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In light of the Google-China conflict, this article discusses the issue of Internet sovereignty and, in particular, draws attentions to the various sources of regime legitimacy that undergird the Chinese government's claim to Internet sovereignty. By building and promoting state legitimacy in economy, nationalism, ideology, culture, and governance, Beijing has been arguably successful in gaining popular compliance and cementing its political rule despite grassroots challenges. In the foreseeable future, China's Internet policies will continue to reflect an Internet development and regulatory model - authoritarian informationalism - that combines elements of capitalism, authoritarianism, and Confucianism. Engagement with the regime's cyber policies and its Internet users needs to recognize not only the demand to tear down the Great Firewall, but also the larger Chinese populace's aspiration for economic growth, social stability as well as greater transparency, accountability, and freedom.

In a speech given at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, President Bill Clinton made light of Beijing's effort to regulate the Internet."Good luck! That's sort of like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall." He was confident that the United States would benefit economically from greater access to Chinese markets and that the Internet would spread liberty in China.[1]

In retrospect, Clinton was right about the growing economic ties between the two countries and, to his credit, there is a greater degree of economic, cultural, and political freedoms in China than before, aided by active Internet use. But he seriously underestimated Beijing's determination and capabilities to regulate the Chinese Internet to its liking. Following Google's high profile spat with Beijing over censorship, alleged cyber attacks, and the Internet giant's license renewal to operate in China, issues of Internet freedom and cybersecurity were elevated to new heights. Speaking at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. on 2010, January 21 Secretary of State Hillary Clinton conceded that "technologies are not an unmitigated blessing" and that the U.S. government stands to promote the freedom of expression, and notably, the freedom to connect.[2]

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Six months later, the Chinese State Council Information Office responded with *The Internet in China*, a white paper on Chinese Internet policy. As the first document of its kind, the paper outlines Beijing's basic principles of Internet regulation in a country of 420 million Internet users: "active use, scientific development, law-based administration and ensured security." The paper proclaims that:

> Within Chinese territory the Internet is under the jurisdiction of Chinese sovereignty. The Internet sovereignty of China should be respected and protected. Citizens of the People's Republic of China and foreign citizens, legal persons and other organizations within Chinese territory have the right and freedom to use the Internet; at the same time, they must obey the laws and regulations of China and conscientiously protect Internet security.[3]

Looming large here is a clash between two different visions for the future of the Web: a single, connected Internet endorsed by Secretary Clinton and a bordered Internet based on national sovereignty supported by Beijing. This article outlines the clashing views on Internet sovereignty and analyzes, in particular, China's Internet policies from the standpoint of state legitimacy. Grounded in its fundamental interest in maintaining regime legitimacy by delivering economic growth and domestic stability, Beijing's cyber approach and practices are inseparable from its promotion of legitimacy in five major areas: the economy, nationalism, ideology, culture, and governance. State efforts, orchestrated both online and offline, have been arguably successful in gaining popular compliance, thus cementing Beijing's political authority despite some grassroots challenges to its rule. In the foreseeable future, China's Internet policies will continue to reflect what I call authoritarian informationalism, an Internet development and regulatory model that combines elements of capitalism, authoritarianism, and Confucianism. Engagement with the regime's cyber policies and its Internet users needs to recognize not only an audible outcry to tear down the Great Firewall, but also the larger Chinese populace's aspiration for economic growth, social stability as well as greater transparency, accountability, and freedom. Meaningful social change comes not only from outside, but also from within.

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Whose Sovereignty? Clashing Views on Internet Sovereignty

The Chinese white paper catapulted the term "Internet sovereignty" to prominence. Though the Chinese government is not claiming sovereignty over the entire Internet, it is asserting its right to regulate the Internet

within its borders. It also signals the maturity of an authoritarian Internet regulatory model from an increasingly confident China.

Overall, Washington and Beijing's approaches toward Internet governance and Internet sovereignty are at odds. The U.S. State Department advocates a single connected Internet that is, to a degree, sovereign in its own right while China's State Council Information Office is pushing for a bordered Internet based on territorial sovereignty. The U.S. approach is individual-based, rights-centered, and market-driven. The Chinese approach, on the other hand, is state-centered. It emphasizes individual responsibilities over individual rights, maximum economic benefits, and minimal political risk for the one-party state.

