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Internet Censorship in China

Recent Developments and Perception of Internet Censorship by Chinese Internet Users

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Annotations

- Where it is believed that names and incidents are of importance, they are augmented with Hanyu Pinyin (in *italics*) and simplified Chinese characters.
- Names of companies, organisations, policies etc. are written in *italics*.

1. Introduction

With the launch of economic reforms and the opening up in 1978, China started to catch up with the industrial nations. During the 1980s and 90s great importance was attached to the development of the science and educational sector. Development of the first Chinese intranet and connection to the internet became a key to developing science and economy. In 1987 the *China Academic Network* (CAnet, *Zhongguo xueshu wangluo* 中国学术网络) was established. In the same year the first e-mail was sent from China to the *University of Karlsruhe*. Full access to the internet was gained in 1994, and it took four more years until the internet business was booming.¹ The growth rate of internet users is tremendous, and China soon will have the largest online community in the world. In January 2008 China had about 210 million internet users, being only second to the United States with 215 million users.²

Analysts often forget that Chinese internet users only constitute a small percentage of the population (about 16% in December 2007).³ The internet penetration rate compared to countries like the USA or Japan (both above 65% in July 2007)⁴ is still very low. The internet market will grow as a large part of the population still is not connected to the worldwide web, especially in the rural areas. But it should be kept in mind that today's surfers still represent an elite.⁵ A large proportion of internet users (about 36.2% in 2007)⁶ hold academic degrees, while persons who enjoyed tertiary education only make up for 6,22% of the populace.⁷ Besides economic aspects, western analyses often stress the aspect of censorship. Involvement of Western companies in content control and imprisonment of 'cyber dissidents', like Shi Tao 师涛, have been topics of discussion for a long time.⁸ *Reporters Without Borders* and *Amnesty International* have recommended China to respect its citizens' freedom of speech. The USA, Germany and France have criticised China for its censorship

1 Fang, Weigui, *Das Internet und China: Digital sein, digitales Sein im Reich der Mitte*. Hannover: Heise Zeitschriften Verlag GmbH & Co KG 2004. P. 2.

2 CNNIC China Internet Network Information Center (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. <http://www.cnnic.cn/uploadfiles/pdf/2008/2/29/104126.pdf>. P. 10. (accessed 22.05.2008)

3 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 12.

4 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (July 2007)*. <http://cnnic.cn/download/2007/20thCNNICreport-en.pdf>. P. 9-10. (accessed 15.5.2008)

5 Fang, Weigui, *Das Internet und China: Digital sein, digitales Sein im Reich der Mitte*. P. 1 and p. 161.

6 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 18.

7 中华人民共和国国家统计局 (编), 《中国统计年鉴—2007: 4-12 各地区按性别和受教育程度分的人口(2006年)》. <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2007/html/D0412c.htm> (accessed 9.5.2008)

8 Shi Tao is a Chinese journalist who has been sentenced to ten years of imprisonment in 2005 for having given away 'state secrets' to an American NGO. The arrest was made possible because *Yahoo!* gave away his personal data. (see Davies, Elizabeth, *Yahoo! 'gave e-mail details that helped jail Chinese writer'*.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/yahoo-gave-email-details-that-helped-jail-chinese-writer-505805.html> (accessed 22.5.2008))

policies. According to a proposal passed in February 2007 the European Union might consider internet censorship a trade barrier.⁹ This could affect future negotiations with the PRC.

Literature on internet censorship in the PRC still holds the view that the Chinese government has successfully build a solid firewall, which can only be circumvented by using special software. Others hold the opinion that a system as complex as the internet cannot be censored in an effective way.¹⁰ As Bill Clinton put it once, trying to control the internet would be like ‘trying to nail Jello to the wall’.¹¹ Some are overly enthusiastic in regard to the possible impact which the internet might have on the process of democratisation, by stressing the importance of its ‘feedback functionality’ and the influx of foreign body of thought.¹² Imperfect control would lead to a more open public discourse, which would eventually lead to the fall of China’s authoritarian regime.¹³

The first part of the thesis will examine the status quo of internet censorship in the PRC. Mechanisms which the Chinese authorities employ to censor the web will be examined, but the focus will rest on the non-technical aspects internet censorship. It will be explored how mechanisms of censorship are becoming increasingly indirect, alongside taking a look at regulations and codes and the news monopoly of the Chinese state and its agencies, like *Xinhua* (*Xinhua tongxunshe* 新华通讯社). The second part of the thesis will examine user’s reactions to internet censorship, how they adapt to it, and if they circumvent technical barriers, or if they are aware of the existence of internet censorship. Special attention will be paid to self-censorship and self-seduction, by taking a look at online behaviour.

To better put into perspective the topic of internet censorship I will use the concept of Panopticism, mediated by Michel Foucault, as well as media theories by Chomsky and Herman. The paper is based on articles and research papers, surveys, as well as online articles and papers. Online articles are used throughout the paper because of their timeliness and availability, as the latest changes in China’s internet censorship cannot be found in traditional papers and articles.

9 Bangeman, Eric, *EU may begin treating 'Net censorship as a trade barrier*.

<http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20080227-eu-may-begin-treating-net-censorship-as-a-trade-barrier.html> (accessed 8.5.2008)

10 August, Oliver, *The Great Firewall: China's Misguided - and Futile - Attempt to Control What Happens Online*. http://www.wired.com/print/politics/security/magazine/15-11/ff_chinafirewall (accessed 16.5.2008)

11 Wacker, Gudrun, „The Internet and censorship in China“, in Hughes Christopher R. and Wacker, Gudrun (Editors), *China and the Internet: Politics of the digital leap forward*. London: RoutledgeCurzon 2003. P. 58-82. P. 58.

12 Fang, Weigui, *Das Internet und China: Digital sein, digitales Sein im Reich der Mitte*. P. 143.

13 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom: Control and Regulation of the Internet in China“, in *China Information Volume XVII, no. 2 (2003)*. P. 65-82. P. 66.

2. The Great Firewall of China: Technical and Non-Technical Means of Censorship

China has one of the world's strictest censorship regimes. Traditional media are mostly directly controlled by the state. Considerable progress has been made since the 1980s, and the media certainly enjoy a higher degree of autonomy than 30 years ago, but the state is not yet willing to loosen its tight grip on information. As with traditional media the authorities also tried to impose control schemes onto the new medium internet. As the Chinese internet has become bigger and more diversified, and internet access has become available to more and more citizens, voices of foreign critics condemning censorship and internet control also have become louder by every year. This chapter presents research findings on how internet censorship works in the PRC, both with regard to technical means, and under the aspect of non-technical control mechanisms.

2.1 Technical Filtering and Censorship

For obvious reasons the Chinese government does not give any details of the hardware and software used to control the flow of information from and to China through the internet. It is well known that most of the traffic in China is routed through systems from *Cisco Systems*.¹⁴ All traffic has to pass through networks of the *Ministry of Information Industry* (MII, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xinxi chanye bu* 中华人民共和国信息产业部), whose networks create a single gateway to the international internet, which can be controlled more easily.¹⁵ Only speculations can be made with regard to the concrete workings of software developed by Chinese companies to control the internet, but by conducting experiments researchers have understood the basic principles of the *Great Firewall of China*. Of course the Chinese state may fix loopholes found in its firewall and change mechanisms, but many researchers have pointed out that the basic technical principles of censorship cannot be changed dramatically, so that the techniques most likely will only be refined over time.¹⁶ According to the *OpenNet Initiative* most systems designed to block undesired content use three basic techniques:

”IP blocking, DNS tampering, and URL blocking using a proxy. These techniques are used to block access to specific WebPages, domains, or IP addresses. These methods are most frequently used where direct jurisdiction or control over websites are beyond the reach of authorities.“¹⁷

IP blocking,¹⁸ also known as 'packet dropping scheme', refers to a scheme where all traffic to a specific IP address based on a 'black list' is discarded, and therefore the content of the target ad-

14 Espiner, Tom, *Cracked: The Great Firewall of China*.

<http://www.silicon.com/research/specialreports/china/0,3800011742,39160084,00.htm> (accessed 1.5.2008)

15 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom“. P. 68.

16 Clayton, Richard, Murdoch, Steven J. and Watson, Robert N. M., *Ignoring the Great Firewall of China*. www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~rnc1/ignoring.pdf (accessed 12.5.2008)

17 OpenNet Initiative (Editor), *About Filtering*. <http://opennet.net/about-filtering> (accessed 5.5.2008)

18 IP stands for Internet Protocol, a network protocol which is used to communicate over the internet. Every computer connected to the worldwide web has its own distinguished IP-address, which is used to identify and communicate with other computers and servers.

dress becomes inaccessible. The scheme is easy to deploy and cost-effective, because modern network routers feature the necessary options. Disadvantages of packet dropping are that blacklists have to be kept up-to-date, to ensure that sites who have moved still can be blocked and new sites are added on a regular basis, as well as that internet users might suffer from 'overblocking'. All websites which share the same IP-address as the blacklisted website will also be blocked, which might lead to the undesired blocking of numerous websites not containing any sensitive content.¹⁹ It is hard to say how many IP-addresses are blocked in China because the blacklist is subject to frequent changes and also depends on the network used to access the internet. By probing different websites in 2006 the *OpenNet Initiative* found out, that IP-addresses blocked by the two big state-owned backbone providers *China Netcom* (CNC, Zhongguo wangluotongxin jituangongsi 中国网络通信集团公司) and *China Telecom* (CT, Zhongguo dianxin jituangongsi 中国电信集团公司) were 'remarkably similar', but not identical.²⁰ Sites like *Wikipedia* or the *BBC's* web service are sometimes unblocked or only Chinese-language versions of these two portals are inaccessible, depending on political circumstances. Now more and more bans are lifted because of the 2008 Olympic Games, but this may change drastically after the games.²¹ Why apparently random changes of blocks and also unblocking of critical content might not be a disadvantage for censorship will be discussed in the next chapter.

Another scheme used to deny access to certain websites is known as 'DNS tampering', or 'DNS poisoning'.²² When the Domain Name System is contacted to translate a textual address (like *www.google.com*) into a numeric IP-address (in *Google's* case it would be 216.239.51.99), no answer ('Site not found') or an incorrect answer is returned, leading the internet user to no site or to a different webpage.²³ In 2002 users wanting to visit *Google's* Chinese website were redirected to its Chinese competitor *Baidu* 百度.²⁴ Research findings indicate that DNS tampering isn't widely used to prevent users from accessing websites. Reasons for this will be discussed in the next chapter.

