. 9% users would use Google to search information in Beijing of china (CINIC, 2005 , P. 11).

It is generally agreed that Internet contribute to fostering a virtual space of communication by offering new forms of bonding and solidarity on cyberspace — new ways of forging cultural communities in local contexts (Morley, 2000). Specifically, people's open access to information by using global Internet search engines, such as Google may create a healthier public sphere on cyberspace, which can work as a cultural and social space that should be open, diverse and accessible (Golding & Murdock, 1991). To this

extent, globally available search engine, such as Google, can contribute to establish public sphere in china.

It assumed that Google is playing a positive role to facilitate public sphere in china. However, the situation is contrary. Although Google censored considerably less than the other search engines, it also need to obey the regulation and law of censorship of china. Internet companies all acknowledged filtering out and censoring politically sensitive information due to China's restrictive censorship policies. When Google complied with Chinese censorship in order to enter China's fast-growing market, it became to the tool of Chinese censorship to control the flow of information.

Why google cannot facilitate public sphere in china? In general there are two reasons.

First reason is that profit motive makes Google compromise with china. Behind the surface tensions between the Chinese regulatory power and Internet corporations, it can be widely acknowledged that the corporate-Chinese government deal provides considerable financial gains to US technology companies by enabling them to attract Chinese consumers in a lucrative Chinese Internet market with appealing, yet non-controversial material (MDMH, P. 411).

According to the statistics from survey, china is a considerable large market over world. As a company, Google's main goal is to gain the profit, when face to the economic interest, its responsibility to protect the human rights becomes less important. Google's capability of facilitate public sphere is restricted by the censorship of china. Because of the profit motives, Google

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have to comply the censorship that is the cost of doing business in china (china dilemma, p. 4). For chasing the financial benefit, Google's compromise of Chinese censorship undermine its' ability of contribute to form public sphere in china.

This new alliance between the two different power groups is based on both state and corporate censorship measures. While the global dissemination of Internet communication operates under fundamental corporate guidelines, such as the free market principle along with the freedom of expression ideology, global Internet information flow is also mediated by local censorship and surveillance policies and political particulars within a social context (MDMH, P. 411).

### **Strict censorship of china**

Once google accepted to censor the information that means google's information are under harsh control. China has a very restrict system of censorship on Internet, which curb google to contribute information to establish the public sphere in china.

Chinese government control the flow of information on internet not only limit network services but also monitor traffic and users (Great leap or long march, p. 705). Chine Internet censorship can be divided into two parts, one is regulation and law, and another one is the technologic control. Law and regulation was considered as the internal control of Internet in china.

It is impossible to block the use Internet, as a result, Chinese government issued the law and regulation to make the access of information were under the officially control. Chinese communist party (CCP) makes the surveillance <https://assignbuster.com/the-strict-internet-censorship-of-china/>

on the Internet legal by publishing related regulations and laws. Chinese government published a directive to regulate the use of the Internet in 1996(Great leap or long march, p. 705). In 1997, Internet control law was added into Chinese Criminal Law. Since 1995, when commercial Internet accounts were began permitting in china, more and more laws issued to control content of Internet. For instance,

Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on Maintaining Internet Security (2000); Measures for Managing Internet Information Services (2000); Provisional Rules for the Administration of the Operation of News Publication Services by Web Sites (2000); Rules for the Administration of Internet Bulletin Board System Services (2000); Rules for the Administration of Computer & Internet Bulletin Board System Services in the Colleges (2001); Interim Provisions on the Administration of Internet Publication (2002)<sup>50</sup>. Other rules are aimed at Internet café, state secrecy, network security, and encryption, but they also indirectly have a strong impact on Internet content regulation. Even some rules for infrastructure or connections include provisions on content governance (Internet content control in china, p. 18).

According to the law and regulation in 2000, the forbidden of sensitive content and the restrictions on the distribution of news aim to control the spread the information that be critical to Chinese government. Moreover, Internet service providers (ISPs) and Internet content providers (ICPs) are required to storage user's data to monitor whether user post or access to information that are unapproved by Chinese government (Internet in china). For Internet company, they must get ICP licence that allowed it operate

business in china. For example, google has to comply the rules on licences that apply a range of permits. According to that, google are imposed to do self-censorship for filtering keywords that unapproved by CCP. If google do not obey the rules, Chinese government can cancel the licences to prohibit google's right to engage business even accuse google.

To put the regulation and law into practice, Chinese government also censor the information by using technical means. Millions of dollars have invested to develop the information technology that distributes the system to limit the accessibility of online resources in china (The china Dilemma, p. 3). Chinese government is also implementing its own e-government project which is called " Government Online Project"(E-government in china, p. 3). Internet content filtering in china has been considered as the most complex and sophisticated around the world.

Chinese government planed the " Golden Shield project" in 1998 and started that plan in 2003. It claimed that Golden Shied project employ advanced information technology to safeguard the security of online information and crime combating capacity, which aim to develop efficient police work (Golden shield project). It estimated that Golden Shied project had spent 70 million dollars on research to date, and that the total spending would likely be even more than that.

One of the most important parts of this project is the Great firewall of china. The main function of the Great firewall is to block the accessing of forbidden materials on sites outside China. The Great firewall employ newer domain name server IP address filtering, URL keyword filtering, Web Server IP

address filtering, HTML Response Keyword filtering, and DNS redirection to achieve the goal of blocking undesirable information. One hand, these technologies including the hardware and software are implemented to prevent police work from attack. On the other hand, the most important role of these technologies is to monitor and filter the flow of information.