Secretary Clinton's speech on Internet freedom evokes a libertarian aura, depicting an Internet that celebrates free information, unlimited computer access, and individualism.[4] Clinton's call to build "a single Internet where all of humanity has equal access to knowledge and ideas" certainly appeals to freedom seekers around the world. Beijing's view of the Internet, on the other hand, is fundamentally a utilitarian one, viewing it as "useful and conducive to economic and social development." Rather than placing emphasis on the Internet as an extension of individual freedom and a marketplace of ideas, Beijing stresses its importance in driving China's economy and raising people's living standards.

Individuals who inhabit cyberspace are also ascribed somewhat different characteristics. Clinton's speech, in essence, is an affirmation of the American First Amendment in cyberspace. Under the umbrella of Internet freedom, she argues that netizens should have the rights to freedom of expression and freedom to connect. Here, not only does the State Department frame these individual rights on the Internet as universal, it also underscores the potential of the Internet in promoting a form of global citizenship that transcends national boundaries. Rhetorically, Beijing also guarantees its citizens and those residing in China online speech freedom. The public, according to the Chinese Internet white paper, has the "right to know, to participate, to be heard, and to oversee in accordance with the law." The same paper also asserts that Chinese netizens' active use of online commentary and discussion services and their oversight of government activities online are "a manifestation of China's socialist democracy and progress."

Notwithstanding the improvement made in certain areas of civil rights in China, individuals' speech rights, especially political speech rights are limited. In its characteristically sweeping language, the Chinese Internet white paper states the Chinese government forbids Internet content:

> against the cardinal principles set forth in the Constitution; endangering state security, divulging state secrets, subverting state power and jeopardizing national unification; damaging state honor and interests; instigating ethnic hatred or discrimination and jeopardizing ethnic unity; jeopardizing state religious policy, propagating heretical or superstitious ideas; spreading rumors, disrupting social order and stability; disseminating obscenity, pornography, gambling, violence, brutality and terror or abetting crime; humiliating or slandering others, trespassing on the lawful rights and interests of others; and other contents forbidden by laws and administrative regulations.[5]

Given the wide spectrum of Internet content prohibited by Chinese laws as well as the arbitrary interpretation and enforcement of law, critical online expressions of dissent are often silenced to preserve often-social stability even though doing so impinges on the rights of individual Internet users.

Although the U.S. State Department was able to claim the moral high ground of liberty and freedom over the dispute between Google and Beijing, one cannot help but realize that the U.S. is constrained by the same standard it needs to live up to as well as the international norm of cyber governance based largely on the nation-state. Under the expansive umbrella of Internet freedom, the apparition of Internet censorship is no less palpable than that of online privacy breaches. While both Beijing and Google try to gain control over data and information in China, the former motivated by political concerns and the latter by advertising dollars, it is not unreasonable for the Chinese netizen to be wary that both may fail the "Don't be evil" test at some point although government censorship is pervasive and prominent at the moment.

Moreover, although the Internet has been popularly viewed and used as border-crossing infrastructure, its governance is far from borderless. Realists have long argued that territorial sovereignty in the form of a state, with its political and legal institutions such as an elected government and the rule of law, is the proper organization to regulate the Internet and such regulation would be no more problematic than that of the real world.[6] This framework tends to refrain from judging the legitimacy of specific state actions, leave Internet regulation to individual states, and adjudicate conflicts based on a limited set of existing international laws. This reality allows countries, including authoritarian countries like China, to deflect criticism and reject international interference, citing territorial supremacy.

The rising specter of government-backed online censorship and the commercial rush to hoard user information and data points to the increasing tension between state sovereignty and a growing public demand to protect netizen rights in the face of both governmental and market obtrusion. It is indeed ironic that the nation-state and national economy have never seemed so relevant even as we speak of their alleged passing and increasing global connectivity. As China grows more integrated with the rest of the world economically, there is a discernable tendency within the Communist Party to rein in political reforms and reaffirm Chinese values. Beijing's recent roll-back in its Internet policies and its bold assertion of Internet sovereignty are symptoms of this trend. However, one would be remiss not to notice the tangible signs of public demands for economic equality, social justice, and political freedoms as they surface on the Chinese Internet. Unfortunately, all too often the debate on the Internet's potential in authoritarian regimes winds up as a dead-end between techno-utopians and pessimists. I argue, however, modest goals of engagement with the Chinese populace is possible if one understands the essence of the Chinese government's Internet approach as well as the interest, needs, and aspirations of its people.