URL blocking using a proxy, also known as 'content inspection scheme', is the most sophisticated means to block unwanted content. All traffic is routed through a proxy server, performing a check if the desired website contains sensitive content which should be blocked. Unlike DNS poisoning and IP blocking this method can be made extremely precise, because routing through a proxy

19 Clayton, Richard, *Ignoring the Great Firewall of China*.

20 OpenNet Initiative (Editor), *China (including Hong Kong)*. <http://opennet.net/research/profiles/china> (accessed 5.5.2008)

21 SourceForge, Inc. (Editor), *China Allows Access to English Wikipedia*. <http://yro.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=08/04/06/1643223> (accessed 25.4.2008)

22 DNS stands for Domain Name System, a system which translate human-readable computer hostnames into numeric IP addresses.

23 Clayton, Richard, *Ignoring the Great Firewall of China*.

24 Fallows, James, "The Connection Has Been Reset". <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200803/chinese-firewall> (accessed 14.5.2008)

permits dynamical control over requested content and does not need static blacklists, but rather a list of undesired keywords. This scheme can be refined to a degree where single images and videos are blocked, while letting other content pass unchanged. Proxy-based blocking of content is not universally applied because coping with the entire traffic of a big network would slow down connections and lead to very high costs.²⁵ An alternative content inspection scheme exists. Rather than using a proxy server this scheme uses components of an ‘Intrusion Detection System (IDS)’, which inspects content as it passes by and will arrange for data packets to be discarded at a firewall or will issue a TCP reset to close the connection. A research team based at the *University of Cambridge* found out that the *Great Firewall of China* employs this method, blocking connections by sending TCP resets to the machine requesting a website and the requested website.

“When a packet arrives at the router it is immediately placed into an appropriate queue for onward transmission. The packets are also passed to an out-of-band IDS device within which their content is inspected. If the packet is considered to be ‘bad’ by the IDS device [...] then three TCP reset packets [...] are generated for each endpoint and given to the router to be transmitted to their destinations.”²⁶

After receiving the packets the desired website cannot be reached for a span of time, reaching from five minutes to an hour.²⁷ The team’s assumption is that there’s not one single IDS device inspecting the content, but rather many different devices. They also discovered that, when setting packet filtering firewalls on both sides of the connection to ignore the reset commands sent by IDS device, the connection will just work fine:

“[...] by simply ignoring the packets sent by the ‘Great Firewall’, we made it entirely ineffective! This will doubtless disappoint its implementers.”²⁸

It was also found out, that the firewall uses another random scheme to disrupt connections, known as ‘blocking with confusion’. Forged SYN/ACK packets issued by the firewall, include an invalid random sequence number which lets connection to the desired website fail. This strategy seems to appear randomly, making it rather hard to circumvent it.

It can be seen from these research findings that the *Great Firewall of China* is not as solid as it is sometimes described in the media, but uses rather well-known means to control the flow of information on the internet. But does the firewall have to be really this solid, and does the Chinese state have to take care of a total control over the content viewed by its citizens? There are indicators that show that the Chinese state gave up the idea of total control over the internet a long time ago, or maybe never even got this idea in the first place. How technically imperfect control over the in-

25 Clayton, Richard, *Ignoring the Great Firewall of China*.

26 Clayton, Richard, *Ignoring the Great Firewall of China*.

27 Fallows, James, “*The Connection Has Been Reset*”. <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200803/chinese-firewall>

28 Clayton, Richard, *Ignoring the Great Firewall of China*.

ternet might even be helpful to the Chinese authorities and how censorship has been refined and changed during the last years will be discussed later in this paper.

2.2 Refining Censorship

The first part of this chapter has given a short introduction to the technical aspects of censorship. This part of chapter two will examine how the Chinese government is refining censorship and its mechanisms by handing down censorship to private or semi-private agencies and companies. This chapter will examine by which means this is done and if the concept of Panopticism may be applied to Chinese internet censorship.

2.2.1 Laws and Regulations

The PRC has issued laws to regulate the internet and online business, and has amended them over time to adapt to changes and new developments. Similar to the laws of other countries, China's regulations on the internet also feature restrictions and define forbidden content.

The first regulations, *The Temporary Regulation for the Management of Computer Information Network International Connection*, were promulgated in 1996, and amended in 1997 and 2000 to keep up with the development of the internet industry. The 2000 amendments include regulations to govern telecommunications and the publication of news and electronic information on the internet; all of them, like the *Measures for the Administration of Internet information services (Hulianwang xinxi fuwu guanli banfa 互联网信息服务管理办法)*²⁹, include a list of forbidden content.³⁰ One distinct feature of this list of forbidden content, which is based on *Regulations Governing the Administration of the Publishing Industry (Chuban guanli tiaoli 出版管理条例)*³¹, is that the list is drafted extremely vague. For example, any content that

“[...] endangers national security, discloses state secrets, subverts the government, destroys the unity of the country. [...] Damages the honour and the interests of the State. [...] disturbs social order, undermines social stability [...]”³²

is forbidden.

It can be seen that these leave a large space of interpretation. Points like ‘subverting the government’ or ‘destroying the unity of the country’ can be interpreted in the light of the situation, and may be used as reasons to imprison dissidents. Because Internet Content Providers (ICP) and Internet Service Providers (ISP) are left with the obligation to ‘clean’ their websites, they are also left with the problem of implementing the rules and regulations of the PRC. It is rather unclear where

29 国务院（编），《互联网信息服务管理办法》. <http://tradeinservices.mofcom.gov.cn/b/2000-09-25/17920.shtml> (accessed 21.5.2008)

30 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 62.

31 国务院（编），《出版管理条例》. http://news.xinhuanet.com/zhengfu/2001-12/31/content_220668.htm (accessed 21.5.2008)

32 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 62.

borderlines may be drawn, which content may be regarded as ‘healthy’, and which may be in conflict with the basic principles of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), or endanger national security. The result of these vague regulations has been insecurity for the media staff, making them conduct a stricter self-censorship to avoid conflicts with authorities.³³ China is a country still in the early stages of rule of law, but it is not due to lack of expertise that some regulations are drafted in such a vague manner. Uncertainty in regulations on users and content providers is most likely intended. Regulations issued to control the latest developments of the internet, like restrictions on blogs and video websites, also lead to more confusion about what may be posted and what is forbidden.³⁴ Regulations drafted to control newly emerging phenomena, like (video-)blogs³⁵, may reflect the Chinese authorities falling back into old patterns of behaviour, overreacting to gain back control over public opinion. But this may also be seen as one method to keep users and companies confused, and force them to stay on the safe site. According to Anne Stevenson-Yang the problem is

“[...] that the important rules in China are not the published ones. [...] China’s system of censorship focuses on before-the-fact control of organizations that communicate with the public.”³⁶

In many cases, ‘policy, not statute is the true law of the land in China’, therefore people operating businesses in China have to be cautious to policy changes and informal letters and internal documents, expressing the will of the CCP.³⁷ This ‘before-the-fact’ control of organisations will be subject of further discussion.

2.2.2 Panopticism: A Short Introduction

Panopticism is a concept mediated by French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984), based on a prison model (the Panopticon) invented by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832).³⁸ Panopticism gained widespread attention through Foucault in the 1970s, and was used in many social and cultural analyses throughout the 1980s and 90s.³⁹ The concept obtained some attention in connection with analyses of internet monitoring schemes, data collection mechanisms and also with regard to censorship mechanisms, because today’s technical standards allow a greater degree of observation, a point which is essential for the functioning panoptical mechanisms.⁴⁰ In Bentham’s prison inmates are detained in an annular construction, and watched from a tower built in the

33 Scharping, Thomas, “Administration, Censorship and Control in the Chinese media: The State of the Art”, in *China aktuell* 4/2007. P. 96-118. P. 107.

34 Pluta, Werner, *Lasst hundert Blogs blühen*. <http://www.golem.de/0801/57004.html>

and Pluta, Werner, *China beschränkt Online-Videos*. <http://www.golem.de/0801/56806.html> (both accessed 29.5.2008)

35 In 2007 about 49.35 million Chinese were writing blogs, and about 76.9% of users were watching online video (CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 52 and P. 56)

36 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, “Can China Co-opt the Web?”, in *Far Eastern Economic Review* October 2005. P. 6-10. P. 7.

37 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, “Can China Co-opt the Web?”, P. 7.

38 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom“. P. 66.

39 Boyne, Roy, “Post-Panopticism”. P. 294.

40 Boyne, Roy, “Post-Panopticism”. P. 296-297.

middle of the construction. The inmates live in separated cells not able to reach out to each other. They do not know when they are watched, they only know that they might be watched at any time.⁴¹ As Foucault puts it:

„He [the prisoner] is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject of communication. [...] the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. And this invisibility is a guarantee of order.“⁴²

The Panopticon is seen as a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism, an ‘expression in a pure form of realizable technology of power’, but also a model applicable to our modern society.⁴³ Foucault does not say that the permanent exercise of power is necessary to remind the inmates that they are under control. Rather, power should be visible and unverifiable, which makes its exercise effective and induces an uncertainty among the watched, so that the prisoner ‘has to act *as if* he is under constant surveillance all the time, even though such surveillance is not physically possible for the single warden’.⁴⁴ Surveillance should be ‘permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action’.⁴⁵ This principle can also be seen in the *Great Firewall*. The firewall is not inviolable; it can be circumvented by different technical means. Blocks are also not permanent in their effects because blacklisted sites change rather frequently. However, continuity can be observed regarding its effects, as will be shown in chapter three. In the following discourse it will be made clear which role the concept of Panopticism plays in today’s internet censorship in the PRC.

2.2.3 The Role of the Chinese Media

The following paragraph will survey the status quo of Chinese online media, and how their organisation and structure helps the Chinese state to censor the internet. Most online media outlets are still handled like traditional print media in law, so at times this section will refer to regulations about the Chinese newspaper market. Rules regarding online and offline media do not differ significantly.

The press and the media are still defined as ‘the mouthpiece of the Party’, and their duty is to propagate the Party line; the Western concept of freedom of the press is explicitly renounced, and newspapers (and their online outlets) are conceived as organs of CCP party organisations.⁴⁶ The main supplier of information in China is *Xinhua*, the state-owned news agency. *Xinhua* has a monopoly on the domestic news service in mainland China, as all news media are required to use it as the

41 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random House, Inc. 1995. P. 200.

42 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. P. 200.

43 Boyne, Roy, “Post-Panopticism”, in *Economy and Society Volume 29 Number 2 May 2000*. P. 285-307. P. 293.

44 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 60.

45 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. P. 201.

