Internet Freedom in Asia: Case of Internet Censorship in China

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ABSTRACT

Internet can develop the communication and information freedom on society but unfortunately in some nations, especially in Asia, it cannot be fully accessed because of government censorship. This report explains the relationship between the practice of Internet censorship imposed by the Chinese government and the freedom of its citizens (in the internet surfing experience) as the realization of human rights in the freedom of expression and opinion (seek, receive-use, and communicate information) which is traced through the relevant literature study. China is a unique case since the internet censorship regulation contributes to its status as the country with the least internet freedom yet at the same time it is credited as having the most internet users globally. In addition, China known as the communist country that began opening up to globalization and information of technology, but the government's control over it is still so tight and binding, not only in the press, or the traditional media, but also in new media with the internet censorship. The control over this information may have a clear objective to maintain a climate of information in the community, but on the other hand, such control is tantamount to restricting the right of citizens to make, use, and distribute information, and more fatal as a violation of human rights.

Keywords: Internet, ICT, Censorship, China, Asia

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth and development of information and communication technology nowadays cannot be separated from the invention of the first generation of computer, which later inspired the creation of a number of innovations in information and communication devices for instance laptop, smart phone, tablet computer,

etc. It also has led us to the era of interactive communication that indicated by the emergence of new media (Internet) in it (Rice & Williams in Abrar, 2003:37).

The Internet (interconnection networking) itself is a set of computer network which connected to each other through telephone line, satellite, and telecommunication system that enable the exchange of information from one person to another—it is certainly means that the Internet will attach and exist on every aspect of life such as social, culture, economic, politic, especially in communication (and information) matter. (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001:307; Dominick, 2011:282).

The existence of the Internet is increasingly strengthened in the middle of 21st civilization and seems well-matched to human attachment to the Internet at this time. It has been dominated from the individual to the community level. In the individual level, at least five to seven hours of free time has been spent to access the Internet and social networking. In the organizational level, computer, telephone and internet are also vital facilities to support office works. Even wider, in the global society, the Internet has obviously connecting the world and eliminating geographical boundaries (Van Dijk, 2006:1-2).

Global attachment to the Internet is confirmed by the latest statistical data that showed a significant increase of Internet users around the world from year to year. Based on elaboration data from Nielsen Online, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), - and Growth from Knowledge (GfK) published by Internet World Stats stated that the number of Internet users has reached approximately 3.2 billion users in 2015 Q2 (per 30 June 2015) globally with Asian continent in the overall top rank (about 1.5 billion users) (http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm, accessed on 8 November 2015). It indicated that billions of population in the world has been utilizing the Internet as new media to communicate and

exchange information.

Regarding to the aspect of communication and information, the Internet opens the opportunity for anyone to become producer of information (McQuail, 2005:40). Internet provides the chance to exchange information across places which formerly hampered by the limit of distance, space, and time. Internet allows access any-time and anywhere to a wide range of information in just one click per second. In turn, the Internet forms an open and free society based on information called network society (Abrar, 2003:11-12; Castells, 2010; Van Dijk, 2005).

Unfortunately, the relationship between the using of the Internet and the establishment of network society is not fully proven. In some regions, particularly Asia, although it were listed as a continent with the largest Internet users in the world, the freedom of netizen (a term to call the user of Internet) still encounter some obstacles for instance limited access, limited content, the digital divide, and violation of user rights (http://id.techinasia.com/kebebasan-internet-di-asia/, accessed on 14 September 2014). Referring to the data released by Freedom House in 2015, the only country in Asia which is entrenched in the top ten countries with the free status of Internet freedom is Japan (East Asia), and the remainder is dominated by Western countries. On the contrary, China that has the largest internet users in Asia and the world was accredited as the country with the lowest Internet freedom in the world (https://freedom-house.org/sites/default/files/FOTN%202015%20Full%20Report.pdf, accessed on 10 November 2015)

China which is also known as the communist country has started to open up toward the globalization of information, communication, and technology although the government's control is still very firm and binding not only on the press or traditional media, but also on new media with the Internet censorship. This control has a clear objective to maintain the climate of information in the com-

munity, but unfortunately, it can be categorized as the violation of human rights to make, use, and distribute information.