Chinese Internet: Beyond Techno-Utopians and Pessimists

As early as 1982, three years after the Party adopted the reform and open door policy, the State Council set up a committee to study and plan for the development of computing and information technology.[7] In 1994, China first connected to the World Wide Web and in 1998 had a million Internet users. Today that number stands at a dizzying 420 million (larger than the U.S. population). Among them, 200 million have blogs. Additionally, 277 million of China's 740 million mobile phone users can access the Web via their cell devices.[8]

Beijing's adoption and promotion of the Web, however, has gone hand in hand with its physical manipulation of Internet architecture and control of Internet use. For the Party, the Web is not something inherently emancipating but an intermediary that can be configured and regulated in an *ad hoc* manner. Wu Jichuan, the then-Minister of Posts and Telecommunications was quoted in 1995 saying:

> By linking with the Internet, we don't mean absolute freedom of information. I think there is a general understanding about this. If you go through customs, you have to show your passport. It's the same with management of information. There is no contradiction at all between the development of telecommunications infrastructure and the exercise of state sovereignty.[9]

Beyond the well-known "Great Firewall of China," a technological filtering system blocking "harmful" foreign content at China's international gateway to the World Wide Web, the state also adopts a multi-layered censorship approach, from blunt suppression of dissidents, Internet policing, content removal, and discipline of cyber cafes, to more subtle forms: regulation of Internet service providers, promotion of self-censorship among users, and employment of cyber commentators to shape public opinion.[10]

Such extensive control does not go unchallenged. Beyond the high-profile cyber dissidents and activists who frequently make headlines in Western media, there is considerable online public discussion and debate on various economic, social, and political issues, forming a unique phenomenon of authoritarian deliberation.[11] Although such debates, not always critical of the government, take place largely within the expanding boundaries consented to by the Chinese state, they contribute to an impressive degree of cyber activism that pressures the government to be more accountable and have, in some cases, been able to change government policies.[12] Walking a fine line between self-expression and self-censorship, many Chinese Internet users have become more keenly aware of their rights as netizens and grown more adept at using euphemism, parody, and humor to criticize local and national government policies.[13]

Taken altogether, there is an unmistakable parallel in the growth of both state Internet control and online activism in China. Techno-utopians often cite instances of empowered individuals who express opinions, expose wrongdoing, scrutinize officials, mobilize protests, and hold the government accountable, all of which contribute to an expanding public sphere

and an emergent civil society. Pessimists, on the other hand, point out that the authoritarian prowess of surveillance, censorship, and control has also been strengthened by the same tools and may well survive the age of digital activism relatively unscathed by diffusing the opposition of a small number of cyber dissidents while keeping the populace at large insulated or apolitical.[14]

So far, the Chinese state continues to embrace the "architectures of liberty" without succumbing to an irreversible loss of control over either the architecture or the empowered populace. More peculiarly, most Chinese approve of state Internet regulation. In a 2007 survey conducted by Pew Internet & American Life Project on Chinese Internet use, almost 85 percent of Chinese respondents say they think the government should be responsible for managing and controlling the Internet.[15] Why the overwhelming consent to state control? This paradox may be explained partially by an unquestioned faith in the Web as a tool against tyranny in the West, in part by Beijing's ability to adapt, and more fundamentally by a broad public acceptance of the state as a provider of social goods, guarantor of social order, and preserver of public values.

A blind faith in technology as liberating ignores political, social, and economic factors that determine the Internet's effect on governance and civil society. To move beyond the debate between optimists and pessimists over the political future of China and the role the Internet could play in its democratization, one has to see past the binary view of authoritarian politics as a perpetual struggle between the state and its antistate, prodemocracy population and try to understand China's peculiars in its own terms.

Unfortunately, Western democracies have long dismissed stable nondemocratic states as illegitimate and resorted to an "elite-driven, top-down, outside-in, technocratic and overly formulaic experiment in social engineering that lacked local legitimacy."[16] This is not to say the values "liberal peacebuilding" tries to promote such as rule of law, human rights protection, democracy, and good governance do not have merit, but the manner in which peacebuilding has been pursued often seems hypocritical and imperialistic to the target countries and consequently has met resistance and produced counterproductive results. Engagement with China's Internet policies and its netizens may benefit from a better grasp of the Chinese government's popular sources of legitimacy and the needs and interests of the diverse Chinese population.