46 Scharping, Thomas, “Administration, Censorship and Control in the Chinese media”. P. 98.

only news source.⁴⁷ Autonomous production of content by the media is allowed, but within strict limits. Besides delivering news to the Chinese media, *Xinhua* also publishes about 40 different journals and newspapers, more than 400 books each year, and, most important in the context of this paper, has an extensive internet service.⁴⁸ *Xinhua* transmits two categories of reports; leading stories and commentaries for mandatory reprinting, or ordinary reports for optional use. The news agency holds a specific monopoly on topics like

“[...] Party and government policies, important meetings, leadership activities, and talks on both domestic and foreign affairs, appointments, dismissals and deaths of important leaders.”⁴⁹

As long as media outlets only republish news from *Xinhua* no further (self-)censorship is needed, as the news are censored already. Many websites will copy news from *Xinhua* not only to circumvent conflicts with the government but also to reduce personnel costs. But competition between state-owned and private media outlets is becoming fierce as a result of the growth of the Chinese market, and of World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession, which will cause more and more foreign media companies to enter the mainland market. Private enterprises naturally depend on the revenue they generate. Given that subsidies are declining Chinese state-owned companies also increasingly depend on advertising, which forces them to adapt to the market and compete with foreign companies.⁵⁰ Today privately owned websites like *Sina.com* (*Xinlang xinwen zhongxin* 新浪新闻中心), *163.com* (*Wangyi* 网易) and *Youku.com* (*Youku* 优酷), rank among the most visited sites in China, while sites like *People.com.cn* (*Renminwang* 人民网) attract considerably fewer users.⁵¹ ‘Privatisation’ of internet content production, through users and online communities, also poses a new threat to the official media, further diversifying content production and establishing new competition for the traditional media.⁵² Private internet companies no longer wait for *Xinhua* news to be published but engage in news reporting to attract readers. When the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was bombed in 1999, private news sites did not wait to receive the official version of the news, but published their own articles. They also reported on an explosion in a school building in Jiangxi, contradicting official information.⁵³ Official media are becoming more commercial, especially local

47 Tang Wenfang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005. P. 81.

48 Scharping, Thomas, “Administration, Censorship and Control in the Chinese media”. P. 101.

49 Scharping, Thomas, “Administration, Censorship and Control in the Chinese media”. P. 104.

50 Tang Wenfang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. P. 86.

51 According to Alexa Traffic Rankings for China (Alexa Internet, Inc. (Editor), *Top Sites China*. http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_sites?cc=CN&ts_mode=country&lang=none (accessed 6.6.2008))

52 Tang Wenfang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. P. 86.

53 Chan, Joesph Man, “Administrative boundaries and media marketization: A comparative analysis of the newspaper, TV and Internet markets in China”, in Lee, Chin-Chuan (Editor), *Chinese Media, Global Contexts*. London: RoulledgeCourzon 2003. P. 159-176. P. 170.

newspapers (and their online versions), which publish reports and comments divergent from official news.⁵⁴

One problem is that with the ongoing commercialisation of the Chinese media and the increasing dependence from advertising revenues many media companies will move to the ‘lighter’ field of entertainment and so-called ‘soft news’, staying away from critical journalism. Some authors argue that in the case of China moving away from propaganda to any thematic field may still be an improvement.⁵⁵ Chomsky and Herman’s propaganda model however indicates that commercialised media can still be used as a tool of propaganda. According to them five news filters can be found in the commercialised media:

“(1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) ‘flak’ as means of disciplining the media; and (5) ‘anticommunism’ as a national religion and control mechanism.”⁵⁶

These filters refer to the American media market of the 1970s and 80s, but they may exist in the current Chinese media market. The first filter, ‘size, ownership, and profit orientation of the mass media’, describes how working-class media in Great Britain were hindered by the government, first by using laws and prosecutions, and later, when this method proved ineffective, by forces of the liberal market.⁵⁷ The PRC’s government also tried to constrain the number of entities being able to do internet business, by drafting laws and regulations which were designed to shut down individual websites, and only let big capital-driven websites survive.⁵⁸ Everybody who wants to run an ‘Internet information service’, has to meet the requirements of ‘value-added telecommunication operations’:

“(1) the operator should be a company set up according to law; (2) the operator should possess adequate funds and specialized staff for the operations; (3) the operator should have the credibility or capacity to provide long-term services for the customers.”⁵⁹

These regulations effectively hinder individuals and companies who do not possess ‘adequate funds’ to run websites and web services, thus promoting the conglomeration and concentration of big companies. The latest regulations permit individuals to post videos. Video-sites now may only

54 McCormick, Barret L. and Liu, Qing, “Globalization and the Chinese media”, in Lee, Chin-Chuan (Editor), *Chinese Media, Global Contexts*. London: RoutledgeCourzon 2003. P. 139-157. P. 141.

55 McCormick, Barret L. and Liu, Qing, “Globalization and the Chinese media”. P. 150.

56 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. London: Vintage Books 1994. P. 2.

57 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 3.

58 Sun, Xupei, “Accession to the WTO and the Development of China’s Digital Media”, in Zhang, Junhua and Woesler, Martin (Editors), *China’s Digital Dream: The Impact of the Internet on Chinese Society*. Bochum: The University Press Bochum 2002. P. 109-128. P. 118.

59 Sun, Xupei, “Accession to the WTO and the Development of China’s Digital Media”. P. 118.

be run by accredited companies. The first filter may not only be proven valid for individual and commercial websites, but also for government-owned websites, like online outlets of newspapers and magazines. As mentioned above, subsidies are declining, or even completely cut off, so that these outlets also have to generate revenue in order to survive on the market. Since the 1990s a trend of conglomeration can be seen among the Chinese media, with the establishment of 24 different press groups till 2001 in China, like the *Guangzhou Daily Press* (*Guangzhou ribao baoye jituan* 广州日报报业集团) and *Guangming Daily Press Group* (*Guangming ribao baoye jituan* 光明日报报业集团).⁶⁰ Similar to centralisation in western markets few big media companies possess large shares of the market.⁶¹ Media companies tend to search new income sources, for example by going public, generating pressure by shareholders who want to see the companies generate revenue, forcing them to turn towards strictly market-orientated objectives.⁶² Dependence on government relations poses a special problem with the still feeble implementation of rule of law in China and the common use of informal channels to do business.⁶³ This multitude of dependencies, the trends to commercialisation and conglomeration, prove that the first filter is also valid in the context of Chinese media, providing a further layer of censorship. Because emphasis is put on economic achievement, rather than on journalistic qualities, media companies not only experience pressure from official side, but also have to regulate their content, based on what private interest parties demand.

The second filter, ‘advertising as primary income source of the mass media’, can also be found in the modern Chinese media world. As has been mentioned above, subsidies from the government have been withdrawn or dropped, thus making advertisement the main source of income for most media outlets, state-owned or not.

“With advertising, the free market does not yield a neutral system in which final buyer choice decides. The *advertisers’* choices influence media prosperity and survival.”⁶⁴

In a system where media companies largely depend on advertisement, ad companies acquire a ‘de facto licensing authority’⁶⁵, similar to the licensing authority of the Chinese government. New filters come into play, further scaling down the field of news which may be covered, because advertisers wish to attract target audiences.⁶⁶ Business news are often ‘bought outright by arrangements with journalist’. Also public relations firms that use ‘soft bribes’ have grown up with the

60 Sun, Xupei, “Accession to the WTO and the Development of China’s Digital Media”. P. 121.

61 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 5.

62 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 11-12.

63 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 13.

64 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 14.

65 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 14.

66 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 16.

commercialisation of the market.⁶⁷ Starting from the 1990s a ‘tabloidization’ can be witnessed in the Chinese newspaper market, where ‘evening papers’ attract larger audiences than the ‘morning papers’ (also known as ‘organ papers’).⁶⁸ Evening papers generally publish more soft news (news about sports, scandals, and celebrities). This move to non-political content may also be witnessed in the field of online media. Chinese webportals feature a lot of soft news on their front page, besides the official news from *Xinhua* they’re required to publish. Even CCP mouthpiece website *People.com.cn* tried to attract readers by reporting in February and March 2008 the sex photo scandal of Hong Kong based singer and movie star Edison Chen (*Chen Guanxi* 陈冠希).⁶⁹ The pressure to attract readers induced a lack of substantial difference between different media outlets. In the case of Chinese media this becomes even more visible as policies already constrain what can be published, and economic pressure puts even more constraints on content. When surfing Chinese web sites or searching for Chinese articles, many users will realise that the same articles are posted on different websites. These articles do not only originate from *Xinhua*, but are also copied from other websites to cover ‘hot topics’ and generate more hits for one’s own web service.⁷⁰

The third filter is called ‘sourcing of mass media news’. According to Chomsky and Herman, the media tend to publish official news given out by presumably trustworthy sources, like government officials and business corporations because news companies need material to publish, and publishing pre-processed material will decrease costs.⁷¹ Chomsky criticises that the U.S. Airforce and the Pentagon produce magazines and information brochures themselves and that U.S. chamber and thousands of state and local chambers of commerce engage in lobbying activities and public-relations.⁷² According to him the danger is that

“[...] the large bureaucracies of the powerful *subsidize* the mass media, and gain special access by their contribution to reducing the media’s costs of acquiring the raw materials of, and producing, news. The large entities that provide this subsidy become ‘routine’ news sources and have privileged access to the gates. Non-routine sources must struggle for access [...]”⁷³

The Chinese system already displays these factors, as there is only one official source to get news for non-government companies, *Xinhua*.⁷⁴ Because there is only one official news source, companies don’t have to engage in news scouting. Privileged access to news sources can also be

67 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, “China’s Online Mobs: The New Red Guard?”. P. 53.

68 McCormick, Barret L. and Liu, Qing, “Globalization and the Chinese media”. P. 151-152.

69 高原, 《MaggieQ 首度回应“艳照门” : 与陈冠希完全无关》 .
<http://hm.people.com.cn/GB/83174/7034214.html> (accessed 6.6.2008)

70 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, “China’s Online Mobs: The New Red Guard?”, in *Far Eastern Economic Review October 2006*. P. 53-57. P. 54.

71 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 18-19.

72 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 20-21.

73 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 22.

74 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, “China’s Online Mobs: The New Red Guard?”. P. 55.

seen in the Chinese system, as government-owned companies have rather good relationships with governmental news sources, while private media companies, and especially foreign news companies, have to struggle to get licenses for the Chinese market.⁷⁵ Investigating news in China is difficult; companies have to obtain licenses, and foreign companies also have to employ Chinese personnel to do the job. Reporters are often hindered, especially when conducting interviews. Therefore relying on *Xinhua* saves a lot of trouble. Reporting critically about governmental sources may even lead to broadcasting and business licenses being revoked. The third filter is valid in the context of Chinese media, even though it works different from the U.S. system. The Chinese state may use tougher punishments to silence the media, while the U.S. system largely relies on binding the media via subsidies.