This paper intends to outline the relationship between the practice of Internet censorship imposed by the the Chinese government and the Internet freedom of its citizens as the realization of human rights to seek, receive, use, and communicate information. The analysis will be examined through the literature study method and expected to provide a comprehensive description of Internet censorship development in China in particular and Asia in general.

INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN ASIA

There is a hope for an open and independent public sphere which is totally free from the pressure of the ruling authority when the Internet first appeared in the early 1990s in Asia. Since then, every person can communicate with each other without being limited by geographical and political boundaries.

Once a message, whatever it is, posted on the Internet, the control of its spread will be very difficult. In order to handle the difficulties, the regulation of censorship which is already implemented to regulate traditional media seems also will be applied to the Internet to avoid the dissemination of undesirable content.

However, the idea of Internet censorship by the government authorities is not the only available option. Not a few parties believe that the government can take preventive measures and carefully reconsider the long-term consequences that will arise if the censorship policy is finally should be enacted. In this case, that hope for the free public sphere can really be actualized with the increased freedom of expression and opinion as well as the development of democracy and advocacy of human rights in the Asian region (Gomez & Gan, 2004:14).

In fact, the majority of Asian governments have censored the Internet either technically or non-technically to prevent the deploy-

ment of categorized harmful contents according to them (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/30/internet-censorship-methods, accessed on 18 December 2014). The Internet censorship itself can be divided into two types: (i). Active censorship which means prohibition and restriction on how netizen use the Internet, even criminalizing individual or group who disseminate unsuitable content; and (ii). Passive censorship which means to block certain contents for example pornography and gambling by blocking its data site or source which continues to be pursued until now (Kodabagi & Kameri, 2013:1).

Here is a brief overview of the Internet censorship practiced by Asian government in several countries:

First, in India (South Asia), Internet is totally under the oppression of state for instance the movement of Internet Kill Switch (IKS) and the program called Central Monitoring System (CMS) which are claimed by government as better solution to treat cyber security threats in the country. But in fact, they are precisely hidden methods to strengthen the surveillance power of local government and its agency. The most recent, BlogSpot has been banned by Indian government as a result of CMS pilot program.

India actually has a cyber-regulation namely Information Technology Act year 2000 (IT Act, 2000) which is quite supportive and friendly to the netizen. But since the amendment occurred in 2008, it has switched as a constitution instrument of local government to perform e-surveillance, Internet censorship and website blocking. What is more ironic, the amendment made unconstitutionally in the absence of procedural rules that might prevent power abuse by the government. It can be assumed that Internet censorship is still not the right solution yet, so that the Indian government need to work seriously on creating more effective and plain constitutional guidelines with the coverage issues including national security, cyber security, etc. (Kodabagi & Kameri, 2013:2-3).

Second, in Pakistan (South Asia), the government has been censoring the Internet since 2003. State has controlled the Internet by blocking Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and certain pages of Wikipedia for years. In 2010, High Court of Lahore decided to forbid Facebook as a consequence of the spreading of blasphemous content and the inviting campaign to draw the Prophet Mohammed on this Zuckerberg's social networking site. Some latest attempts undertaken by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) have been prohibiting the using of specific words in texting (SMS), setting up a system of Internet filtering like Great Firewall of China used by the Chinese, and implementing kill switch on digital communication all over Balochistan and Gilgit-Balkistan areas (Liu & Kim, 2012:23).

Third, in Russia (North Asia), through a meeting with media executives in St. Petersburg on 24 April 2014, President Vladimir Putin said his government will impose greater control over the information flowing through the Internet. Russian parliament has signed a law that was similar to the Chinese which would require Internet companies such as Google to build data center in Russia and store the user data locally for six months (http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-05-01/russia-moves-toward-china-style-internet-censorship, accessed on 21 October 2014). In addition, this Act supports the authority of the government to block sites which are considered extremist or threaten public order. It was reported that some of the sites and blogs of government opposition like the *grani.ru, kasparov.ru, ej.ru, echo.msk.ru*, and *navalny.livejournal.com* have been blocked (http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russian-blogger-law-puts-new-restrictions-on-internet-freedoms/2014/07/31/42a05924-a931-459f-acd2-6d08598c375b_story.html, accessed on 21 October 2014). The first third order were the opposition news websites, the fourth is the site of Echo Moskvy (the last remaining free radio station in Russia), and the fifth is the blog of opposition po-

litical figure Alexei Navalny (http://www.washingtonpost.com/ blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/16/the-logic-of-russian-internet-censorship/, accessed on 21 October 2014).