The Promotion of Harmony: Boost Authoritarian Legitimacy

Without competitive elections, functioning rule of law, or adequate human rights protection, China would have failed to pass as a legitimate state by liberal democratic standards. On the other hand, however, China has enjoyed relative stability despite serious challenges to Communist rule in 1989 and experienced high-speed economic growth in the past three decades. Most measurements on state legitimacy agree that the post-1989 Communist Party has successfully rebuilt its popular legitimacy. Bruce Gilley's study

found in 2006 that China was a "high legitimacy" state among seventy-two countries considered, higher than Japan and second only to Taiwan in Asia.[17] Internationally, China is increasingly viewed more favorably as well, largely due to its economic achievements, according to Pew Research.[18] To understand and effectively engage such countries, there seems to be a need to evaluate state legitimacy empirically, not based solely on a realist's focus on stability or an idealist's emphasis on democratic consent, but grounded in a sense of common good and justice historically and locally defined.[19]

In the Communist Party's ambivalent relationship with the Internet, one must recognize that controlling information and public discourse has always been a cornerstone of authoritarian rule.[20] It is because legitimacy, understood as the right to rule, or the public's belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate for the society, requires subjects to obey not only out of self-interest, but also consent to the state's moral authority.[21] This acceptance implies knowledge and judgment about the state on the part of the ruled. A broad base of legitimacy can thus enable an authoritarian government like China's to regulate the Internet more to its liking, which in turn, reinforces its authority online. Following Holbig and Gilley's scheme,[22] I discuss next Beijing's popular legitimacy in five areas: economy, nationalism, ideology, culture, and governance and democracy. With their online presence, these various sources of legitimacy serve to solidify the party-state's claim to Internet sovereignty.

Economy

Economic growth is undoubtedly the Party's top priority and a main source of legitimacy. It is particularly the case as China emerged out of the recent global financial crisis triumphantly, with the government announcing a four trillion yuan (US$560 billion) stimulus package. Pew's 2010 survey shows in a widespread gloom, only China has an overwhelming portion of the population (87 percent) expressing satisfaction with the national conditions.[23] The Party's economic performance, framed as Party-led societal progress, scored points with many Chinese who now enjoy a higher standard of living compared to abject poverty levels twenty or thirty years ago.

Unlike the focus on individual rights in Anglo-American political thought, there is an enduring emphasis on collective socioeconomic justice in China, dating back to Mencius, a Confucian philosopher who stressed the links between economic welfare and legitimate rule.[24] This idea continues to find resonance in current Chinese politics as the 2004 Chinese White Paper on human rights states: "The Chinese government continues to put the safeguarding and promotion of the people's rights to subsistence and development on the top of its agenda."[25]

Knowing all too well that economic growth and rising standards of living are its fundamental raison d'être, Beijing relentlessly promoted IT development. Shortly after China introduced economic reform and the open door policy in 1979, the leadership under Deng Xiaoping quickly realized its Western counterparts were transitioning from an industrial society to an informational one and felt the urgency to catch up. Deng himself approved

the National 863 Projects in 1986, investing 10 billion yuan (roughly $1.4 billion) in high tech industries between 1986 and 2000, two-thirds of which went to IT.[26] Today, IT contributes about 10 percent towards China's GDP. With the government's backing, many Chinese IT companies emerged as global competitors, including ZTE Communications, Huawei (networking and telecom), Tencent (instant messaging, online gaming and virtual currency, the world's third largest Internet company by market capitalization), and Baidu (search engine, the fourth most-visited website in 2010).[27] The rise of such firms continues to fuel the Chinese economy and Beijing's claim to legitimacy.

Economy-based legitimacy, however, has its limits. It not only creates unprecedented inequalities and environmental deterioration in China, but also feeds rising expectations and alternative social values and political cultures.[28] So far, Beijing has managed to rally dominant social forces around economic growth. An elite class of business and political leaders has accepted authoritarian rule in exchange for cash. The growing middle class, intent on guarding their wealth from instability, is far from challenging state legitimacy as previously expected.[29]

Nationalism

Besides economy, nationalism is often seen as the other pillar of authoritarian legitimacy. Both state-sponsored and grassroots-driven nationalism serve as a bedrock for personal and social identities at a time of uncertainty induced by marketization and social pluralism. An official cultivation of "patriotism" becomes an "ersatz ideology" [30] to fill the vacuum left by an erosion of communist ideology. State media, through news and entertainment, regularly remind citizens of the nation's sufferings in its not so distant past: Western imperialism in the nineteenth century, cruelties inflicted by the Japanese "devils" during the Sino-Japanese war, and more recently the virulent Western "China threat" rhetoric fixed on preventing China from its inevitable rise.[31] Similar endless chains of "national humiliations" are repeated in textbooks to perpetuate a mode of "victimhood" expected to be internalized by youths born in the 1980s or 1990s.