The fourth filter, ‘flak as means of disciplining the media’, is defined as:

“‘Flak’ refers to negative responses to a media statement or programs. It may take the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches and bills before Congress, and other modes of complaint, threat, and punitive action.”⁷⁶

‘Flak’ in the Chinese context may take rather severe forms, even as harsh as imprisonment. Withdrawal of media licenses may effectively end the business of whole companies, but individuals can also be exposed to ‘flak’. Many dissidents, like Shi Tao, have been imprisoned during the last years for publishing dissident opinions on the internet. 52 individuals (among them journalists and writers) were known to be imprisoned in 2006 for online activities.⁷⁷

The fifth filter, ‘anticommunism’, can not be directly applied to the PRC. ‘Anticommunism’ in the USA of the 1980s is described as a ‘political-control mechanism’, even as a kind of ‘religion’, which is used to foster support for the government and its views.⁷⁸ A similar kind of ‘national religion’ can be found in China. After Mao’s death in 1976, communist ideology lost lots of its attractiveness. Attempts have been made to reactivate (Neo-)Confucianism values, and to establish a more civilised and harmonious society, but so far the CCP has only succeeded in positioning itself as a nationalist precursor.⁷⁹ Therefore nationalism may be seen as a kind of new state religion. Nationalist feelings are no longer suppressed, they’re even stirred up to a certain degree, to give the people a way of ‘letting off steam’.⁸⁰ Discussion forums on nationalist topics, like the *Strengthening the Na-*

75 Wu, Yuwen, *Panel 6: How does China deal with foreign and peripheral news media?* <http://www.beijing2008conference.com/articles.php?id=134> (accessed 28.4.2008)

76 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 26.

77 OpenNet Initiative (Editor), *China (including Hong Kong)*. <http://opennet.net/research/profiles/china>

78 Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent*. P. 29.

79 Giese, Karsten, “Freier Diskurs oder perfekter Überwachungsstaat? Identity Work im chinesischen Internet”, in *China aktuell 1/2005*. P. 35-51. P. 35.

80 Fang, Weigui, *Das Internet und China: Digital sein, digitales Sein im Reich der Mitte*. P. 139.

tion Forum (*Qiangguo luntan* 强国论坛), are less likely to be shut down.⁸¹ The role of nationalism in China's online culture will be shown in chapter three.

As has been shown, all five filters may be transferred to today's PRC. The Chinese media market faces pressure from both sides: governmental and private. The market has been liberalised and private actors have mushroomed, but even though competition between different types of media outlets exists, the Chinese media still are heavily regulated. Over-regulation can be seen in the sheer amount of institutions who claim rights to watch over internet companies and their regulatory body. Besides the *General Administration of Press and Publication* (GAPP, *Zhonghuarenmingongheguo xinwen chuban zongshu* 中华人民共和国新闻出版总署) and the *State Administration of Radio, Film and Television* (SARFT, *Guojia guangbo dianyingshi zongju* 国家广播电影电视总局), which also watches the traditional media, about 14 different agencies claim the right to regulate companies doing online business, among them the *Ministry of Information Industry* and the *Ministry of Public Security* (*Zhonghuarenmingongheguo gong'anbu* 中华人民共和国公安部).⁸² Also most foreign-invested companies and a large part of their Chinese counterparts, are forbidden from engaging in the generation of editorial content; editorial staff must be employed by wholly Chinese-owned companies, making it more easy for the Chinese government to control its activities.⁸³ Demands of investors also have to be met, making it more difficult to find topics that may be published.

2.2.4 Media Associations

Another way to delegate responsibility for censoring the internet is the formation of media associations. An example is given by the *Beijing Association of Online Media* (BAOM, *Beijing wangluo meiti xiehui* 北京网络媒体协会), which was founded in 2004 and has prominent members like the big internet portals *Yahoo! China* (*Zhongguo Yahu* 中国雅虎) and *Sina*, as well as ISP *Sohu* (*Souhu* 搜狐).⁸⁴ According to an article by David Bandurski, BAOM, which was founded as a trade association in the first place, plays an active role in censoring content through a 200-strong team of internet monitors, targeting pornographic and violent as well as politically sensitive content.⁸⁵ Chinese journalist and blogger Zhao Jing 赵京 sees in this kind of de-centralised control an evolution of the orthodox internet censorship scheme of the CCP.⁸⁶ While the *Great Firewall* already blocks large parts of unwanted content, a lot of news can still bypass the block or be accessed by circumventing the firewall. The control exercised by associations like BAOM, may serve as a

81 Wacker, Gudrun, "The Internet and censorship in China". P. 70.

82 Scharping, Thomas, "Administration, Censorship and Control in the Chinese media". P. 101-103.

83 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, "Can China Co-opt the Web?", P. 9.

84 北京网络媒体协会 (编), 《理事名单》. <http://baom.sina.com.cn/2/2005/0514/27.html> (accessed 22.5.2008)

85 Bandurski, David, "Pulling the Strings of China's Internet". in *Far Eastern Economic Review December 2007*. P. 18-21. P. 18.

86 Bandurski, David, "Pulling the Strings of China's Internet". P. 19.

second line of control. Searching blogs, BBS entries, message boards, and privately set up websites for unwanted and sensitive content, can effectively avoid that messages with ‘unhealthy’ content spread among users. By holding the ISPs and ICPs accountable for censorship the Chinese government distributes the financial pressure to different entities, making censorship more cost-efficient and presumably more effective because of the greater technical knowledge of private companies. The Chinese blogger Hong Bo states:

“The issue now is that the amount of information available on the Web is growing, so that it can’t be controlled relying solely on government supervision.”⁸⁷

This distribution of responsibility perfectly corresponds with the model of Panopticism. The higher the number of temporary and anonymous observers, the greater the risk of being watched, the greater the anxious awareness people have of being observed.⁸⁸ Of course companies do not reveal information on how many internet monitors are employed to watch forums and BBS-sites, but Chinese netizens will sense that some content they posted is regarded as inappropriate when it is deleted from a BBS or forum by an administrator. They will therefore ‘learn by doing’ how they should behave online. The popular social network *Myspace* (*Juyou* 聚友) applies content filters that return the message ‘Sorry, the article you want to publish may contain inappropriate content. Please alter the inappropriate content, and publish it once more. Thank you.’⁸⁹, when entering key words like ‘Dalai Lama’ or ‘Taiwan Independence’.⁹⁰ People who want to set up blogs whose names contain words like ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ on the Chinese version of *MSN Spaces* will see a message telling them that ‘the title must not contain prohibited language, such as profanity. Please type a different title’⁹¹. Users will learn to alter the content they want to post.⁹² Even though large parts of these responses are generated automatically users will get the idea that they are under constant surveillance, which eventually will lead them to alter their behaviour, so that they will not get into conflict with the system again. Self-discipline is regarded as inseparable from laws and regulations, leaving it to the content provider and user to regulate their behaviour, or otherwise face sanctions.⁹³

It is not known to what extent media associations are intertwined with the government. Insider information suggests that there is a very high degree of co-operation between the Beijing govern-

87 Bandurski, David, “Pulling the Strings of China’s Internet”. P. 20.

88 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. P. 202.

89 很抱歉，您将要发布的文章可能包含不适当的内容。请删除该不当内容，然后再发布。谢谢。

90 Teyxt (Editor), *MySpace now available in China - minus politics and religion*.

<http://teyxt.com/China+MySpace+censorship+politics+religion+064+monitor> (accessed 30.5.2008)

91 标题不能包含禁止的语言，例如亵渎的语言。请键入一个不同的标题。

92 MacKinnon, Rebecca, *Screenshots of Censorship*. <http://www.globalvoicesonline.org/?p=238> (accessed 30.5.2008)

93 Giese, Karsten and Müller, Constanze, “Ethisch-moralische Grenzen öffentlicher Kommunikation - vernachlässigte Dimension im Diskurs um Internetzensur in China”, in *China aktuell* 4/2007. P. 74-95. P. 90.

ment and the BAOM, making BAOM nothing more than a ‘mere functionary’ of the Beijing government, with internet ‘monitorers’ on the government’s payroll.⁹⁴ The same can be assumed for other media co-operations. Because China’s Ministry of Information Industry has the right to issue and withdraw licenses for companies which offer online information services, membership in media associations is seen as more or less mandatory for holders of ICP licenses.⁹⁵ Censorship, presented as voluntary act of ‘corporate civic virtue’, is regarded as coercive by critics, because no media company wants to be singled out as laggard and take a chance to lose its license.⁹⁶ Media associations and alliances first were only set up in Beijing in 2004, where many Chinese internet companies have their principal office, but Shenzhen followed the example of BAOM and initiated the *Shenzhen Association of Online Media* (*Shenzhen wangluo meiti xiehui* 深圳网络媒体协会), in 2006.⁹⁷ One of the well-known members of this alliance is *Tencent* (*Tengxun* 腾讯), a company running China’s most popular instant messaging service ‘QQ’.⁹⁸ Instant messaging through QQ also has become subject to monitoring, making it difficult to exchange dissident opinions.

Proposals issued by BAOM indicate that the focus of this trade association is shifting towards self-policing to clean up the web. The association and its members want to target content which contradicts ‘social morality and Chinese traditional virtues’, as well as eradicate ‘pornographic and violent’ content, which is in line with president Hu Jintao’s 胡锦涛 campaign for a civilised web which was started in 2006.⁹⁹ As is often the case, the fight against pornography was put forward, while other content was only vaguely labelled as ‘unhealthy’ or against ‘traditional virtues’. As mentioned in paragraph 2.2.1, the vague wording of laws and regulations is not a flaw of the Chinese censorship regime but a strength, because ICPs and ISPs will try to stay on the safe side, by censoring more content than maybe necessary, than to take a chance by not censoring enough. Besides media alliances, schools and universities have also initiated ‘voluntary’ control over content posted on their websites and forums. Control is exercised by teams of students whose task is to guide internet users in their behaviour and delete undesired content.¹⁰⁰ The *Internet Society of China* (ISC, *Zhongguo hulianwang xiehui* 中国互联网协会) drafted a ‘Public Pledge of Self-Regulation and Professional Ethics for China Internet Industry’. It states that it wants to ‘establish a self-regulating mechanism for China’s Internet Industry’, by ‘monitor[ing] the information publicized

94 Bandurski, David, “Pulling the Strings of China’s Internet”. P. 19.

95 Bandurski, David, “Pulling the Strings of China’s Internet”. P. 19.

96 French, Howard W., *As Chinese Students Go Online, Little Sister Is Watching*. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/09/world/asia/09internet.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin (accessed 26.6.08)

97 China CSR (Editor), *Shenzhen Online Media Form Self-Discipline Alliance*. <http://www.chinacsr.com/2006/07/20/614-shenzhen-online-media-form-self-discipline-alliance/> (accessed 24.5.2008)

98 Tencent, Inc. (Editor), *Tencent-About Tencent*. http://www.tencent.com/about/about_e.shtml (accessed 24.5.2008)

99 Bandurski, David, “Pulling the Strings of China’s Internet”. P. 18 and 20.

100 French, Howard W., *As Chinese Students Go Online, Little Sister Is Watching*.

by users on websites according to law and remove the harmful information promptly’, ‘encouraging people to use the Internet in an ethical way [...] and reject the spread of harmful information’.¹⁰¹ The pledge has been signed by different members of the ISC, including newspapers like the *People’s Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报), and educational institutions like *Peking University* (*Beijing daxue* 北京大学), but also by foreign-sino co-operations, like *Yahoo! China*.¹⁰² When defining which content should be removed from the web, the pledge refers to Chinese law, as well as to Chinese customs and ethics, which are not defined in detail, indicating a wide range of topics which could be censored and removed.