Fourth, in Iran (West Asia), the Islamic government wants to create their own Internet which is not connected to the global network because security and cultural content reasons. By having their own Internet, Iranians are perfectly being censored and isolated from the external world. The state will allocate 60% of Iranian households and companies to have access to a new Internet and within an approximately of two years, the whole country will be connected each other with their own Internet.

However, the total closure of the global Internet has two sides both positive and negative implications for Iranians. According to the Wall Street Journal, the state government wants to protect the country from massive protest and conflict as happened in various African countries (e.g. Egypt, Libya, etc.) in 2011. But negatively, this disconnection of universal Internet access may ruin the Iranian economy. Currently, about 11% of Iranians access the global Internet with the strict Internet censorship for example modified content; monitored dissidents, blocked threaten websites, and deleted outrageous BlogSpot's posts by the government (Kodabagi & Kameri, 2013:4)

Fifth, in Indonesia (Southeast Asia), Ministry of Communication and Information announced in October 2011 that 300 sites had been blocked in order to eliminate radical and extremist contents that threaten national integration after sectarian clashes in Solo, Central Java, and Ambon. However, the ministry did not reveal the blocked sites as well as the criteria used to determine the decision to block these sites (Liu & Kim, 2012:22).

The newest is the enactment of the regulation of the Communication and Information Ministry number 19 of 2014 about the blocking management of negative Internet sites. Since then, the Indone-

sian government has legally blocked numerous sites especially which containing pornographic materials, gambling materials, ethnicity, religion, and race elements, etc. Although this action is done to avert bad Internet effects for Indonesian netizen, it has drawn criticism from various non-governmental organizations and communities because it is considered incompatible with Article 28 letter J Constitution of 1945 and Article 19 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which already ratified with Law No. 12 of 2005. Indonesia Media Defense Litigation Network (IMLDN) highlighted the freedom of expression while ICT Watch highlighted the non-transparent and unaccountable mandate on the preparation of negative site database—it has been proved when the state government decided to block Vimeo. Netizen also protested the blocking of Vimeo for no apparent reason. But still the ministry persisted that the Vimeo should be blocked because its pornographic substances (http://tekno.kompas.com/read/2014/08/08/1426022/Resmi.Ini.Isi.Peraturan.Blokir.Konten.Negatif, accessed on 21 October 2014).

Sixth, in North Korea (East Asia) there is still no accurate statistics yet that measure the level of Internet penetration in the country. However, the presence of North Korea's official online media has increased in recent years. Rodong Sinmun has launched a new website in February 2011 and Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) has continuously improved since its debut in 2010. Website Korea Friendship Association as the main channel to promote international propaganda has supported multimedia content such as video. Sites like YouTube and Twitter are managed under the name of Uriminzokkiri which means our nation.

Since February 2013, North Korea has allowed foreigners to visit or live in the country and access the Internet from their mobile devices over 3G networks operated by Koryolink Company. World

Internet access is still limited to a handful of high-level officials who have received state approval. In spite of the increasing number of academic scientists and students in the country, they are only allowed to access the Internet on limited functions. Citizens are given access only to the national Intranet which is not connected to a foreign network. The Korea Computer Center, a government research center for information technology, controls all the information and determines which information can be downloaded from the intranet (http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2014/north-korea#.VEaSbvmUdy0, accessed on 22 October 2014). Personal computers are very rarely at home; access is only granted via terminals in libraries, offices, luxury hotels, and foreign visits zones in big cities (Kodabagi & Kameri, 2013:3).

Referring to the ongoing practice of Internet censorship in six Asian countries from five different regions shows that the online media is also a subject to government which plays the central figure to legitimate and authorize every realm of communication and information ranging from the biggest to the smallest scale (Abbott, 2013:585). The system and regulation then designed to dictate normatively about what should and should not be done by individual or group when go online. In the end, the strict enforcement of Internet censorship regulation is still believed as the fastest, easiest and most reasonable methods to nullify each thing that potentially disrupting the stability of state regime.

INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN CHINA
THE LARGEST NETIZEN YET THE WORST FREEDOM

The survey result of freedom on the Net conducted by Freedom House in 65 countries in 2015 scored China as the worst abuser of Internet freedom in the world. The ratings were determined through an examination of three broad categories associated with the state censorship on the Internet namely obstacles to access, limits on

content, and violations of user rights as listed in the following table:

TABLE.I. CHINA'S PROFILE ON INTERNET FREEDOM

China Population: 1.36 billion	Internet Freedom Status	2014	2015
Internet penetration 2014: 49% Social media/ICT apps blocked: Yes Political/social content blocked: Yes Bloggers/ICT users arrested: Yes Press Freedom 2015 Status: Not Free	Obstacles to access (0-25) Limits on content (0-35) Violations of user rights (0-40) Total (0-100) 0 = most free, 100 = least free	Not Free 19 29 39 87	Not Free 18 30 40 88

Source: Freedom on the Net 2015 by Freedom House (2015:190)

As many other countries in Asia that implements digital media and censorship legislation as their way to cope with unexpected circumstances as a result of the uncontrolled flow of information on the Internet. Likewise Chinese government also took the same actions starting from executing the multilayered censors, enacting the binding legislations, and applying the multidimensional and multi-level control mechanisms of the Internet.

The table also emphasizes that government do not allow any kind of online and offline public opinions as they may cause public movements or chaos against government. The vocal users are imprisoned, social networking sites are forbidden, political and social contents are blocked, and press is fully controlled.

TYPE OF INTERNET CENSORSHIP IN CHINA

The Chinese government mainly utilizes three types of Internet censorship known as The Great Firewall, The Golden Shield, and Keyword Blocking (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2013:3; Liang & Lu, 2010:106-108).

The Great Firewall is started to be used since the late 1990s to restrict access to foreign websites; The Golden Shield is a system of domestic surveillance created by the Chinese Ministry of Public

Security in 1998; and Keyword Blocking is content blocking of key-words or phrases which are prohibited through the filter software specially designed and widely used for application, access point, internet service provider, backbone network, affecting website, email, online forum, college bulletin board, social network-ing site, blog and micro blog, instant messaging, and search engine. While targeted content filter to filter pornography, religious material known as Falun Gong, political topics and issues of ethnic minorities (Yong Kun, Yang, Ha, Yuping, Mengyao, & Nute, 2012:118; http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/ 2013/04/economist-explains-how-china-censors-internet, accessed on 22 October 2014).

The Chinese government controls all Internet activities such as blocking website or IP address and filter keyword by router in eight gateway of state's Internet, telecom enterprise data center and Internet portal; managing and monitoring Internet service provider, Internet cafe, and university bulletin board system; listing web-site and blog; arresting the hacker and rebel user; blocking foreign website such as social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter), video sharing site (YouTube) including Radio Free Asia, Voice of America (Chinese language), international human rights site, Tai-wanese news site; English online news site for example Voice of America, New York Times, and Washington Post (though sometimes by chance they still can be accessed or censored selectively). Since 2005 the state has paid group of people known as 50 Cent Party to send a pro-government message and lead online conversation away from sensitive topic. The government reportedly has hired thou-sands of students to express the pro-government acts on website, bulletin board, and chat room (Lum, Figliola, & Weed, 2012:2).

INTERNET CENSORSHIP LEGISLATION IN CHINA

Internet censorship in China is principally aimed to manage the

news and discussions which does not comply with state legislation on Measures for Security Protection Administration of the International Networking of Computer Information Networks announced by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security in 16 December 1997. Since then, a lot of legislation on Internet content were authorized, in particular legislation on Measures for the Administration of Internet Information Services or better known as the Telecommunications Regulations of the People's Republic of China legalized by the State Council in 25 September 2000 as well as the Provisions on the Administration of Internet News Information Services issued by the State Council, the Ministry of Information Industry, and the State Council Information Office (SCIO) in 25 September 2005 (Yunchao, 2010:54-55).

