Google in China

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**Introduction**

Francis Fukuyama wrote *The End of History* *and The Last Man (1992)* and claimed that the world has reached its summit after the emergence of the USA as the sole superpower of the world (Fukuyama, 2006). One can agree or disagree with him on this claim as people do, but we cannot deny that the world was never as connected ever in history as in the contemporary century and interpersonal contacts had never such a wide scope as we see today. The 20th century is credited with the title of the century of revolutions. These revolutions gave birth to many new nations and ideologies that were absent from the world before that. Socialism in China is one such example, it altered the Chinese’ beliefs and ideology to run their country and thus People’s Republic of China (PRC) replaced the Republic of China (RP) in the mid-20th century. In the West, the PRC is considered a totalitarian kind of regime that suppresses the people. Nevertheless, the West including the USA took too much time to respond. The 21st century squeezed the world and brought individuals, organizations, and governments accessible with just one click (in the modern sense one tap) no matter in whichever corner of the world they are, thanks to the internet. Google is the world’s largest *search engine* and it revolutionized the internet and modern researches by providing easy access to considerable information. Google tries to provide every kind of information to every person who has access to the internet and it does not believe in depriving anyone to reach any kind of information that interests a person. Google was welcomed and appreciated for its policies and services wherever it worked until 2002 when it was first ever punched by the Chinese authorities. Its services were blocked in the country and then they were forced to introduce *Google.cn* in 2006 as an exception to their liberal services. These blockades are condemned in the West and they call it mass intellectual genocide, but the Chinese authorities despite having miraculous progress in their country with the help of West do not take into account these protests from the West. One needs to understand that a phenomenon that is genocide according to the West it is a useful policy to run such a titanic country like China, and the difference of the ideology lies in Eastern philosophy versus Western philosophy. The following discussion attempts to trace the differences between the philosophies to understand the subjugation of Google in China.

**The Case Summary**

The case gives an account of the historical development of Google in China. Google is a globally acknowledged search engine that works throughout the world. It was founded in 1998 by two American graduates of Stanford University Larry Page and Sergey Brin. Starting from a garage and being a local small company they worked in such an impressive way that they rose to the international level in a short time and spread the company all over the world. Currently, it has more than forty products and has become more than a basic search engine. It guarantees the privacy of its customers and makes it possible for every user to access almost every kind of information. According to Google's mission statement: "Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful" (C Fitzgerald, 2016). Google was working identically throughout the world including China after its birth. China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 (Garred, 2018). After this remarkable success, the Chinese authorities started keeping a check on the international companies' operations in the country that were incepted after this membership. Moreover, Chinese companies buckled up to counter the American companies in the international market. China blocked Google services in 2002 within the country. According to Eric Schmidt, the CEO of Google, this blockade was on the insistence of Baidu.com a Chinese internet company. At that time, Google comprised 25% of overall Chinese internet services whereas Baidu.com comprised merely 3%. Google.com fell to 22% and Baidu.com rose to 58% by 2007, the research notes. This censorship affected google.com in the worst way because they were expecting a considerable rise in their customers in the following years. The google.com management approached the authorities and reached an agreement that they would introduce a new sub-engine of their search engine with the name Google.cn that would be particular to China. They introduced the search engine in 2006. This search engine is different from google.com in the sense that it self-censors many socio-political and religious sites. The reason for this exception is that the Communist regime in China does not offer civil liberties i.e. freedom of speech to its people as we see in the USA and Europe. It suppresses and oppresses every individual and organization that dares to disagree with its policies. It also believes limited individual rights and gives more importance to National Interest over an individual. Google could not avoid such a large and emerging market of 3.5 million users in 2006 that were expected to increase by 57 million annually. Therefore, they agreed to offer a search engine that would censor all the anti-communist material, for example, Democracy, Taiwan, Dalai Lama, East Turkestan, and many other such subjects. Google CEO Eric Schmidt was asked about why do they not ask China to respect civil rights and allow inflow and outflow of all kinds of information, he replied: “I think it’s arrogant for us to walk into a country where we are just beginning operations and tell that country how to run itself” (Ferguson, 2016). Nevertheless, this compromise with Chinese authorities raised new questions about the integrity of google.com and questioned Google's motto "Don't Be Evil". It is because millions of Google users thought that Google was unsuccessful in keeping their data safe and it has sided with a regime that does not respect the civil rights of people. The Google authorities claimed that they are not supposed to dictate the political structures of countries and they feel nothing unethical in respecting the Chinese norms and laws. This policy helped Google to increase its share in China from 19.2% in 2006 to 22.2% in 2007. Moreover, it decreased the Baidu.com’s share from 63.7% to 58.1%. Currently, Google has a lesser share than Baidu.com in China, but it is optimistic about its future in China according to Schmidt: "We were late entering the Chinese market and we are catching up. Our investment is working and we will eventually be the leader". Nevertheless, Google's compromise with the Chinese regime has triggered a new debate on ethics among Eastern and Western scholars that cannot reach any useful conclusion if we do not study this phenomenon concerning Eastern and Western philosophies.