As can be seen, the responsibility for censorship has been spread to a wide base of entities: private, semi-private and state-owned agencies, which is perfectly in line with the panoptical model. A higher number of observers means a higher risk of being caught for the observed, making them even more cautious not to break the existing rules and laws.¹⁰³ Even though there are now more entities censoring and examining content, this does not mean that the Chinese government has lost control over what can be written online, and what may not be posted, because the concept of Panopticism may also be applied to agencies that already exert surveillance:

”In this central tower, the director may spy on all the employees that he has under his orders: [...] he will be able to judge them continuously, alter their behaviour, impose upon them the methods he thinks best“¹⁰⁴

The Chinese central government and its ministries can be seen as the supervising director, whereas media associations like the BAOM, media companies, ISPs and ICPs that operate websites and online services, can be regarded as the employees, who watch the masses, but at the same time are also being watched and regulated. Because the CCP still has party cells in many companies and production units (*danwei* 单位), it still has many possibilities to exercise control over the agencies that carry out censorship and content control, although it can be argued that most Chinese see membership in the CCP only as a way to rise up in society.

Last but not least, distribution of censorship to media companies may not only help to generate a more complex and effective system of censorship, but may also eliminate one of the technical bottlenecks of the *Great Firewall*: controlling content through proxy servers, the most sophisticated way of controlling content, as mentioned above, considerably slows down internet traffic. But when

101 Internet Society of China (Editor), *Public Pledge of Self-Regulation and Professional Ethics for China Internet Industry*. <http://www.isc.org.cn/20020417/ca278881.htm> (accessed 29.5.2008)

102 Internet Society of China (Editor), *Member*. http://www.isc.org.cn/isc_e/member.php (accessed 29.5.2008) and Human Rights Watch (Editor), *“Race to the Bottom”: Corporate Complicity in Chinese Internet Censorship: II. How Censorship Works in China: A Brief Overview*. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2006/china0806/3.htm> (accessed 22.5.2008)

103 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. P. 202.

104 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. P. 204.

in-depth analysis and censorship of content is passed over to the content provider site there are no more slow-downs. Local web control schemes by media associations are thought to be a ‘fourth tier’ of internet censorship, besides user self-censorship, corporate complicity and governmental legal and propaganda controls.¹⁰⁵

105 Bandurski, David, “Pulling the Strings of China’s Internet”. P. 21.

3. The Chinese Internet User

This chapter will discuss if Chinese internet users are aware of internet censorship, how they react to it, and what possible countermeasures they might take.

3.1 Survey in Chongqing and Beijing

This part of the thesis is based on a survey I conducted from March to April 2008, as well as on a survey by the Chinese Network Information Center. My survey was conducted in internet cafés (so called *wangba* 网吧) in Chongqing, in the Shapingba 沙坪坝 university district, and in Beijing on the campus of the *Peking University*.¹⁰⁶ Besides, I randomly interviewed mostly young people. The respondents to this survey were limited to 100 people. Some surveys could not be used, because they were accidentally filled out by Korean and Japanese students (12 surveys were of no use). The average age of participants in this survey was 23 years. Most participants had a good educational background. But as most Chinese internet users today still have an educational background that is above average,¹⁰⁷ findings from this survey can be applied to the bigger group of young Chinese internet users, and most findings may also be backed up by data of other surveys.

Besides general questions about age, educational background, gender, favoured computer operating system and internet browser, how often and where people go online, particular questions were posed to determine online behaviour and attitude towards internet censorship. Questions about their online behaviour involved their favourite activities and websites, as well as what kind of news mainly were they interested in when going online. Specific questions regarded search engine usage, their satisfaction with search results, and problems that occurred when performing internet searches. Questions were posed in a rather broad way in order not to alienate respondents and not to alarm authorities. For example, participants were asked if problems occurred when using search engines, and not if problems occurred when searching for politically sensitive terms like ‘democracy’ or ‘Tiananmen’. Only questions 16) to 17.3) were more or less directly focused on the respondent’s attitude towards censorship and privacy policy.

Not only outcomes of the survey are important. Reactions of participants and internet café owners not presented in the survey are not less important, because they allow to draw conclusions about awareness of censorship and the possible attitude towards this phenomenon. Most internet café owners’ had no objection against this survey, but they told me not to bother users who obviously had no time or no interest to participate. Three internet café owners said they did not want me to conduct this survey, and one owner first agreed, but after I had handed out the papers, told me to leave as soon as everyone had returned the survey. All owners or supervisory staff wanted to know

106 The survey (in English and Chinese) has been attached to the appendix (see pages 40 and 41).

107 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 18.

why I was conducting the survey, but surprisingly nobody asked if I had a permit to do so. Reluctant *wangba* owners aside, the biggest problem when carrying out the survey were the internet café users themselves. Many users were busy playing online games, and simply could not be asked to take part in the survey. Another part of the internet users refused to take part in the survey, because they ‘had no time’. In my opinion fear of governmental reprisals was not the driving force behind their refusal; rather most users did not want to waste the money they had paid to use the internet café. Thus responses from certain user groups, mainly heavy gamers, cannot be found in the survey, which should be kept in mind.

3.2 Awareness of Internet Censorship

When talking about censorship of the internet in China, it should be once more made clear that most Westerners and most Chinese have a different view on this topic. Western criticism on Chinese internet control mainly focuses on the censorship of politically sensible topics and the constraints put on free speech, but most Chinese associate internet control with the ban of pornographic and other ‘unhealthy’ content.¹⁰⁸ A survey, conducted by a team of the *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences* (CASS, *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan* 中国社会科学院) in 2007, found out that 85% of respondents thought that the internet should be controlled by the Chinese government, while putting emphasis on the control of pornographic (87%) and violent (86%) content, as well as the control of spam mail (83%), advertisements (66%) and slander against individuals (64%). Only 41% said that political content should be controlled.¹⁰⁹ My own research findings are consistent with the CASS survey, as most respondents agreed that content should be controlled (84 out of 100 agreed). 81 responded to the question which content should be controlled: only 6 people said that political content should be controlled, 6 people thought that websites, that spread viruses should be forbidden, but 33 respondents said that violent content should be controlled, and even 54 respondents said that pornographic content should be controlled.¹¹⁰ 19 people did not answer this question. Responses reflect how the official discussion in China mainly centres on ‘online poisons’, like pornography,¹¹¹ therefore creating support for a more restrictive censorship regime. This is further proof of the idea of a Panopticon at work. What is worrying is, that the prison inmates, the Chinese netizens, have internalised behaviour patterns, and react how the state expects them to.¹¹² When I talked to some young Chinese about Edison Chen’s sex photo scandal they all expressed that they wanted to see the photos. When I asked them why they had not yet downloaded them, all of them answered that it would

108 Fallows, Deborah, *Most Chinese Say They Approve of Government Internet Control*. http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_China_Internet_2008.pdf (accessed 17.5.2008)

109 Fallows, Deborah, *Most Chinese Say They Approve of Government Internet Control*.

110 Respondents could give multiple answers to this question.

111 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 66.

112 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. P. 201.

be of no use to search for the photos because the government would already have shut down all websites and BBS offering them. But a quick search revealed that there were many foreign as well as Chinese websites still offering the photos. This shows once more, that internet users have adapted to censorship by internalising. Because it is always put forward that pornographic content is forbidden, and certainly lots of websites featuring ‘unhealthy’ content have been shut down, users naturally assume that certain images or articles will automatically be removed by the government censors, whereas in reality lots of forbidden content may be accessed without any problem. When searching for pictures of boats on the Yangtze River (*Changjiang* 长江), I stumbled upon pictures of half-naked and naked women, which also could be considered pornographic. Upon further research I discovered, that when entering terms like ‘body art’ (*renti yishu* 人体艺术), *Baidu* yielded many results leading to websites like *www.muwen.com* (*Muwen caijing* 牧文财经). This site offers a large archive of more or less artistic pictures featuring female nudity.¹¹³ I was rather surprised that this kind of website could be freely accessed from a normal internet connection in China, but I was even more surprised to find out that some Chinese friends whom I asked if there were many webpages like *Muwen*, said they never had expected that there would be websites like this in China. When I asked them if they had tried to search for this kind of content before, they replied they had n’t, repeating the argument that they expected this kind of content would be blocked by the Chinese government. This shows that repetition of slogans against ‘online poisons’ have deeply dug into the minds of the youth, making it unnecessary for the government to implement a perfect system of content control.

As has been shown, netizens are certainly aware that certain topics cannot be touched, and that specific content, like pornographic and violent content, is filtered by the Chinese government. But it is arguable if Chinese internet users know about all aspects of internet censorship. The two examples I have given above show that many users assume that internet content control is more potent than it is in reality, which equals a self-confinement of the user. As some sites are only blocked temporarily, some sites become unreachable due to bottlenecks in international traffic, and some sites are unreachable because of blocks the user is confused about which sites he may access and which not.¹¹⁴ The user cannot distinguish between sites that have been blocked by the government and sites which have become unavailable because of traffic problems, because there is no specific feedback for blocked websites.¹¹⁵ This is also why DNS tampering is not used more often: redirects to other pages would tell the user that websites are actively blocked. Temporary lifts of blocks and their reinstatement also discourage netizens from visiting these sites, because they cannot be re-

113 See appendix (page 42).

114 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 66.

115 Fallows, James, “*The Connection Has Been Reset*”. <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200803/chinese-firewall>

garded as reliable sources. Some critical sites may even be unblocked, like the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*. Because of their frequent inaccessibility they could not develop a solid user base, and in the meantime Chinese alternatives, like *Baidu Baike* (百度百科), became available. In this context it should also be mentioned how the Chinese use search engines, and how search engines work in China. Because the internet is composed by billions of webpages search engines are indispensable tools to find one's way through this giant data jungle. 72.4% of all Chinese netizens use search engines, while for 7.4% of netizens search engines are the 'first leg of journey' into the internet, in other words the first website they will visit when accessing the internet will be a search engine.¹¹⁶ China's government knows this, and has prompted search engine manufacturers like *Baidu* and *Google* to censor the results displayed by their search engines. What impact this might have on the reception of censorship among Chinese is showed by web statistics. Both sites rank among the top five sites in China.¹¹⁷ My survey also shows that most Chinese use *Baidu* (77 users), followed by *Google* (37 users). Both engines filter politically sensitive results from search results. But there exists one small difference: while *Baidu* never tells that results have been filtered, *Google* displays a short sentence at the end of the page, telling the user that 'Because of local laws and policies, part of the results couldn't be displayed'¹¹⁸. According to my survey, 84% of users are satisfied with the results of *Baidu* and *Google*, which indicates that most of them are not aware that part of their queries might be filtered and results might not be displayed. It is questionable if Chinese internet users are aware of the dimension of censorship in China, especially in regard to man-power and involvement of non-state actors. They experience control when going online in internet cafés, where they have to show their ID cards, and when they have to register their ID to participate in certain online discussion,¹¹⁹ but most are unaware that there are supposedly some thousand 'volunteers' patrolling BBS and forums, deleting inappropriate content.¹²⁰ Many students of the *Shanghai Normal University* (*Shanghai shifan daxue* 上海师范大学) were surprised to hear that they were monitored by their own classmates when going online on the campus.¹²¹ On the one hand the Chinese government wants the people to know that it will enforce internet content control, but on the other hand it wants to leave users in the dark about man-power and technical means involved, creating an atmosphere where the user is more likely to censor himself.