The establishment of telecommunications legislation in 2000 formed three systems namely the licensing and site registration, the pre-approval for certain type of site, and exclusive approval for the function of specific site (Yunchao, 2010:55). These three systems essentially forbid any organization or individual to use telecommunication network to produce, reproduce, distribute, or transmit information consisting of nine points: (i). Oppose the basic principles prescribed in the constitution, (ii). Threaten state security, reveal state's confidential, subvert state power, or devastate national unity, (iii). Adverse the state dignity and interest, (iv). Incite ethnic hatred, racial discrimination, or undermine interethnic unity; (v). Sabotage the state religion policy or propagate the heresy or feudal superstition; (vi). Spread rumors, disturb social order, or disrupt social stability, (vii). Do obscenity, pornography, gambling, violence, murder or spread fear, and incite crime, (viii). Insult or defame third parties or infringe upon the legitimate rights and interests of third parties, (ix). Include all related content prohibited by the laws or administrative regulations (Yong Kun, Yang, Ha, Yuping, Mengyao, & Nute, 2012:112-113).

Chinese legislation on the use of the Internet has grown and become more comprehensive over time although can be too broad, vague, ambiguous, inconsistent, overlap and redundant so that the decision making process may not be coherent and consistent (Endeshaw, 2004; Liang & Lu, 2010:108-109; Qiu, 2000; Qiu, 2003). Nevertheless, citizens of China are unable to fight back because of the absolute tendency of repression and authority from government.

INTERNET CONTROL MECHANISM IN CHINA

Internet control mechanism conducted by Chinese authorities is basically a fusion form and adjustment of traditional media control mechanism that have been applied before the emerging digital media.
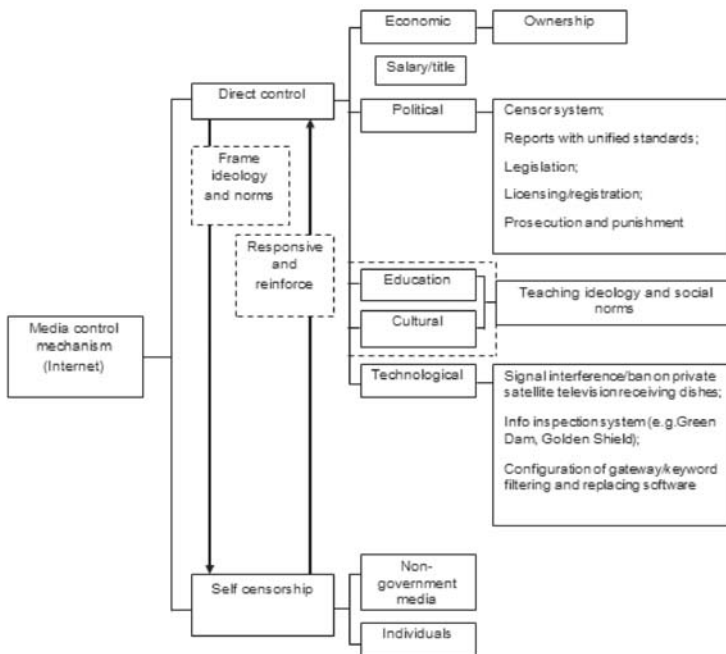

FIGURE I. INTERNET CONTROL MECHANISM IN CHINA (SOURCE: DONG, 2012:408)

Even though the instrument is mainly similar, but the implementation is dissimilar because of the differences in the nature of the two media (Dong, 2012:407). In general, the Internet control mechanism can be concluded as government efforts to censor netizen's activity on the Internet with a wider range of aspects for instance economy, politic, education, culture, technology, either directly or indirectly (through self-censorship).

In terms of economy and politic, although restrictions on media ownership have been eased in the Internet age with the growing number of private Internet Content Provider (ICP) and Internet Service Provider (ISP) (Esarey, 2005; He, 2004; Zhao, 1998, 2008 in Dong, 2012:408), the ownership of Internet Access Provider (IAP) is still entirely owned by the government (Qiu, 2000:17). As a result, traditional media licensing system is still used for the ICPs and ISPs (Dong, 2012:408).

Furthermore, all the international data exchange must use the incoming and outgoing channel provided by the state and each ICPs and ISPs legally responsible to the state for any inappropriate content on the site (Dong, 2012:408). Both ICPs and ISPs must pass the professional training regulated by government in order to work in the media industry. In particular, ICPs and Internet cafe owners are required to provide records of users' information, published content, and visited sites. Users including ICPs and ISPs actors are also only allowed to register using their real names and provide clear personal information and contact number to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (Dong, 2012:408-409). Because afraid of possible sanctions by the government, the owner of the ICPs and ISPs proved more censorious than the authorities themselves (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/30/internet-censorship-methods, accessed on 18 December 2014).