**Ethical Issues Involved**

From a Western ethical perspective, the Communist party exploits the masses in China and Google helps them to do so, but the Chinese justify their actions with their historical and cultural background. Western ethics i.e. Kantianism believes that if a person feels that he/she has a thirst for something, ethics demand that he/she must have that thing available so it would not deprive him of inner satisfaction. Immanuel Kant believes that when an individual gets disappointed from society when the matter of his/her desire occurs, he/she can become a person prone to destruction. Therefore, social institutions should respect the freedom of a person to do something and choose something for him/her. It is the ancient belief prominent in Europe since the Greek philosophers. This belief has shaped the concept of freedom in Europe and America. This approach is called deontology, where ends do not justify means and it is believed that the means should be ethical and harmless for every individual. China has a different approach to the social roles of an individual. This approach is called Utilitarianism and it stresses upon the individuals to sacrifice for the greater good. This approach believes that ends justify the means and the theorists believe that we should not be ashamed of sacrificing a few people for the security of a large community. Driving forces behind this belief are the philosophies of Chinese ancient forefathers Confucius and Lao Tzu, they both are prophets or two different schools of thought but they share much in their beliefs and preaching. They both stress upon individuals to sacrifice for their brethren and deter their desires. Confucian teachings are saved in the Lunyu. He preaches the concept of ren (compassion) and love for others. He demands sacrifice from the individuals to make the society a better place to live in. Lao Tzu’s book The Tao Te Ching also is similar to that of Confucius. Tzu teaches some practices to purify one’s soul. He introduces some practices like solitude and some mystic practices that can encourage a person to sacrifice for his/her people. These philosophies helped much the Communist party to promote utilitarianism and to govern the country with a totalitarian model. Were there not such philosophies in the background, China might have not welcomed and strengthened Communism on its land. Censoring media and the internet are also the expressions of these beliefs, and the things that have become ethical issues for Americans and Europeans have no such strong identification among Chinese. They have a different individual and national conscience from the Western communities. Many Chinese praise Capitalism for its insistence upon civil liberties, but they do not feel any extra-ordinary uneasiness with utilitarian China. Take the example of Jack Ma, a great businessman, and billionaire, he has spent years in Europe and America and earned billions of dollars, but he is loyal to the Communist or Socialist agenda of his country being a member of the Communist party. This is the national psyche of China that was comprehended by the Google management and they decided to acknowledge China's stance within its borders.

**The Stakeholders**

China has a unified and organized Internet Service Provider (ISP) which requires all the internet companies to get registered to its platform. Google enjoyed boost all over the world because it did not have to face any kind of restrictions in any country. China's restrictions halted its progress on such a large scale. The stakeholders in this red-tape war were the investors of Google.com and Baidu.com. Baidu.com earned a lot of fame and money when Google was under censor attacks. The other stakeholders were multinational companies whose business demanded full access to the latest technological developments in the country to connect to the world. Google solved its issue by introducing Google.cn that helped it to run its business in the giant market of China, but it could not repair the damage to its image in the foreign world. This phenomenon has caused a rivalry between Eastern and Western ways of thinking about civil liberties. Samuel P. Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996)* argues that the future wars in the world would be based on cultural peripheries instead of the physical borders of the countries. This book should not be taken as a prophecy but as an apprehension, and it is the responsibility of great countries like the USA and the European powers to deter this war with full potential. Western *Universalism* requires that we should have a unified and integrated set of social beliefs about civil liberties in this new world. In another way, it claims that some universal truths require us to be respected in any kind of circumstance. But we see that these so-called universal truths are defined by the Western propagators and the idea of Eastern philosophy is categorically ignored, as Noam Chomsky notes in his book *Failed States* (2006).