116 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 43.

117 Alexa Internet, Inc. (Editor), *Top Sites China*. http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_sites?cc=CN&ts_mode=country&lang=none

118 据当地法律法规和政策，部分搜索结果未予显示。(See also appendix (page 43))

119 Scharping, Thomas, "Administration, Censorship and Control in the Chinese media". P. 108-109.

120 Bandurski, David, "Pulling the Strings of China's Internet". P. 21.

121 French, Howard W., *As Chinese Students Go Online, Little Sister Is Watching*.

Because most people associate internet content control and censorship with ‘online poisons’ and not the censorship of political opinions and beliefs, it is not surprising that most Chinese support internet content control through the government. Regarding the answers to the question because of whom the internet should be controlled, congruence with statements of PRC officials could be found. 70% of respondents said that the internet should be controlled to protect ‘small children’, ‘adolescents’ and ‘students’, while only 10% were of the opinion that the internet should be censored for everyone. When justifying the use of online control and censorship the CCP always puts its role as protector of the weak and helpless forward, ‘children, women, national minorities, the common people’,¹²² to create bigger support for this kind of policies.

The number of ‘cyber dissidents’ in China can only be estimated. According to *Reporters Without Borders*, about 51 cyber dissidents were imprisoned in 2008.¹²³ Most of these cases are not made public. But sometimes big cases become the focus of China’s state-owned media.

“Police forces and courts only need to become active sporadically if high-profile arrests and sentences can be made to constitute an effective deterrence by demonstrating the risks associated with dissident behaviour.”¹²⁴

This strategy is known in China as ‘Kill the chicken to scare the monkeys’¹²⁵, and fits well into the concept of Panopticism. Making high-profile arrests from time to time, like the case of Huang Qi 黄琦 and his website *www.6-4tianwang.com*,¹²⁶ reminds internet users that observation through authorities is not bogus, and that they have to stick to norms of behaviour.

3.3 Media Consumption and Self-Seduction

As mentioned in the second chapter the Chinese media market has been growing since the 1980s and 90s, and even today the market still keeps growing. Chinese media have become more diversified, and private media companies have entered the Chinese market, offering a broader range of contents. Mouth-piece newspapers and websites are facing the competition with private sites and are behaving in increasingly market-orientated ways. This of course changes the way in which the Chinese consume media products, and their attitude towards the official and the private media. In the context of this paper it is of interest what kind of content Chinese internet users consume and how the consumption of certain media and content might lead to a kind of self-seduction, similar to self-censorship.

122 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, “Can China Co-opt the Web?”, P. 8.

123 Reporters Without Borders (Editor), *China - Annual report 2008*. http://www.rsf.org/print.php?id_article=25650 (accessed 17.6.2008)

124 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 68.

125 杀鸡给猴看。 Make an example out of someone (by punishing them) to frighten others.

126 Huang Qi’s established a website for relatives of missing persons, which he received official praise for. But when his website commemorated the events that occurred in Tiananmen Square on 3-4 June 1989, his website was shut down and he was arrested. (See Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 65.)

According to the CNNIC January 2008 survey, about 73.6% of Chinese internet users have watched online news, and about 1/5 of users first look up news when going online. Checking online news ranks third after online music and instant messaging.¹²⁷ The survey I conducted shows similar findings, with online news ranking in the first place (75 users), followed by chatting with friends (74 users) and downloading music (65 users). It is also worth mentioning that 41 users said they actively write blogs, and 36 users said they also like to play online games. These statements can be backed up by official data, which states that 59.3% of netizens play online games and 23.5% of users regularly update their personal blog.¹²⁸

Next I examined the consumption of online news, and which sources are the most trusted by Chinese internet users. According to my survey most internet users are interested in national (65 users) and international news (65 users), and are also interested in entertainment news (61 users). Less netizens show interest in local news (43 users) and sports (40 users). Political news scored lowest with only 30 users showing interest. A study on media malaise suggest that not the medium but the content of transported by a medium may have effects on political mobilisation,¹²⁹ therefore observing what Chinese internet users consume may be helpful to understand possible alienating effects. CNNIC information suggests that that the belief in online news among Chinese internet users is quite low, with only 51.3% believing in online news,¹³⁰ other statistics from CASS even suggest that only 30% of online news is regarded as trustworthy.¹³¹ The same survey states that users ‘overwhelmingly’ trust information on government websites, more than any other kind of information.

“Three-quarters of respondents deemed reliable most or all the information on government websites, compared with 46% for pages from established media, 28% for results from search engines, 11% for content on bulletin boards and in advertisements, 4% for information from individuals’ web pages, and 3% for postings in chat rooms.”¹³²

These statements contradict my own findings and experience in China to a certain degree. When talking to Chinese friends and students about websites they normally visit to inform themselves, most of them said they would never look at pages of official party media (this may be reflected in the relatively low trust of 46% in ‘established media’), but they also said they would never consult official government websites for information. Most of them turn to privately-owned websites like *Sina.com*, or news sites from Hong Kong, which they think can report more freely. The majority of respondents in my survey also stated that they used privately-owned websites like *Sin-*

127 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 50-51.

128 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 52.

129 Newton, Kenneth, “Mass Media Effects: Mobilization or Media Malaise?”, in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Oct. 1999). P. 577-599. P. 594.

130 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 51.

131 Fallows, Deborah, *Most Chinese Say They Approve of Government Internet Control*.

132 Fallows, Deborah, *Most Chinese Say They Approve of Government Internet Control*.

a.com (27%) and *Google.cn* (23%) as their web portals,¹³³ while no one stated he would use a state-owned website. This shows a large distrust in official news, which contradicts findings of the official survey by CASS. One reason explaining this difference, may be that respondents did not answer according to their true feelings out of fear of reprisals. Anyhow statistics show that privately-owned websites are the ones that attract most users.¹³⁴ Reasons driving people to these websites are manifold, but the two main reasons are that users distrust established official media, and that the content provided by these sites is richer and more diversified than the content provided by traditional news outlets. As Joseph Man Chan puts it:

“They [the non-Party press] owe their appeal to their emphasis on social issues and the provision of useful daily information and entertainment.”¹³⁵

But as has been already discussed above, the newspaper and online market still is heavily regulated, with content being generated by privately-owned companies still having to be approved by the state. So content on privately-owned websites does not differ by a large degree from content on state-owned websites. News on both kinds of sites are still mainly taken over from *Xinhua*, so that the assumption from users they might get less censored news when visiting sites like *Sina.com*, might be misleading. Interpersonal communication has also gained importance, with about 81.4% of users using instant messaging services like QQ and MSN,¹³⁶ and blogging being a widespread phenomenon especially among young Chinese internet users.¹³⁷ Many netizens regard blogs and chats as a guarantor for unfiltered and authentic stories and news. Anne Stevenson-Yang talks about an ‘online mob dynamic in which a blog can fuel a sudden social fire’.¹³⁸ Users swarm to the hottest BBS, blog, chat room or website to talk about the newest topics, largely avoiding official sources. The Beijing 2005 protests in against the publishing of a Japanese textbook that airbrushed Japanese atrocities in World War II was largely driven by an enraged online community and websites copying and spreading the news about this book.¹³⁹ This way of communication may of course be misused by government officials as well as by advertisement companies which pay people who post favourable to the leadership.¹⁴⁰ Some of these rallies may even have been stirred up by the Chinese government, to give the people a way to let off some steam, because first the government let people express their feelings, but after some time all of these rallies were cut off from official site. Most ral-

133 Webportals are sites which users first visit when going online.

134 Alexa Internet, Inc. (Editor), *Top Sites China*.

135 Chan, Joseph Man, “Administrative boundaries and media marketization”. P. 164.

136 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 42.

137 CNNIC China Internet Network Information Center (Editor), *CNNIC Released “2007 Research Report of China Youth Internet Behaviours”*. <http://www.cnnic.cn/html/Dir/2008/04/29/5127.htm> (accessed 22.5.2008)

138 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, “China’s Online Mobs: The New Red Guard?”. P. 57.

139 Stevenson-Yang, Anne, “China’s Online Mobs: The New Red Guard?”. P. 56-57.

140 Bandurski, David, “Pulling the Strings of China’s Internet”. P. 21.

lies that are not immediately ended by the government have a nationalistic undertone, with paroles in favour of the government.

It should be kept in mind, that blogs and interpersonal communication may lead to activities like rallying against the Japanese text book, or boycotting the *Carrefour* supermarket chain, but that most young Chinese internet users are mostly interested in non-political topics, like ‘entertainment, sports, to be star fans, foods and tourism’.¹⁴¹ Top-ranking blogs on *blogs.sina.com.cn* (*Xinlang boke* 新浪博客) are mostly written by stars or are generally of personal nature.¹⁴² This shows the mechanism of self-seduction at work. Many Chinese internet users tend to be more interested in soft news, like rumours about stars, instead of politics and social problems. According to statistics 59.3% of Chinese netizens play online games, with the rate being considerably higher among people with low income, low education level and young age.¹⁴³ Self-seduction in the Chinese context also amounts to being a mechanism of self-protection, leading the internet user away from possibly dangerous topics, similar to the mechanism of self-censorship used among big internet service and content providers. Not engaging in politically sensitive discussions and not posting critical content is reinforced by the perception that one might be under surveillance, no matter if he goes online within his own four walls or in an internet café. This mechanism is also reinforced by the choice of content offered by internet content providers, that is noticeably tabloidised.

3.4 Countermeasures

Which countermeasures are used by Chinese internet users who are aware that they are being watched and who want to get access to restricted information? There is a wide range of strategies available to the Chinese internet user on how to circumvent blocks, and how to surf the internet anonymously.

