

## Trump's WeChat Ban Is Xenophobic

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### Body

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After the news broke that President Donald Trump was set on banning TikTok in America, the app's myriad of devoted followers spoke out against the injunction with semi-religious fervor. Proponents of the app praised it as a platform for creativity and a place for marginalized voices to share their creations. Others called the decision a violation of free speech. The reasons for banning the app, which is owned by Chinese tech giant ByteDance, ranged from fear of Chinese data collection on U.S. citizens to spite for TikTok users' role in reducing crowds at Trump's Tulsa rally.

However, under all the buzz surrounding TikTok, Trump has been orchestrating another ban on the Chinese messaging app WeChat. This move could have astronomical ramifications for the Chinese-American community.

Chinese parent company Tencent was able to establish WeChat as China's premier app due to the country's refusal to accommodate American tech mainstays such as Google and Facebook. The app became an all-encompassing mechanism for Chinese citizens, who use it to pay for goods and services, find transportation, play games and communicate with friends and relatives all around the world.

WeChat has been criticized for its ties to the Chinese Communist Party, as exchanging certain phrases and topics can result in unsavory consequences for app users. However, the app has become such an important part of communication for many Chinese individuals that it cannot be removed from people's lives.

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Plus, WeChat is the premier method of communication between Chinese-Americans and their relatives still in China. That means that despite its shortcomings, WeChat is an invaluable resource for chronicling the Chinese diaspora. In an article published by BBC News, Chinese immigrants express how the WeChat ban makes them feel unwelcome in this country. After a slew of anti-Chinese sentiments uttered by Donald Trump, most notably his use of the term "Chinese virus," alongside coronavirus-related attacks on Asians, the recent actions are a deliberate way of alienating Chinese-Americans from their communities when they need it the most.

The ban has immediate effects on communication with China's elderly population and those who are less tech savvy as well. For many students, WeChat is the only form of communication with their Chinese grandparents. International calls rack up a hefty bill, and teaching the elderly to use VPN to access American social media platforms can prove to be a difficult feat. The same complications afflict other members of our immigrant community, and the imminent ban could mean an loss of correspondence between Chinese people at a time when correspondence is an invaluable tool for keeping them afloat.

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In addition to the interpersonal toll, banning WeChat could pose major issues for the American economy. Due to the app's payment function, it has been used as a tool for transferring funds and messages between businesses in both countries - making the app crucial to the day-to-day functionings of businesses. The President of AmCham Shanghai mentioned that losing WeChat as a tool could be an "existential threat" to the livelihood of many American businesses. A WeChat ban could also sever ties between major corporations like Starbucks, Walmart and Nike from a large base of Chinese consumers who use the app to order products.

It is evident that Trump's hasty decision to ban WeChat has far more drawbacks than benefits. Although censorship and policing is a threat to the commonwealth in both America and China, the app needs to remain available if we are to weather its abilities. If Trump moves forward with his xenophobic prohibition of WeChat, we would be limiting democracy in the same way the U.S. government criticized Beijing for doing many years ago.

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