# China’s Developing Social Credit System

&emsp; China’s use of facial recognition models for surveillance of its entire population and using it to allegedly control the behavior of its population has long since received much attention both in the west and in east along with criticisms. Leaving aside my views on this facial recognition model, China has upped its game towards a “Social credit system.”

&emsp; The social credit system is inspired by the credit scoring systems from the west such as FICO scores in the United States. However, the SCS takes it a step further, or maybe to the extreme. In addition to taking in a person’s financial information, it also includes multiple aspect of a person’s life, for example, their purchase history, political activities, even small activity like jaywalking could hurt your score. This is a highly potential Weapon of Math Destruction, referred to as WMD henceforth.

&emsp; This system, “dubbed the greatest ambitious experiment in digital social control ever undertaken” [1] in first glance seems to be a catastrophe that’s brewing up. Its scale is particularly worrying. In the rest of the paper, I’ll be referring to it as SCS.

&emsp; According to the Chinese government, SCS is intended to increase trust and accountability in Chinese society. Accountability maybe and maybe even to an extreme level of accountability that makes one uncomfortable. Just think if you have to be accountable even for quarrel with neighbors, expressing your opinions, etc. As for trust, I think it’s going to increase distrust in response to the fear of getting reported for even small actions just mentioned.

&emsp; “Each citizen is expected to be given a social credit score that will increase or decrease depending on whether the subject’s social behavior is acceptable.” [1.] My question is who get to decide what behavior is acceptable and in what range? Is it justified for someone to get to decide that? Should there really be a black and white line in terms of what is socially acceptable? As might have been hinted by my rhetoric, I don’t think so.

&emsp; To me, it looks like an e-proxies, the scale of which has never been seen before. And it’s a legal e-proxy. The implications of which would entrench in every corner of Chinese society.

&emsp; One might argue that it has the potential to do a lot of good. But like how most systems when implemented in large scale presents inability to address every person justly, this massive system would definitely do so.

Consider Loren Fei, the 30-year-old-daughter of a silk factory owner, who has been added to a blacklist of businesses and their owners. Because her father couldn’t pay his bills, she said, her bank accounts have been frozen and she lost her job and her ability to travel. “My family really wants to pay back the money, and the system is making it impossible,” Ms. Fei said. [4] Looking at this case, it essentially seems to have the potential to become a prison of unimaginable scale, one that is as implicit as implicit can be while also being as explicit as explicit can be.

Another aspect of SCS is public shaming. One live example among many others can be seen in this [site](http://zxgk.court.gov.cn/shixin/).

It is codifying the past by what is socially acceptable. A society evolves and what is socially acceptable also changes usually slowly but sometimes drastically as well. This positive feedback isn't integrated in this model. After you, if someone is responsible for updating the data measures, then it's bound to include the bias of fallible human beings [11]

The three things that identify a WMD according to O'Neil are scale, secrecy, and destructiveness. [11] The scale of SCS checks off as SCS is set to affect at least approx. 1.4 billion Chinese population out of 7.8 billion world population [12]. Secrecy is bound as the data collected by the government is not going to be made public. No one would ever want all their personal data to be made public so only the score produced by the model after crunching on the data is going to be public. When the first two check off, the last one checks off

Taking into consideration all the factors that O'Neil uses to define Weapons of Math Destruction, unless the model changes this is a WMD in creation, perhaps the greatest of its kind in history.

*Citations:*

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4. [*China Scores Businesses, and Low Grades Could Be a Trade-War Weapon*](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/22/business/china-social-credit-business.html?searchResultPosition=1)
5. [*Sample of one city's citizen social scoring pilot system: penalized and rewarded behavior*](http://socialcredit.triviumchina.com/what-is-social-credit/citizen-social-credit/#citizen-social-credit-penalties-rewards)
6. [*China's Social Credit System: Data, Algorithms and Implications*](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340245981_China's_Social_Credit_System_Data_Algorithms_and_Implications)
7. [*We’re just data: Exploring China’s social credit system in relation to digital platform ratings cultures in Westernized democracies*](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2059436419856090)
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10. [*What is China’s social credit system and why is it controversial?*](https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3096090/what-chinas-social-credit-system-and-why-it-controversial)

# -------------Time-------------

Topic and Data Search:

Time Invested: 2+2+ 2 + 2+2 +

Work on Paper:

Time Invested: 1+3+