3.4.1 Proxy Servers

The simplest and most convenient way of getting access to restricted information is by using so-called proxy servers.¹⁴⁴ There are lots of ways to redirect traffic to international proxies, either via telling the browsing software to re-route its traffic through a specific IP-address, or by surfing to proxy web pages that provide a detour to non-accepted sites.¹⁴⁵ Many Chinese internet users know

141 CNNIC (Editor), *CNNIC Released “2007 Research Report of China Youth Internet Behaviours”*

142 SINA Corporation (Editor), 《新浪博客总流量排行》. <http://blog.sina.com.cn/lm/top/rank/> (accessed 24.6.2008)

143 CNNIC (Editor), *Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China (January 2008)*. P. 52-54.

144 A proxy server is a server (a computer system or an application program) which forwards requests from clients to other servers. Proxy servers that are placed outside of China, may connect to otherwise blocked servers and deliver content to users within the *Great Firewall*.

145 Woesler, Martin, “Internet censorship focus: ‘Human Rights not found’ in the Chinese web”, in Zhang, Junhua and Woesler, Martin (Editors), *China’s Digital Dream: The Impact of the Internet on Chinese Society*. Bochum: The University Press Bochum 2002. P. 237-267. P. 257.

what proxy servers are,¹⁴⁶ 30% of Chinese internet users reported to have used proxies before, and 10% do so on a regular basis.¹⁴⁷ Lists of proxy servers are said to circulate among internet users, and to be forwarded via e-mail.¹⁴⁸

Although proxy servers are rather easy to use, even for users without a very high level of technical knowledge, it is questionable if they are really widely used among Chinese netizens. Although many users claimed to know what a proxy is, only few acknowledged that they had used one before.¹⁴⁹ Different factors might prevent users from accessing restricted information through proxies. Because addresses of proxy servers can be blocked, just like any other webservice, users have constantly stay up-to-date, to get the newest addresses of unblocked proxies. Most proxies also work rather slowly, so that connections take very long to establish, or even time out before they are established.¹⁵⁰ Commercial actors have been discouraged to operate proxy servers in the climate following the 9/11 attacks,¹⁵¹ therefore non-profit projects have to stand in, lacking fiscal power to provide higher bandwidth services. While the problems mentioned above are of technical nature, the concept of Panopticism comes also into play when looking at issues that may prevent Chinese users from accessing restricted content through proxies. It is said that Chinese agencies set up fake proxies to gather data about internet users who show dissident behaviour, and even circulated lists with fake proxy servers.¹⁵² It is questionable if the Chinese government really engages in baiting internet users to use fake proxies, or if spreading such rumour is done on purpose to dissuade users from circumventing internet blocks. According to Lokman Tsui, rumours about fake proxies (so called 'honey pots') result in paranoia, which causes users to suspect proxy servers to be booby-trapped:

“Whether these fake proxy servers ‘really’ exist hardly matters anymore, reminding one of the characteristics of the Panopticon, where it is equally immaterial whether the guard is truly watching or not.”¹⁵³

3.4.2 Encryption Technology and Virtual Private Networks

More sophisticated means to circumvent blocks and online censorship are also available in China. Encryption is a way to protect data (for example e-mails) from being spied on by third parties. Computer programs, like the e-mail encryption software *Pretty Good Privacy*,¹⁵⁴ and its free

146 According to the survey I conducted 57% of respondents know what a proxy server is.

147 McCormick, Barret L. and Liu, Qing, “Globalization and the Chinese media”. P. 145.

148 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 71.

149 According to the survey I conducted 57% know what a proxy server is, but only 36% have used one before.

150 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom“. P. 74.

151 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 71-72.

152 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 71.

153 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom“. P. 74.

154 Zimmermann, Philip, *Phil Zimmermann's Homepage*.

<http://www.philzimmermann.com/EN/background/index.html> (accessed 13.6.2008)

implementations, are readily available for download. China tried to gain control over encryption mechanisms by passing new regulations in 1999, but because of the strong opposition from western companies like Microsoft the ‘measure [was] considerably watered down’.¹⁵⁵

Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)¹⁵⁶ provide a way to get unlimited access to information. Most VPNs encrypt the data transfer between the server providing the data and the user requesting the data, therefore making it impossible for censors to see which websites are requested. VPNs are a necessity for most banks and companies doing business in China, making it unlikely that the Chinese government will crack down on them.¹⁵⁷ Different from proxies, VPNs are almost never free of charge, which makes this service uninteresting or even unaffordable for most Chinese netizens.

Beside cost factors, why is encryption technology not used more often among Chinese internet users? According to my survey only 45 users thought that going online anonymously was important, while 53 did not regard anonymity as important. Only 17 users did know means to go online anonymously, 29 users said they do not know any means, and the rest did not answer this question. The main reason that encryption technology is not employed, may be that people using encryption technology represent a minority. Users might suspect that sending encrypted e-mails or accessing websites through encrypted channels may attract the attention of the government in an environment where encrypted connections are not standard.¹⁵⁸ Because the user only can suspect that the controlling agencies may look for encrypted connections and e-mails, the mechanism of self-censorship once more comes into play. Rather than taking the risk of being exposed, and investigated upon, most users will stay away from these technical means of privacy protection.

“Once again, visibility of the subject normalizes behaviour.”¹⁵⁹

One reason, often overlooked in the academic discussion, might also be that most Chinese just do not consider their e-mails and other data worthy of strong protection. Someone who took part in my survey said he does not need to protect his privacy, because he does not do any bad things. Encrypting e-mails is also extensive, as all contacts have to get keys to decrypt the messages, therefore making communication more complex and less intuitive. Even in the west, where more people have access to the internet, encryption software is not widely used when privately surfing the web.

155 Wacker, Gudrun, “The Internet and censorship in China”. P. 71.

156 VPNs work similar to proxy servers, but being more secure, often having advanced security features, like content encryption and authentication mechanisms.

157 Fallows, James, “*The Connection Has Been Reset*”. <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200803/chinese-firewall>

158 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom“. P. 75.

and Clayton, Richard, *Ignoring the Great Firewall of China*. www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~rnc1/ignoring.pdf

159 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom“. P. 75.

3.4.3 Peer-to-Peer Software

The newest method to circumvent censorship are so-called peer-to-peer (P2P) networks.¹⁶⁰ There are different projects, like *Freenet*, *Peekabooby*, *Triangle Boy* and *Tor*, which work in similar ways. *Peekabooby*, *Tor* and *Triangle Boy* rely on proxy servers, while *Freenet* enables ‘anonymous sharing’ of documents. The main advantage of P2P networks is that

“In principle, every node can function as a ‘server,’ and each and every one would have to be blocked in order to block the whole service, making it hard to uphold censorship.”¹⁶¹

One of the flaws of P2P networks is that software has to be spread through traditional channels like websites and e-mail, meaning that if websites or mails are blocked, the software cannot be spread among the users. When probing some websites in February and March 2008, I successfully visited the Chinese homepage of the *Tor Project*,¹⁶² which surprisingly was not blocked. The homepage even features directions in simplified Chinese on how to install and activate *Tor*. Why can this website be still accessed? It has been reported that the Chinese government routinely blocks e-mails requesting peers for *Triangle Boy*, and even blocked *Triangle Boy* nodes, but other software seems to stay under the radar.¹⁶³ Software with a small user base, like *Freenet* and *Tor*, might not be regarded as a threat by the government. As Karsten Giese pointed out, dissident behaviour and opinions are tolerated as long as they are isolated and not discussed in public.¹⁶⁴ Because network speeds largely depend on volunteers who dedicate their bandwidth to these projects requesting websites and documents through these networks is extremely slow, even slower than accessing through proxy servers, therefore making them worthless for everyday usage.

Predominance of certain software may also have to do with the low level of proxy and P2P usage. The survey I conducted, shows that most Chinese internet users use the standard combination of *Microsoft Windows* and *Internet Explorer*, and only a small minority use alternative browsers and operating systems, making it unlikely that they use software like *Tor*, which interacts better with alternative browsers like *Mozilla Firefox*. According to the survey only 25% of internet users use alternative browsers, like *Firefox* and *Opera*, while the vast majority uses a combination of *Windows* with the standard browser *Internet Explorer*.

160 A peer-to-peer network is a decentralised network, where every each node is a peer, as opposed to a centralised client-server network.

161 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom“. P. 75.

162 Tor Project, Inc., The (Editor), *Tor: 匿名在线*. <http://www.torproject.org/index.html.zh-cn> (accessed 15.3.2008)

163 Tsui, Lokman, „The Panopticon as the Antithesis of a Space of Freedom“. P. 75.

164 Giese, Karsten, “Freier Diskurs oder perfekter Überwachungsstaat? Identity Work im chinesischen Internet”. P. 48.

3.4.4 Language as Countermeasure

Besides technical means to circumvent censorship mechanisms, Chinese internet users also have developed linguistic strategies to evade censorship. They use homonyms to prevent online filters from finding critical texts or split critical discussions among several non related headlines, so that readers themselves have to piece together parts of the puzzle.¹⁶⁵ Users also use numbers which transport certain meanings, often derived from local dialects, so that it can be hard to understand for non-initiated people what the users are talking about.¹⁶⁶ Alphabetic characters are also used to shorten certain expressions, making the language used by Chinese internet users more complicated to control and censor.¹⁶⁷ Using a kind of coded language has long been a tradition in China, and may circumvent automatic censorship, but still can be censored by human controllers, and leaves the door wide open to arbitrariness by the state.¹⁶⁸ Another principle commonly used in political sensitive discussions is “Pointing at the bald head to curse the monk”¹⁶⁹, meaning that authors will criticise certain aspects of a topic that may have nothing to do with the issue he really wants to address, leaving it up to the reader to reconstruct the issues he really wants to address.¹⁷⁰ These strategies show that the Chinese have internalised particular behaviour patterns to evade conflict with the state. But, as a study conducted by Karsten Giese suggests, panoptical behaviour cannot be concluded for the whole of China’s netizens. Older panellists are to self-censor themselves more often, while younger internet users choose a more direct way of communication, no matter what they talk about.

165 Giese, Karsten, “Freier Diskurs oder perfekter Überwachungsstaat? Identity Work im chinesischen Internet”. P. 47.

166 Fang, Weigui, *Das Internet und China: Digital sein, digitales Sein im Reich der Mitte*. P. 108.

167 Fang, Weigui, *Das Internet und China: Digital sein, digitales Sein im Reich der Mitte*. P. 105-106.

168 Giese, Karsten, “Freier Diskurs oder perfekter Überwachungsstaat? Identity Work im chinesischen Internet”. P. 47.

169 指着秃子骂和尚。

170 Giese, Karsten, “Freier Diskurs oder perfekter Überwachungsstaat? Identity Work im chinesischen Internet”. P. 47.

4. Conclusion

This thesis has observed the status quo of China's internet censorship. Its underlying assumption was that the technical implementation of censorship may not be as perfect as it is assumed in the West, and that the CCP may instead rely on 'discipline-mechanisms' as Panopticism.