In terms of education and culture, politic is a study taught from elementary school to university. Marxist theory and its ideological

as well as philosophical and nationalist thought about vision and mission of the establishment of new China inserted into learning curriculum. It is intended to train self-censorship in the earlier level of individuals and organizations (Dong, 2012:409). In short, censorship, legislation, and control by government aimed to continue conditioning the citizens to be the obedient subject to the state.

ANGRY NETIZEN, GOVERNMENT KEEP GOING

All forms of government control and censorship on the Internet have caused restlessness and anger for Chinese netizen. Those limitations and censorship on almost every dimension and level of Internet activities have triggered protest because they extremely suppress netizen's freedom.

Moreover, more complaints also arise since the regulatory agency is overlapping and its legislation is volatile (Chu, 1994; Esarey, 2005; He, 2004; Qiu & Zhou, 2005; Winfield & Peng, 2005 in Dong, 2012:409). In order to cover up these weaknesses, the government launched a technological project called The Golden Shield as their database system. This project then culminated on 8 June 2009 when the government announced that all personal computers which sold in China after 1 July 2009, to have the filtering software called Green Dam Youth Escort installed on them. This policy followed by massive protests among youths, academics, activists, industries, and foreign companies in China as they assumed it violated privacy and freedom of every citizen.

The protest was getting louder since lately known that the software was defective and could allow hacker to monitor the user's Internet activity, steal data, inject virus, even ridiculously the cartoon cat Garfield and baby pictures blocked by this software (Yu & Liu, 2009 in Dong 2004:409). Responding to such criticism, CCTV broadcasted an exclusive report on young generation's anxiety for the uncontrolled negative content such as pornography found on

Google.cn. A several days later, revealed that those people appeared in the report evidently were interns paid by CCTV (http://www.jx.xinhuanet.com/review/2009-06/22/content_16872885.htm, accessed on 18 December 2014). The government finally decided to suspend temporarily the further application of this software (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/02/china-green-dam, accessed on 18 December 2014).

The most current protest was the pro-democracy demonstration in Hong Kong last year (September 2014). Demonstrators demanded that the Chinese government frees Hong Kong to hold its own democratic election. In addition, China received protest for restraining the freedom of Hong Kong and censoring all information relating to Hong Kong on all types of media including the Internet in order to avoid or reduce political movement in China (http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/29/world/asia/china-censorship-hong-kong/, accessed on 19 December 2014).

Apparently, the Chinese government will indeed perform a variety of ways to banish upheaval scattered information on the Internet—no matter whatever the controversies might come from their people. Government has built a very systemic and holistic circumstance so that the information climate can always be under their control. It takes a struggle from Chinese netizen to be able to voice their rights.

WEIBO MICRO BLOG: A NEW HOPE FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN CHINA?

In spite of the strict censorship imposed by government in the last decade, Chinese netizen even more aggressive to express their opinions through online media such as bulletin board attached to the general site, personal site, and then the most recent is Twitter-like called Weibo (http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21574632-microblogs-are-potentially-powerful-force-change-they-have-tread, accessed on 22 October 2014).

According to some experts, within two years, micro blog Weibo has become the most important public sphere, the most prominent place for freedom of speech, and the source of the most important news for the community. There are reportedly about 300 million micro bloggers registered as Weibo's users through the platform provided by the leading ISPs such as Sina and Tencent. Both of ISPs have been in the forefront to reveal various countries' black records such as corruption and other unexposed sensitive news for instance, in July 2011, micro bloggers exposed the high-speed train crash near the city of Wenzhou that killed 40 passengers while government was trying to control the news coverage (Lum, Figliola, & Weed, 2012:5).

Weibo's fever has attracted some news sites and online portals to highlight the euphoria. Government, political elites, opinion makers, and academics in the country have their own Weibo. Even international celebrities open their own Weibo's page.