Grassroots pent-up frustration of perceived foreign disrespect towards China is invariably channeled through the catharsis of nationalism. Western leaders' meetings with the Dalai Lama are framed as a gesture of open provocation. Popular protests against foreign powers such as the anti-Carrefour rally against French disruptions of Beijing Olympics torch relay in 2008 are often delicately sanctioned by the state.[32] Books like *China Can Say No* published in 1996 and *Unhappy China* of 2009 became instant bestsellers, transmitting popular anger toward perceived unfair Western, particularly U.S., criticism and containment of China.

In the age of new media, nationalistic sentiments find new platforms of expression and coordination. *People's Net*, the official party mouthpiece, for instance, maintains a highly popular online forum, Strengthening the Nation Forum. Many netizens consider it a freer space and credit the government for listening to the people.[33] The growth of the Anti-CNN move-

ment also bears out the state's sophisticated guiding of popular patriotism. Started out as a project of a 23-year-old student in response to "the lies and distortions of facts in Western media" in covering the 2008 Tibetan unrest, the online group sets out to "collect, classify, and distribute biased Western media reports against China"[34] but shuns criticizing the failures of Chinese official media.

While popular nationalism often comes from an authentic place, state nationalism has a tendency to manipulate public sentiments, extol state achievements, and obscure inequalities. By erasing the differences between "nation" and "state," the government continues to promote the logic that a Chinese citizen's love for the country inevitably translates into support for the Party.[35] Conversely, a challenge to the state and praise for Western values such as freedom and democracy are seen as unpatriotic and a denial of one's Chinese identity.

Ideology

The Internet has not put an end to ideology. The Communist Party cannot disown the revolution that brought it into power or the 75 million party members, one in every twelve Chinese adults, who are part of its ranks. The world's largest party is a sprawling governing edifice with branches throughout government, the military, schools, state-owned enterprises and even private firms.[36]

Over the years, the Party has adapted. Unlike Mao, who threw himself behind "thought work" to induce popular obedience, his successors, from Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin to Hu Jingtao, have been more pragmatic. All of them de-emphasized class struggles that defined the Mao era and put economic development on the top of the Party's priority list. Deng's famous "cat-ism"—"I don't care if it's a white cat or black cat. It's a good cat so long as it catches mice"—perhaps best captures this pragmatism in ensuring public support for the Party's leadership.

After 1989, the Party under Jiang paid more attention to thought work. Jiang summarized his approach as "seize with both hands, both hands must be strong," meaning Party legitimacy relies on both economic growth and a renewed emphasis on political thought work.[37] Jiang's 2002 legacy of the "three represents" broadened party membership to include "the most advanced social productive forces," i.e. the newly affluent segments of the society. Hu, on the other hand, made "harmony" his political centerpiece to reduce confrontations in China's tumultuous economic and social transition.[38] The idea openly acknowledges China's societal tensions but prescribes a socially acceptable and politically legitimate goal for the Party. Chinese citizens are no longer assessing their political leaders based on party principles but rather on performance, such as capacity and efficiency in solving social problems.[39]

It certainly can be said that contrary to bringing harmony to Chinese society, the Party had in effect consolidated "crony capitalism" and created a corrupt class largely above the law.[40] But attracting the best and brightest also lends legitimacy to the Party's claim to reduce arbitrary decision-

making and improve governance. Top Party leaders have repeatedly vowed to address popular discontent over issues of land grabs, political corruption, and wealth gaps, and moved in 2006 to abolish the agricultural tax to appeal to China's 800 million plus farmers. Premier Wen Jiabao, for instance, famously said during his online chat with netizens in 2010: "He who knows the leakage of a house lives under the roof. He who knows the mishandling of a state is among the populace."[41] The central government subtly manages to maintain public confidence in the top leadership by assigning blame to unprincipled and corrupt local officials.

Culture

Similar to ideological renewal, Chinese culture is also undergoing reconstruction. But rather than directly referencing national sovereignty or socialist ideology, the Party has increasingly aligned itself to represent the legacy of Chinese cultural traditions and a revival of China's cultural identities.[42] At the forefront of this movement is the renaissance of Confucianism. Traces of Confucianism in contemporary Chinese society can be found in both public and private life, through architecture, fashion, education, lifestyle, and over 300 Confucius Institutes worldwide. Its rejuvenation is all the more remarkable given Mao's open condemnation of this quasi-religious philosophy four decades ago.[43]

The rediscovery of Confucianism in the 1980s was both populist and intellectual. Besides initiatives from local authorities, Confucianism was seen in the academy as an inherently humanistic bridge between Eastern and Western values. Tu Weiming, for instance, argues that Confucian core values are not only compatible with human rights but can enhance the universal appeal of human rights: persons are at the center of relationships rather than in isolation; society is a community of trust rather than a mere system of adversarial relationships.[44]