It is argued that google should reject the self-censorship in china. However, under dual pressure of stringent law and advanced technological control, google faces the dilemma in china. There only two choices for google, one is to do self- censorship, another is to be filtered by Great firewall in china. No matter google chose which side, Chinese government will enforce google to filter the keywords that crucial to public debate and democracy. David Drummond, Google's senior vice president, said that if google do not filter keywords, Chinese government could block even more sites which still disappointed Chinese public. (Google rules, p. 41)

This is one of the reasons Google, in 2006, started Google. cn. Among other characteristics, Google. cn was more quickly accessed than Google. com because it filtered out content in- side China, bypassing the Great Firewall. For example, a search for " Tiananmen Square" on Go- ogle. com results in pictures of the man standing in front of the tank, as well as other websites related to 1989. Google. cn, in contrast, shows tourist sites re- lated to the Square and pleasant looking holiday images. No mention is made of the events of 1989. 7 Moreover, if a search for images of the Dalai Lama is made on Google. cn, of the 161 images returned only one is of the Tibetan Buddhist. The same search on Google. com results in 2, 030 found images. 8 If one lived in China it might be forgiven for thinking many of these historical

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events and persons never existed (Just doing business or doing just business, p. 221).

The whole system of censorship on Internet works effectively. Why the Internet can be controlled in china? There are two main reasons behind the phenomena.

Political aspect makes the role of Internet in china different from other countries. In general, most of keywords censored are related to politics in china and CCP have opened the diffusion of non-political information. Take the BBC sites as a instance, it can be accessed expect political news. As is know to all, china is not a democratic country that has a unique political environment. CCP has absolute authority to affect the public sphere. Since Republic of China has been established in 1949, CCP have made effort to strength the control of ideology by employing sophisticated censorship. The mainly information from Chinese media are used for propaganda.

Internet, especially the searching engine used to be the tool to monitor the public opinion to reinforce CCP's one-party regime. In 1990s, when internet has been introduced in china, it has provided a forum of public debate and democracy for Chinese. Then CCP has relaised the important role of internet and apply law and technology to filter the keyword which risk the authority. As Kellner (1999) argues, Internet can be used as a tool for state power to increase the control or can be used as a tool to establish public sphere. According to that, CCP form authoritarian censorship on interenet to enforce it only to server for Government.



In addition, CCP control the flow of information outside china because the fear of against Chinese communist government from west countries. For example, Wei Wu (great leap) claimed that since the end of cold war, Chinese government still worried about those anti-chinese communist government reporters from west might offer information on internet to against CCP. While the internet is global available, Chinese can access some information related to democracy and other west ideology. CCP consider that west ideology can affect the public opinion to endanger one-party regime. To safeguard the surveillance, CCP establish the great firewall to block the sites related to those west ideology about democracy and freedom of speech.

Besides the political aspect, china has a lack of fundamental social environment of freedom of speech. Most of Chinese people tend have no sense of freedom of speech. Although scholars like Guobin Yang (the power of the internet in china) argued that more and more online debate and movements about democracy have took place online since 1990, china is lack of the basic to form public sphere on Internet.

To begin with, Chinese people educated by Marxist which do not emphasise the importance of freedom of speech. Since 1949, Marxist which is the mainstream ideology in china is deferent from west ideology about democracy. To this extent, Chinese people do not have deep understand of democracy and freedom of speech, which are negative to establish the public sphere.

Furthermore, Chinese citizen trend to have more concerns about economy than politics. Generally speaking, china is a developing country with large

population. A number of people in china focus on the developing of economy to improve their level of life condition rather than consider the public sphere. For some Chinese people who are suffering from poverty, the freedom of speech even is a luxury right (Internet content contrl).

## **Future of Google and china**

Because of hack attack, Google. cn was shut down on 12 January 2010 and visitors are now being redirected to Google. com. hk (google rules). It is believed that Google. com. hk is an appropriate way to solve the problem between china and Google (Google offical blog). Google. com. hk is legal to uncensored and provide more information, yet it would be filtered by Great firewall even it has the risk to be prohibited in mainland of china.

As a result, it is difficult to judge that whether google. com. hk can continue to supply information to facilitate public sphere in china. Google's ability to contribute public sphere of china still depends on the censorship of china. David Drummond argued that governments in the West should put pressure on Chinese government to improve the internet enviroment in china(Google rules, p. 35). U. S. government and the European Union have not complained or strongly against China's filtering of the Internet. The U. S. Congress has not passed its own laws or resolutions to address the issue of censorship in China. It continues to support business with China (Google china).

Nevertheless, Chinese government is under pressure recently and attempting to establish more open and transparent media system. One significant example is the filtering during the 2008 Olympic Games. In 2001, Chinese government promised that there would be no restrictions on

journalists in reporting on the Olympic Games (Access controlled, p. 468). Although some websites were still blocked, websites containing politically sensitive content were accessible during 2008 Olympic Games. Moreover, most international social media websites were accessible, such as Blogspot, Facebook, and Twitter. Another example is happened in 2010 shanghai expo in china. Computer users can access to most of websites that may blocked before. These two examples indicates that Chinese government has realised that their responsibility to create more open public sphere for Chinese and international public. The open of internet environment just need to be taking gradually in china.

## **Conclusion**

This emerging public sphere on the Web tends to enable more democratic sharing of information and lead to a new political awareness based on informed civic engagement (Fischer, 2000). However, average citizens are not in a good position relative to both global corporate forces and influential government regulatory regimes in terms of making rules and policies to manage the global flow of cyber- communication. Given that technology brings change, both positive and negative, in relation to social interactions and power dynamics, it should be recognized that technology also involves regulation or restriction by the state or other social forces because the information technology, i. e., the Internet, is not separated from the social and political context in which it is created and operated (Marshall, 2003; Fischer, 2000).

The question is no longer how the Internet will affect china; it is how china will affect the Internet (Who controls the internet, p. 104).

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