Figure 2. Weibo homepage and Hollywood Actor's official page (Source: http://blogs.ubc.ca/carlytaojing/files/2012/01/ crt_weibo_G_20101116094909.jpg; https://www.techinasia.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/tom-cruise-sina-weibo.jpg?17bc4c, accessed on 22 October 2014)

Its presence has triggered a lot of debates and controversies in China both because of its ability to disseminate information and mobilize individual or mass, or in some cases related to government

control on it. One of the most notorious cases occurred in October 2010, when a 22-year-old boy named Li Qiming killed one person and wounded another in a car accident because he was drunk while driving at Hebei University. At that time, he lightly warned *"Sue me if you dare, my father is Li Gang (a deputy police chief in nearby district)!"* (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/18/world/asia/18li.html?page-wanted=all&_r=0, accessed on 18 December 2014). This case immediately covered by the government, but not with the words that already spread quickly in online forum like Weibo (Qiang, 2011; Bamman, Connor, & Smith, 2012:2).

FIGURE 3. CENSORSHIP OF LIU XIAOBO IN WEIBO (SOURCE: BAMMAN, O'CONNOR, & SMITH, 2012:3)

In December 2010, Nicholas D. Kristof (a newspaper columnist of The New York Times), opened an account on Sina Weibo to test the censor level. His first two posts were *"Can we talk about Falun Gong?"* and *"Delete my Weibo if you dare! My father is Li Gang!"* As a result, within twenty minutes, the posts immediately removed by the administrator. Having attracted widespread attention from the media, the account was also deleted (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/23/opinion/23kristof.html, accessed on 18 December 2014).

Censors are also found when information searching contained forbidden certain keywords on Weibo for instance the name of Liu

Xiaobo (a Chinese literary critic, writer, professor, and human rights activist who called for political reforms and the end of communist single-party rule) on 30 October 2011 as shown Figure 3.

The notice was *"In accordance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies, the search results could not be displayed"*. Another keyword such as Jasmine, Egypt, Ai Weiwei, Zengcheng, Beijing Occupy, Occupy Wall Street, etc. are also prohibited in *Weibo* (Bamman, O'Connor, & Smith, 2012:3). The highest statistical forbidden keyword in the period of 2014 was Hong Kong because Chinese government assumed it could evoke reactions of citizens and repeat the tragedy of Tiananamen 1989 demanding democracy in China.

FIGURE 4. THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP OF THE HONG KONG DEMONSTRATION ON WEIBO

(Source: http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/29/world/asia/china-censorship-hong-kong/, accessed on 19 December 2014).

Beside forbidden keywords blocked, on 31 March 2012, Chinese government through the Xinhua announced that sixteen sites have been closed down and six people were arrested, while Sina Weibo and Tencent Weibo criticized and punished (in the form of suspension of the comments function for three days) on the dissemination of rumors online (http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/

china/2012-03/31/c_131500416.htm, accessed on 22 October 2014).

It seems that Chinese netizen is still difficult to break free from the restraints of government, because in fact, Weibo is expected to be a source of alternative news, a free forum for discussion, a free media sharing, and a connector to the outside world, still get censored. This condition affirms that there is no medium of communication and information which is neglected by the state intervention and suppression, and there is no citizen movement which is not known by the state. As a consequence, freedom of expression and opinion attached to every citizen who should be respected, fulfilled and protected by the state is minimized even treated as an entity that should be given to the state as a regulator and a determinant of its significance (Nowak, 2003:50-53).

ALIBABA.COM: STATE SUPPORTS COMMERCIALIZATION, NOT DEMOCRATIZATION

China, who had known for the authoritarian government, fully owns, organizes, and funds the existing media in the country. The Communist Party do tight control on political expression, speech, religion, association, and any individual or large-scale movement of social group perceived as threaten for the country (Yong Kun, Yang, Ha, Yuping, Mengyao, & Nute, 2012:15),

However, major changes have occurred since the commercialization of media which encouraged institutional transformation (Ma in Curran & Myung, 2000:21-22). State began to reduce funding for the media, which meant that the state did not have a full scale intervention of the media so that the media was no longer merely a mouthpiece for the party and the government, but the media have started to produce entertainment content to stimulate interest in the audience in order to gain more profit through advertising and subscriptions. Non-state actors also began to emerge and compete in the middle of media competition (Majid, 2004:557-558).