The Party has promoted the revival of Confucianism by appropriating it as an alternative strategy to legitimize party rule. There is some resemblance of Confucian thoughts in the official ideology of "harmonious society." Perhaps most appealing to the ruling party are such Confucian ideas as the love of social order and stability, cultivation of personal virtues and social responsibility, obedience, acceptance of hierarchy, and devotion to the family and the state. These values, from the Party perspective, are not only intuitively compatible with Chinese traditions, but more importantly can help promote social order and stability. By claiming a moral high ground, the state is able to intervene and regulate aspects of Internet use such as pornography and gaming from the standpoint of benevolence and protection.

Governance and Democracy

If resorting to nationalism, ideology, and culture to bolster the Party's political legitimacy seems elusive at times, the government has been delivering more concrete, if inconsistent, results in the governance realm. Striving to build a Chinese version of "socialist democracy," the party-state has improved its governance in a few key areas: bureaucratic efficiency, empowerment of the people's congress, the rule of law, and inner-party democracy.[45] Such changes

are important in that they developed more autonomous, capacity-rich public institutions not easily manipulated by single individuals.

In addition, authorities have also tried to adopt various input institutions that allow citizens to apprise the state of their concerns. Such institutions include: the Administrative Litigation Act of 1989 that allows citizens to sue government agencies for alleged violations of government policies; Letters-and-Visits departments (*Xinfangju*) for citizen complaints; village elections; people's congresses; people's consultative conferences (where citizen grievances are addressed); and use of mass media as the people's tribunes.[46] These institutions, even if not well implemented, are legitimacy-enhancing. They provide, at the very minimum, a symbolic gesture from the state toward protecting human rights and restoring social justice.

The advent of the Internet has extended and in some ways transformed such practices by adding an online dimension to many rights- and justice-seeking activities. It is estimated that the states has committed to investing trillion-yuans (US$121 billion) in government IT projects since the early 1990s. As a result, provincial, city, and county governments now feature online government portals at rates of 100 percent, 93 percent, and 69 percent respectively.[47] Aside from making more information available online, government networks have also created spaces for public discourse including e-consultation functions such as Q&A sessions with government officials; e-petitions; e-discussion features such as real-time "gov. chat" between citizens and policy makers; and policy discussion forums. Local citizens have more access to government information, services, and means to articulate their rights and seek social justice. As a result, citizens are gaining access to local politics, and with it, political knowledge. By granting limited public spaces, these government networks help deflate social tension and re-establish state legitimacy.[48]

All these initiatives indicate that the state is promoting good governance and defining democracy in its own terms, although not in the liberal democratic sense. There are still many profound contradictions in its governance structure that place the party's leadership above the law, social harmony above dissent and social "instabilities," and individual responsibilities to society above personal rights and freedoms.

Authoritarian Informationalism

Given the government's active and largely successful promotion of legitimacy in various quarters including economy, nationalism, ideology, culture, and governance, it is perhaps not too astonishing to come across reports such as the 2007 Pew survey on Chinese Internet use which found an overwhelming amount of netizen trust in the government regulation of the Internet. Three-quarters of respondents said that they trusted information on government websites more than any other kind of online information, compared with 46 percent for established media, 28 percent for search engine results, 11 percent for content on bulletin boards and in advertisements, 4 percent for information from individuals' web pages, and 3 percent for postings in chat rooms.[49]

Indeed, the state's grip on power has been strengthened, not weakened. Although the regime still has many legitimacy deficits, largely in corruption, rule of law, public safety, and social inequality, the government is still viewed legitimate by most Chinese citizens. With no viable political alternative to the status quo, the government is able to regulate the Internet more to its liking, which in turn, reinforces its authority online.

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In the foreseeable future, China's Internet policies will continue to reflect what I call authoritarian informationalism, an Internet development and regulatory model that combines elements of capitalism, authoritarianism, and Confucianism. From the government's perspective, although the Internet poses some fundamental challenge to the regime, it is possible to mitigate such challenges and ensure its own survival by producing economic growth, social stability, and national identity. In this respect, the Chinese government actually expects to use the Internet not only to extend its control in society but also to enhance its legitimacy.

In this respect, the Chinese government actually expects to use the Internet not only to extend its control in society but also to enhance its legitimacy.

