

Google Refuses To Assist U.S. Military, Bends Over For China's Communist Censors

Besides clearly showing the company is willing to put profit above doing what's right, their decision to censor their search engine in China is likely to threaten their bottom line in the long run.

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Should Google change its famous motto “Don’t be evil” to something like “Don’t be evil when it’s convenient, but it’s okay to be evil when it means new markets and more profit?” The question is pertinent, because *The Intercept* has **reported** that Google plans to launch a censored version of its search engine in China in the next six to eight months, pending the approval of Chinese regulators.

China already has one of the world’s worst records on internet freedom. The Chinese government has built a large army of censors to scrub the internet to their liking in real time. Under President Xi Jinping, the Chinese government has further tightened its control over its people’s right to free expression. Chinese censors cast a very wide net of control. Whether it’s *The Wall Street Journal* site or the image of **Winnie the Pooh**, whether it’s a serious topic or something funny — anything the government doesn’t like, or any phrase or images even remotely associated to anything the government doesn’t like, is either banned, blocked or simply disappears.

For example, after Liu Xiaobo, China’s first Nobel Peace Prize laureate and a human rights warrior, passed away last year, news reports of his death and any searches for Liu’s Chinese name or his English initials LXB were blocked. The term “RIP,” a candle emoji and even a picture of an empty chair were banned on China’s equivalent of Twitter. Chinese people who dare to challenge censorship are quickly **detained** by local police. This shows how far China is willing to go in censorship.

Increasingly, the Chinese government has extended its censorship and oppression of its people beyond China’s borders. From Singapore to the U.S., the Chinese are increasingly **fearful** of criticizing Beijing.

Once upon a time, Google modeled itself as a champion for freedom of expression. According to the company's old **code of conduct**, its famous motto "Don't be evil" is "about providing our users unbiased access to information, focusing on their needs and giving them the best products and services that we can."

Only eight years ago, Google shut down its search engine on mainland China, over the Chinese government's control of online freedom and an alleged intrusion into several Chinese human rights activists' Gmail accounts. Back then, Google's actions won wide praise for its moral stand and for living up to its "Don't be evil" motto. Brave Chinese took great risk to leave flowers and chocolates in front of Google's Beijing office.

But with 700 million active internet users, China is probably such a big market that Google figures that it can't afford to be out for too long. In order to get back into China, Google has been working on this censored Chinese search engine, code-name "Dragonfly" for more than a year. The search engine will blacklist websites and search terms on human rights, democracy, religion and any other issues

deemed sensitive by the Chinese government. Google also developed Chinese version search engine apps that will "automatically identify and filter websites blocked by the Great Firewall," and will "blacklist sensitive queries so that 'no results will be shown' at all when people enter certain words or phrases." Such kowtowing to Beijing is a betrayal to millions of Chinese internet users.

The Intercept **reported** that Google has already presented these censored search engine apps to their Chinese overlords. The censored search engine project is not the first time Google has made an attempt to return to the Chinese market. Google established its artificial intelligence (AI) China Center in Beijing in 2017. The company introduced a mini-game powered by AI on WeChat, a popular messaging and social network platform of Tencent Holdings, a Chinese homegrown technology company.

Since Google and its subsidiary, YouTube, controls about a **90 percent** of market share of worldwide internet searches, the Chinese government is only too happy to have such a powerful technology company to help them manipulate information and enhance their oppression over Chinese people. There is no doubt China will use Google as an example to pressure other foreign companies to join its unholy alliance. Patrick Poon, a Hong Kong based member of Amnesty International, told the Intercept, "It will set a

terrible precedent for many other companies who are still trying to do business in China while maintaining the principles of not succumbing to China's censorship."

While Google has no problem bending its knee to authoritarians, it refuses to help the U.S. military. In early June, Google **announced** it wouldn't renew a contract to do artificial intelligence work for the U.S. military after some strong opposition from its employees. The kind of work Google does with the Pentagon involves "using machine learning and engineering talent to distinguish people and objects in drone videos." Worrying that Google's AI work with the Pentagon may lead to development of lethal weapons, about 4,000 Google employees signed an open letter saying working with the U.S. military was putting users' trust at risk, as well as ignoring its "moral and ethical responsibility." Google's senior management was also reportedly deeply conflicted about Google's work with the Pentagon.

Apparently, Google believes that helping the U.S. military is morally objectionable, but helping Chinese censors to restrict internet freedom and oppress over a billion people won't put users' trust at risk and is totally moral. Google also seems unconcerned that **China is developing killer robots**, such as autonomous combat drone swarms. In truth, what Google didn't publicize is that their virtue

signaling in the U.S. comes at a cheap price — Google's contract with the Pentagon is **reported** to be worth less than \$10 million, which is nothing for a company that is worth close to \$800 billion.

Interestingly, Google quietly **removed** the "Don't be evil" motto from its company code of conduct sometime in either April or May this year. Clearly, today's Google no longer holds itself up to the moral standard it once believed in. It's no longer a champion of freedom of expression. It's just another business that is comfortable being evil for the sake of its bottom line.

But, Google should have done some research on its own powerful search engine. The Chinese government has paid only lip service to protecting foreign companies' intellectual property rights. Its actions show that it follows a different playbook:

Step 1. Entice foreign companies to China with the allure of the size of a giant consumer market, while forcing foreign companies to share their intellectual

properties with a selected few large Chinese companies (so called “national team”) through ruinous laws and regulations.

For example, According to Harvard Business Review [analysis](#), “Since 2006 the Chinese government has been implementing new policies that seek to appropriate technology from foreign multinationals in several technology-based industries, such as air transportation, power generation, high-speed rail, information technology, and now possibly electric automobiles. These rules limit investment by foreign companies as well as their access to China’s markets, stipulate a high degree of local content in equipment produced in the country, and force the transfer of proprietary technologies from foreign companies to their joint ventures with China’s state-owned enterprises.”

In 2015, China passed a new cyber security law, which requires any telecom and internet companies operating in China to provide Chinese law enforcement with assistance such as decryption of user data when deemed necessary to fight against terrorism. Despite objections from U.S. and European trade groups, the law became effective Jan. 1, 2016.

Step 2. Punish foreign competitors to aid domestic companies. For example, Qualcomm, a U.S. technology company, had to pay the Chinese government \$975 million to settle an anti-monopoly charge in 2015. In addition to the fine, Qualcomm had to “agree” to offer its licenses to some of its cutting edge technology at a sharp discount to what it charges companies elsewhere.

Step 3. Replace foreign goods and services in key industries with homegrown products and services after the Chinese companies obtain the technical knowhow. China announced that it has built a supercomputer that performs five times faster than a comparable U.S. one, with 100 percent made-in-China processor chips. Xi’s “[Made in China 2025](#)” program, sets a goal to replace foreign technology in key strategic areas with homegrown ones by 2025.

If this is what you decide to do Google, no one will stop you. But please drop your pretense of any moral superiority. You are now very much in danger of becoming part of the evil, Google! But, beware. As many companies have come to learn, getting into bed with evil is often a bad choice. Google may just find this bargain is its undoing.

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