One conclusive support from the government for the commercialization of media is a massive investment to develop infrastructure of information and communication technology. According to the State Council, China invested RMB 4.3 trillion (US$ 680 billion) in Internet infrastructure development over the last 13 years to boost economic growth and promote the ability of domestic technology so the country will no longer rely on foreign technology, especially from the United States and Japan (Yong, Kun, Yang, Ha, Yuping, Mengyao, & Nute, 2012:15).

Alibaba Group Holding Limited (New York Stock Exchange: BABA), the greatest e-commerce company who has hundreds of millions users and oversees millions of merchants and businessmen in China and worldwide, is an obvious evidence of government's support for the media commercialization (http://projects.wsj.com/alibaba/, accessed on 18 December 2014).

Established and supervised by Jack Ma on 4 April 1999, Alibaba has become a success local company in global scale because the government's support in it (http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21573981-chinas-e-commerce-giant-could-generate-enormous-wealthprovided-countrys-rulers-leave-it, accessed on 18 December 2014). It is not the same as the strict censorship on the Internet in general; three online shopping sites operated by Alibaba namely *Taobao.com*, *Tmall.com*, and *Alibaba.com* were released with a loose censorship to penetrate international markets. The government also alleviates Alibaba to compete with its competitors e.g. eBay and Amazon by conducting quite difficult policies and regulations for foreign companies to grow, but giving wide space to national companies (http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-05-07/how-chinas-government-set-up-alibabas-success, accessed on 18 December 2014).

Alibaba probably is just one of the many examples on how Chinese government shows their support for the using of the Internet

in the economic and business purposes. Alibaba can bring multiple benefits to the state, does not like the other websites or online forums that just wastes the country's efforts. Thus clearly shows that the Chinese government does not want the state and its citizens into the democratic activists, but activists on liberalism or capitalism with the Internet.

CONCLUSION

China continues to transform into a consistent state in guarding the utilization of traditional media and new media like the Internet. Having the largest populations does not necessarily make it as a country that provides and guarantees freedom of surfing to its citizens. This is indicated by the persistence of the strict limits as obstacles to access, censorship of content, and violations of the user rights. In addition to the consistency showed in dispels all sorts of issues that threaten the state regime, the Chinese government also appears to be in a state of confusion and tend to be inconsistent when viewed from a fantastic investment expended for the development of the Internet in the country. There is no small cost allocated to build the physical infrastructure for supporting the Internet, but it seemed to be useless because people cannot experience entirely non-material support from the government along with the Internet censorship and control which constantly rob their freedom.

Three types of censorship consist of The Great Firewall, The Golden Shield, and Keyword Blocking; state regulations that prohibit any organization or individual to use telecommunications networks to produce, reproduce, distribute, or transmit information comprising nine points against the interests of the state; and systematic controls that cover all aspects of economy, politic, education, culture, technology, either directly or indirectly is a series of protection that actually made by the state, run by the state, and the

results are returned to the state.

Citizens do not have the power and autonomy over themselves because everything has been set by the state. Every citizens actions demanding freedom will be short-lived because immediately lost and replaced with other issues under government's control. Government can close all access into and out of China then bury the issue without a trace. It is difficult to find a gap that can be used to penetrate the defense of the country since the government will always come up with a plan and the other plans.

Weibo which had started to bring a new hope for the Chinese netizen to express their opinions, in turn also experienced similar things with other websites that have been blocked and banned by government. Netizen's thoughts posted on Weibo are seen as a new threat to the country if they are not immediately intervened. Censorship then became the main weapon to control and make everything still running stable. Furthermore, Chinese netizen more often censor themselves to avoid sanctions which overshadows every time they search, create, use, and disseminate all things forbidden by country.

The government's censorship began to weaken when confronted with the economic interests of the state. Alibaba which was developed by Chinese has confirmed that the government does not support the political and democratic interests in cyberspace, but do encourage economic and profitable business on the Internet. It has been clear that the government does not put an excessive prejudice when the Internet is used for commercial objections only.

In the end, the freedom on the Internet and freedom of expression and opinion in China are quite difficult to be fulfilled. The country is in the highest authority over everything. As a result, citizens are like fighting against their own country with a tiny chance of winning. Internet only used by the state as the savior of government so that it cannot be as a tool against the government.

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