Beijing will continue down the path of capitalism with a vision to turn China into a technologically advanced economic powerhouse. The past three decades of market-driven development have made China the second largest economy by being the world's factory, producing low-end manufacturing products. In order to consistently deliver high-rate economic growth, the government is clearly committed to the next stage of development by ramping up domestic consumption and creating cutting edge technological innovations. Sustained Internet growth, in both user base, goods and service delivery, fits into the bigger picture. China already has the world's largest number of Internet users, a market that draws both domestic and foreign companies. Ongoing urbanization will add more consumers who can afford Internet products and services in the near future. With the government's backing, many Chinese Internet and telecommunications companies, state-owned and private ones, have been expanding overseas, particularly in Asia, Africa, South America and the Middle East, places that prefer inexpensive Chinese technological products or have an interest in China's surveillance technologies.

Such an economic development strategy, however, is unlikely to deter the Chinese government from managing an ever-growing Internet population more to its liking. By securing a broad base of political legitimacy, the state legitimizes and legalizes restriction of online expressions or dissent on the basis of security, law and order, arguing that doing so will be in the interest of the majority of its citizens and for the greater good of the Chinese society. Without strong legal protection for individual rights, the state's claim to national sovereignty invariably puts netizens at a disadvantage, while also deflecting international criticism and interference. But it would be inaccurate to conclude that Chinese netizens are not free. There remains a lot of give and take between the government and citizens compared to the pre-Internet era. Netizens have a greater deal of freedom than before, enjoy a lot more benefits and conveniences the Internet affords, and sometimes can even influence policy-making. But the boundaries of political discourse and actions are largely prescribed by the state and enforced behind the scene with cooperation from Internet companies. With an expanded toolbox of sophisticated censoring techniques and technologies, modern authoritarianism differs from its classic counterparts in that it grants a much bigger degree of freedom to its citizens, including political ones, to diffuse radical opposition and enhance its rule.

The revival of Confucianism boosts the state's image as the ultimate caretaker of the Chinese society and embodiment of Chinese cultural legacy. From the government's perspective, Confucianism has both internal and external appeal. Its emphasis on social order and stability, obedience and devotion to family and state reinforces the government's official ideology on social harmony. Politically, Confucianism can be used as an excuse to diffuse individual and group challenges to state authority and arbitrariness. Such challenges are often dismissed for causing "social instabilities" and disrupting social order although neither the constitution nor other legal provisions clearly define "social instabilities" in concrete terms. Externally, the benevolent and humanistic essence of Confucianism helps promote Chinese cultural heritage and values overseas.

Engage Authoritarian Informationalism

The options for engaging Chinese netizens are few given the Chinese government's firm stance. Major Internet services like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Blogger are still blocked. Google, after weeks of deliberation with the Chinese government, renewed its license in July 2010 to continue its operation in China. Now Google.cn provides a landing page and sends users directly to its uncensored Hong Kong site, although for mainland users, specific searches containing sensitive words are still blocked by the Great Firewall.[50] Other major Internet companies like Microsoft and Yahoo! continue to comply with Chinese regulations and offer censored search engines.

Such blockage and restriction place limits on speech as well as business. The U.S. State Department voiced concerns and vowed to promote Internet freedom. Various proposals have been put forth to increase free-

dom of speech on the Internet, particularly in response to Chinese Internet censorship.[51] They fall largely into four categories: (1) technical: developing tools for censorship circumvention, anonymity and security measures such as secure login, storage and redistribution of deleted content, and mirror sites to replicate at-risk materials; (2) legislative: enacting legislations such as the Global Online Freedom Act to prevent U.S. Internet companies from engaging in Internet censorship; (3) trade: pursuing actions through international trade organizations such WTO that treat censorship as an unfair barrier to trade, controlling the export of U.S. and European censorship technologies; (4) research, education and community of practice: funding research and innovation against Internet censorship such as building block resistance platforms, sharing "opposition research" to identify problems and solutions in an international anticensorship community, educating users on privacy and rights issues, supporting international exchange to increase the influence of indigenous experts, implementing corporate responsibility mechanisms, promoting international acceptance of Internet freedom and respect for the rights of Internet users for instance through the U.N.

These and many more ideas highlight a multilayered thinking behind Internet freedom that attempt to address the various interests, such as users, businesses, civil society groups, and governments involved. Regarding Chinese government policies, many of these recommendations may have some limited effects on the Chinese government, and perhaps a profound impact on U.S. Internet companies operating in China more than Chinese Internet users. This is because these are largely technical, external solutions to an inherently human, political and internal problem.