**Possible Solutions**

China has not any kind of hyper-sentiments towards religion, the only thing concerns China is its culture and most importantly its physical status. The authorities manipulate every topic to protect its National Interest, a very commonly used term in the USA. China under President Xi Jinping has imitated one more American term *American Dream* and has named it *the Chinese Dream*. The Chinese dream is as opposed to the American Dream as the policies and beliefs of both countries. Whereas America encourages its citizens to do whatever they can to achieve their goals in life, China encourages its citizens to do whatever they can to make their country stronger, richer, and powerful. This is the very phenomenon that should be understood by the Americans: if they do not consider the national psyche of China, either there would be war or any other crisis. China, on the other hand, needs to understand that the time has gone when oppressed communities were given no consideration anywhere in the world. It has to offer civil liberties to its citizens or there would be chaos in the country if masses get tired with the dictatorial policies of China. Hedonism believes in full liberty that can be and that is unacceptable for the Chinese regime and Utilitarianism is unacceptable to the West. Universalism is a possible solution to this ideological rivalry. The West should acknowledge the Chinese concerns and China should introduce Western beliefs about its land. Vedic preaching Dharma (Righteousness, Duty), Artha (Wealth), Kama (Desire), and Moksha (Liberation) are also some principles that can convince the Chinese to reconsider their policy of *utilitarian* government. For example, Dharma demands fulfillment of national duties by the citizens, but in response, Kama and Moksha stress upon the state to respect their civil rights. Eastern philosophies like Confucianism, Buddhism, and Vedic teachings stress upon the individual to purify his/her inner self and serve for a greater cause whereas western philosophies like Kantianism ask the states to offer as many liberties to the individuals as possible. The dilemmas that are faced by Google cannot be addressed unless this ideological liberty is defined rather redefined internationally.

I consider that the more important and useful solution to the issue faced by is a universal demarcation of some principles regarding civil liberties: *ethics*. A human being born free but we tie him/her into some invisible social chains. Generally, we happily get tied into those social chains, but usually, we curse upon our acts. The world leaders must understand that they cannot hold free citizens in chains for long, and they have to define some universal civil liberties. Kohlberg has proposed a moral development chart that describes the evolution of the human mind. He says that there are three stages of human conscious development: (i) Pre-conventional Stage, (ii) Conventional stage, and (iii) Post-conventional stage. A human being conforms to social restrictions to escape punishment in the first stage. The second stage makes him/her conscious about to do some particular acts to get acceptance in society. Both these stages encourage individuals to respect the rule of law. The third mentioned stage enables a person to think out of a nutshell if required. He/she observe the social laws and break them wherever needed. Age does have some relationship with this mental evolution, but it is not specified rather much random. Many people reach the third stage during their thirties, but many others cannot reach it even after 50 years of age. The Chinese policymakers must understand Kohlberg's model to determine where their national intellect lies. Depriving Chinese people of access to the latest updates can harm a country in many ways. Huntington's analysis of the next clash can be more harmful than the two Great Wars. Therefore, the Eastern and Western policymakers must sit together to reach a consensus about the universal harmonious culture of the whole if we want to escape any new major clash.

**Conclusion**

Google is the world's largest search engine that has its web all over the globe. Google's services are appreciated and supported by every government in every country, but China is an exception. China is one of the major markets of the world, a great producer of goods and a great consumer. China is the only country that pressurized this American based company to make a self-censor policy if it wants to work in the country. The company tried to convince the authorities about its integrity being a prestigious search engine company, but all in vain. Eventually, Google submitted to the Chinese pressure and introduced Google.cn, a sub-category of Google.com. google.cn provides limited access to the material because it has signed an agreement with Internet Service Provider (ISP) of China that obliges the companies to censor some topics in research that are related to social, religious, and political rivals of the Communist Party of China. This compromise of Google is criticized in the USA and Europe, but the Google CEO claimed that we are not any social or political organization that can teach a country about its policies rather we are a pure apolitical service provider company that should not be indulged into the ideological war between the countries. The western people usually criticize the Communist party for suppressing the voice of its rivals and denying them their civil rights. Some scholars believe that we should study China's case in the light of historical analysis of the country, or otherwise, we would be deceived by our perception about China. Many Chinese indeed feel that they are being ruled by a strict government, but their approach towards these strictest laws is not as of the Americans and Europeans. The majority of Chinese feel contended with their government policies because such policies have made them super-power in minimum possible time. This phenomenon was understood by the CEO of Google Eric Schmidt who justified Google's operation in China with a different version of Google that looks more Chinese than American. It is because that is in the Chinese language and Chinese wallpaper. The Communist party justifies its actions because it has Confucian and Tzu's philosophies in their cultural subconscious. The west should either acknowledge these philosophies or make a mutual ideological compromise with China to have a shared universal culture, or otherwise, the world can fall into the lap of a catastrophic Great War or *Fifth Generation* War.

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