**We Need a “Wall” with a “Window”**

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A few weeks ago, when everyone was talking about Squid Game in China, it may arouse someone’s interest and therefore he decided to watch it. While he skillfully searching this drama on carry websites, it suddenly occur to him that netizens thousands of miles away were watching it on a website called Netflix. The Great Firewall(GFW) is performing its duties during that process by blocking some web addresses. At first, people may complain about this policy for inconvenience. Some foreigners also consider GFW as a reflection that China is lack of freedom of speech and closed. However, after thinking for a while, it is not hard to conclude that though not perfect, GFW plays an essential and beneficial role in our daily life. As a matter of fact, GFW maintains our national stability by reducing the influx of undesirable information and preventing the disclosure of national secrets or malicious attacks, at the same time, ensures a sound development environment for domestic Internet companies. Yet with the rapid development of Internet and improvement of people's educational quality, GFW may need to be updated to a more open version in the perspective of science and technology.

First of all, GFW maintains our national stability by reducing the influx of undesirable information. On the one hand, a large amount of pornographic and violent websites are blocked in order to guarantee the healthy growth of minors. On the other hand, due to differences in ideology, some foreign media are tend to stand in a preset position to criticize policies proposed by the Chinese government or even blacken the Chinese government. As happened during the epidemic period, regardless of the significance of shutting down infected cities, famous foreign newspapers like The New York Times and British Broadcasting Corporation consider it violating human rights. The New York Times tweeted on March 8, 2020: “To fight the coronavirus, China placed nearly 60 million people under lockdown and instituted strict quarantine and travel restrictions for hundreds of millions of others. Its campaign has come at great cost to people’s livelihoods and personal liberties.” The influx of biased information would only cause panic among the public. If could not be supervised properly, it might be reasonable and straightforward to block away those websites providing controversial information.

Furthermore, GFW is actually a bi-directional wall, which means domestic secrets could not flow out and no attack could get across it. From this point of view, GFW is more consistent with its name, the Great Wall. This role of GFW may not be noticed in our daily life, which exactly illustrates the success of GFW. According to the report of US Defense News on January 7, 2008, the US Congress was funding research on cyber attacks against Chinese firewalls. The fund was up to $15 million and aimed to “develop anti-censorship tools and services”. Assuming GFW is totally useless in protecting national security, there is no need for US to attack it.

Last but not least, GFW ensures a sound development environment for domestic Internet companies. Chinese Internet started relatively backward compared to foreign countries. “When I took office, only high energy physicists had ever heard of what is called the Worldwide Web.... Now even my cat has its own page.” said Bill Clinton. If we could not develop our own Internet companies, it means we are going to lose the first chance in the new era. As mentioned above, GFW protects domestic companies from malicious attacks. Meanwhile, unexpectedly, due to the blockade of some websites like Google, YouTube, some companies such as Baidu and Youku got a peaceful development environment where the competition was not very fierce. Though it may sound like trade protectionism, Chinese Internet gets rid of dependence on foreign enterprises and becomes more autonomous thanks to GFW. Generally speaking, strategic significance of developing domestic Internet companies is self-evident.

A number of foreign media regard GFW as a violation of freedom. They are inclined to claim that GFW blocks the communication between different cultures. However, in accordance with a research[1] proposed by Harsh and Angela, GFW does not cause isolation of China in the perspective of Internet. The conclusion of their paper is “‘the Balkanization of the Internet,’ as warned against by many (Goldsmith and Wu 2008), is driven primarily by cultural diversity, whose impact is, when applicable, only enhanced by national filtering.” The effect of the GFW is less clear among websites that have Chinese as one of the languages and a “global” geographic focus. Therefore, it is more likely that even if GFW is cancelled, the existing websites in the same cultural background would continue to stick together.

However, on top of necessity and importance mentioned above, GFW still has some shortcomings. Yanfeng and Ryan’s research[2] found that after China's blocking Google, inventors located in China experienced a subtle decrease in technological and cognitive search distances compared to those in nearby countries. While some undesirable information is blocked away, a number of scientists and inventors are actually blocked from useful technology and science information at the same time. Hence GFW may need to be updated to a more open version in the perspective of science and technology. It may be effective to establish more article review departments to promote the flow of scientifical information while cutting off unhealthy information. Meanwhile, properly authorizing research institutions and schools in need to access some scientific research websites may lessen the negative effects of GFW on science research as well.

In conclusion, GFW is an essential national policy for stability and development though usually misunderstood. At the same time, we have to admit its defects for blocking some useful information indiscriminately. Therefore, if improved properly, GFW could perform better and play a more positive role.

**Reference**

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