Anti-censorship technologies, in no way easy and inexpensive, may help a small number of users break through the Great Firewall of China or other filtering systems to reach restricted content overseas (which most web savvy Chinese users are already doing), but they will have a limited effect on far more complicated domestic censorship issues: human censors, closure of domestic websites, arrest of cyberdissidents, discipline of Chinese Internet companies, and self-censorship. Although Google has kept its promise not to censor by directing mainland search traffic to its uncensored server located in Hong Kong, sensitive searches are still blocked. So search results are unlikely to have been changed for Chinese mainland users although the burden and cost of censoring seem to have shifted more to the Chinese government.

Moreover, the proposed technologies, if created and deployed online, can potentially be blocked online as well. They cannot protect the creation and sharing of politically sensitive materials on domestic websites (though domestic platforms are far more effective to gain influence over the target audience within the country). Nor can these technologies necessarily change Chinese citizens' views on western norms of freedom and democracy and turn them into "global citizens." Circumvention tools have existed since 1990s but technologies and information do not automatically lead people to start a revolution. Political and human problems demand more than mere technological answers.

In the eyes of the Chinese government, most of the discussion on the topic seems more or less a plot to overthrow its rule. American Internet giants Google, Facebook, and Twitter somehow seem like extensions of the U.S. State Department.[52] U.S. funding to a Falun Gong Internet freedom group preceded Beijing's announcement of its Internet White Paper to restate its national sovereignty over the issue. Somewhere in the context of the spat between the government and Google as well as the high-profile involvement of the U.S. State Department, Internet freedom had been much more narrowly defined than its original intent, which is to create and maintain a single connected Internet for ideas, knowledge, and expressions. The sheer political focus of the conversation may not address the broader American foreign policy goals in authoritarian societies as much as intended. Given the current level of legitimacy the Chinese state and the democracy deficit the U.S. government has overseas, radical political change is not only unlikely but also undesirable. However, incremental, progressive changes are possible to achieve on the issue of Internet freedom if the issue itself is more broadly defined beyond the attempt to tear down the Great Firewall.

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At the government level, economy and trade are more likely to change the Chinese state's behavior given Beijing's priority in economic development and international trade. Framing censorship as a trade barrier may rally the larger foreign business community, not just a few U.S. Internet companies. As much as the government wants to censor political content with its borders, it also desires to retain foreign investment and trade relations. In addition, Beijing prizes technological and business innovation, which it sees as the primary driving force for the next wave of economic growth. Although it wishes Google would comply with its censorship rules, the Chinese government also views companies like Google as a useful leverage to spur technological innovation at home.

At the Internet-user level, the question of Internet freedom is not so much about turning Chinese netizens into cyberdissidents, but rather about engaging the majority Internet users on issues they care about, increasing their living standards and helping them to be more conscious of their rights and hold local governments to account. This is not foreign policy of the "social engineering," "regime changing" kind, but the kind that can effectively raise awareness and build long-term engagement. It implies local problems need local solutions. The "App <4> Africa" contest, a contest funded by the State Department, for instance, is engaging local people to develop mobile

phone applications most useful to citizens and civil society organizations in Africa as mobile phones have become central to African everyday living. Projects as such do not presuppose or impose solutions but instead invests in the ingenuity of the local population.[53]

China is a big country with its own unique set of problems. Engaging Chinese netizens via the Internet and social media requires a unique understanding of these issues, China's media landscape, regulations, as well as the interests and preferences of Chinese Internet users.[54] Guided by a broadly conceived framework of Internet freedom, it is possible to connect with diverse Chinese Internet population segments, including youths, women, and migrant workers on issues of common interest, including public health, environment, education, and intellectual property. Citizens can be engaged in these issues through a variety of platforms like music, gaming, and mobile phones. Research, education, and community of practice can aid in this endeavor. Virtual connection with Chinese Internet users can be achieved through key players such as U.S. Internet firms operating in China, Chinese Internet companies, as well as bilingual online communities to raise awareness among Internet users and educate users on issues of security and privacy.

Just as there is no single silver bullet to tackle the issue of censorship, there is also no single way to engage the numerous Chinese Internet users who share common needs, interests, and aspirations with their Western counterparts despite the controls and parameters set by a popular authoritarian regime. Internet sovereignty is ultimately about restoring users' rights and giving users the necessary tools and experience to govern themselves.

Just as there is no single silver bullet to tackle the issue of censorship, there is also no single way to engage the numerous Chinese Internet users who share common needs, interests, and aspirations with their Western counterparts despite the controls and parameters set by a popular authoritarian regime. Internet sovereignty is ultimately about restoring users' rights and giving users the necessary tools and experience to govern themselves.

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