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A TIKTOK BAN WON'T BAN "TIKTOK." HERE'S WHY.

Albert

1. I'm a high school student in China. From standardized exams to debate tournaments, I have a ton of things to worry about – even without consideration of the recent surge in anti-Chinese sentiments in the United States.

2. The United States has long positioned itself as a “city upon hill,” providing its citizens with freedom of speech and expression outlined in the First Amendment. However, in the contemporary era, geopolitical tensions with China led some Americans, alarmed by the possibility of Chinese espionage, to advocate a ban on the Chinese social media platform TikTok.

3. I see reports coining Covid-19 as the “Chinese virus,” inciting a wave of racist abuse targeting Asian groups. I hear politicians condemning China’s “surveillance balloons,” evoking fear of Chinese spy activities. I read lawmakers advocating a ban on TikTok, citing the possibility of Chinese surveillance. Everywhere I looked, the United States seemed to be turning its back on Chinese citizens like me.

4. There are American policy makers out there arguing against banning TikTok. TikTok’s affiliation to China can potentially raise privacy concerns, but an easy, sino-phobic ban is simply not the solution.

5. The problem with TikTok is not a China problem. The problem with China is not a TikTok problem. Virtually all social media companies – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and so on – sell their user information to third parties. If foreign governments wish, they could easily obtain this information. If tech giants wish, they could easily leak valuable data in pursuit of their own profit. Banning TikTok doesn’t protect Americans’ privacy, since virtually every tech giant can become the next “TikTok.”

6. Hence, what America needs is a comprehensive reform of privacy laws, so that all social media companies operating in the United States – not just TikTok – are prohibited from sharing user information with third parties.

7. Only by then, could the rights of Americans and interests of America be truly protected.