Chapter two has proven how the *Great Firewall of China* is not as complex and impenetrable as it is sometimes assumed, that it relies on rather simple principles, and can be circumvented easily. But chapter two and three have also shown that these technical imperfections may not hamper the effectiveness of censorship. Rather than trying to control every bit of information, China's government has changed the approach from censorship to more self-censorship. First of all censorship is delegated to other entities, like private enterprises, as well as state-owned companies and educational institutions, leaving them with the duties to 'clean' the web according to vaguely drafted laws, regulations and informal notifications. Because of the vague wording of most regulations companies and institutions have to impose a strict self-censorship. Most of them will censor more content than may be necessary to evade conflict with the state. Media associations are useful tools for the Chinese state to group internet companies and force them to impose so called self-regulations. It has also been shown that besides pressure from officials and the government most media companies also face pressure from advertisement companies and stockholders, which increasingly determine what content may be shown and what content has to be regarded as inappropriate. This process has been made possible through the marketization of Chinese media, initiated in the 1980s and 90s. Self-censorship and pressure from the site of private companies has confined what Chinese media may report on today, so there is no need for a direct implementation of internet censorship by the Chinese state.

As has been shown in chapter three Chinese internet users are also more likely to censor themselves. Because users are not sure on whether they are being monitored or not, many choose to restrict themselves not to get into trouble with the government. Some topics are evaded consciously, like discussion about taboo topics like Taiwan and Tiananmen, but other topics are evaded more or less subconsciously. Because netizens think the government is capable of deleting any content not compliant with norms and customs, many give up the search for possibly forbidden content, even though it still can be found without any problem. Insecurity is what makes self-censorship most effective. Like companies, users only vaguely know about what topics are taboo and therefore choose to restrict themselves.

Countermeasures against censorship are also known among Chinese citizens, but they are not generally used. The fear of becoming subject of investigation induces users to avoid using well-known methods to circumvent blocks. Many internet users are also not interested in politics, but are

more concerned with news about stars and other kind of soft news, distracting themselves from problematic news and discussions, that could possibly get them into trouble with the authorities.

The thesis has proven how internet censorship takes place through a panoptical mechanism, and how this mechanism is still valid. It may be argued that self-censorship is as imperfect as the *Great Firewall*, because there will always be people who cannot be controlled this way,¹⁷¹ but in my opinion this does not prove that the concept of Panopticism cannot be applied to internet censorship in the PRC. Dissident opinions are tolerated to a certain degree, because as long as only small groups or individuals break free from the censorship the rule of the CCP will not be threatened. As long as the masses are kept under control by collective self-censorship and self-seduction a technically perfect control of content is not necessary.

It is difficult to make any assumptions on the coming development of internet censorship in the PRC, but in my opinion this strategy will not change in the short run. Interviews have shown that young internet users have internalised the slogans of the Party, therefore an outcry for more freedom of speech and less content control is unlikely to be heard in the near future.

171 Giese, Karsten, "Freier Diskurs oder perfekter Überwachungsstaat? Identity Work im chinesischen Internet". P. 47.

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Appendix

因特网用户调查

- 1) 年龄: _____ 1.2) 性别: 男 女
- 2) 文化程度: 小学 中学 高中 大专 大学
- 3) 你用什么电脑系统? Windows Linux OS X 另外: _____
- 4) 你用什么浏览器? Internet Explorer Firefox Opera 另外: _____
- 5) 你使用因特网的频率: 每个月一次 每个星期一次 每天一次 每天多次 另外: _____
- 6) 你经常在哪儿上网? 在网吧 在家里 在大学 在朋友家 上班时 另外: _____
- 7) 你上网一般做什么? (多项选择) 看新闻 玩游戏 下载音乐 跟朋友聊天 打广告
(BBS) 写博克 贴上录象 贴上照片 另外: _____
- 7.2) 如果你看新闻, 你看什么样的新闻? (多项选择) 本地新闻 国内新闻 国际新闻 政治新闻
 体育新闻 娱乐新闻
- 7.3) 如果你贴上录象或照片, 请写下来你常用的网页: _____
- 8) 你使用什么门户网站? _____
- 9) 你用什么通讯软件? (多项选择) Skype MSN QQ ICQ 另外: _____
- 10) 你用什么电子邮件? _____
- 11) 你常用什么搜索引擎? _____
- 11.2) 你对搜索引擎的结果满意吗? 满意 不满意
- 11.3) 你用搜索引擎时碰到过困难吗? 有 没有
- 11.4) 如果碰到下列困难的话, 请打勾: 超时问题 404错误 连接很慢 没有相关搜索结果
- 12) 如果一个网页打不开, 你用什么方式打开? _____
- 13) 你认为为什么有的网站打不开? (比如 wikipedia.org, bbc.co.uk) _____

- 14) 你知道什么是“IP地址”吗? 知道 不知道
- 15) 你知道什么是“代理服务器 (Proxy-Server)”吗? 知道 不知道
- 15.2) 你用过代理服务器? 用过 没用过
- 16) 你认为匿名上网重要吗? 重要 不重要
- 16.2) 重要的话, 你知道什么手段匿名上网? _____
- 17) 你认为违法和不良信息应该屏蔽吗? 屏蔽 不屏蔽
- 17.2) 如果应该屏蔽, 应该禁止哪些内容? _____
- 17.3) 应该为谁屏蔽那些内容? _____

Internet user survey

- 1) Age: _____ 1.2) Sex: Male Female
- 2) Educational background: Primary school Secondary Education College University
- 3) Which operating system do you use? Windows Linux OS X other: _____
- 4) Which browser do you use? Internet Explorer Firefox Opera other: _____
- 5) How often do you use the internet? once a month once a week once per day more than once a day
 other: _____
- 6) Where do you go online? Internet café at home university friend's home at work other:

- 7) What do you do on the internet? (multiple answers possible) check news play games download
music chat with friends post on BBS write blog post videos post pictures other:

- 7.2) If you check for news, what kind of news are you interested in? (multiple answers possible) local news
 national news international news politics sports entertainment
- 7.3) If you post pictures or videos, what website do you use? _____
- 8) Which webportal do you use? _____
- 9) Which communication software do you use? (multiple answers possible) Skype MSN QQ ICQ
other: _____
- 10) Which e-mail provider do you use? _____
- 11) What search engine do you use? _____
- 11.2) Are you satisfied with search results? satisfied not satisfied
- 11.3) Have you encountered problems while searching on the web? Yes No
- 11.4) If yes, please mark problems you encountered: Timeout Error 404 Slow connection No results
- 12) If a website will not open, by which means can it be opened? _____
- 13) Why do you think some websites cannot be accessed? (e.g. wikipedia.org, bbc.co.uk) _____
- 14) Do you know what an 'IP-address' is? Yes No
- 15) Do you know what a 'Proxy-Server' is? Yes No
- 15.2) Have you used Proxy-Servers? Yes No
- 16) Do you think it is important to surf anonymously? Yes No
- 16.2) If yes, what means do you know to retain anonymity? _____
- 17) Do you think illegal and unhealthy content should be banned? Yes No
- 17.2) If yes, what should be forbidden? _____
- 17.3) Because of whom should this content be banned? _____

[搜索](#)[高级搜索](#)

请输入搜索关键词

用户
密码

[登陆论坛](#)[注册](#)[找回密码](#)

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- 广东美女可可广州首场062
- 广东美女可可广州首场062
- 淡雅小楠(图)
- 新疆美人如碧(图)
- 扬扬钢管舞娘2(图)
- 扬扬钢管舞娘1(图)
- 新疆哈萨克姑娘Ruby如碧2
- 新疆哈萨克姑娘Ruby如碧1
- 扬扬健美女郎2(图)
- 扬扬健美女郎1(图)

热门浏览TOP10

- 日本的人体艺术(图)
- 北大校花全露(图)
- 爽图(图)
- 俄罗斯的人体艺术02(图)
- 韩国人体艺术-雅俗女人(性感玲玲(图)
- 新拍人体(图)
- 丹丹, 专业人体模特(图)
- 室内人体拍摄 (VICKY 专
- 小雯-国内很有名的一个人

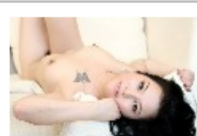
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淡雅小楠



新疆美人如
碧



扬扬钢管舞
娘2



扬扬钢管舞
娘1



新疆哈萨克姑娘
Ruby如碧2



新疆哈萨克姑娘
Ruby如碧1



扬扬健美女
郎2



扬扬健美女
郎1



美丽的小雪2



美丽的小雪1



扬扬赤裸女特
工2



扬扬赤裸女特
工1



新疆姑娘_如
碧2



新疆姑娘_如
碧

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[中央调查“天安门事件”死亡人数 TOM文化](#)

“天安门事件”平反前, 社会上流传这次事件死了很多人, 血流成河。... 4月5日, 政治局会议把发生在天安门广场的革命群众运动定性为“反革命事件”, 决定当晚8点合围天安门 ...

cul.tom.com/1066/1075/200526-8673.html - 29k - [类似网页](#)

[天安门事件](#)

天安门事件, 亦称四五运动, 是1976年4月5日发生的以天安门事件为代表的反对“四人帮”的全国性的群众强大抗议运动。1976年1月8日, 周恩来逝世, 全国各族人民无限悲痛。 ...

www.china.com.cn/chinese/zhuanti/208150.htm - 10k - [类似网页](#)

[“天安门事件”后的邓小平 网易新闻中心](#)

2007年4月2日 ... 听完毛远新长达一个多小时的汇报后, 身体已经极度衰弱的毛泽东, 做了以下指示: “开除邓的一切职务, 保留党籍, 以观后效。”“华国锋任总理”, 提议华国锋 ...

history.163.com/07/0402/08/3B2E72L300011246.html - 48k - [类似网页](#)

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天安门事件,重温历史, 珍惜现在美好生活! ... 相关专辑. 该播主的其他专辑. 信息加载中... 更多>>. 信息加载中... 北京周总理文化大革命. 天安门事件 ...

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89年天安门事件_2. ... 【独家拍摄】胶济撞车事件肇事火车车头内部实拍!!! 来源: cn.“老舅”拍自家狗调戏外甥女, 还上网炫耀!! 垃圾 ...

www.17k8.cn/view/745252.html - 26k - [类似网页](#)

[1978年“北京市委为天安门事件平反”真相历史回顾 中国国际战略研究网](#)

这条新闻稿的标题, 主要是“中共北京市委宣布天安门事件完全是革命行动”。在“四人帮”被粉碎后, 许多同志为争取天安门事件平反作出了很大努力。从1976年10月起, 到1978年 ...

history.chinaiss.org/content/2008-3-27/27232142.shtml - 29k - [类似网页](#)

[“四五天天安门事件回顾”-那天, 我在天安门 华商网](#)

2008年6月16日 ... 新闻,新闻中心,陕西,陕西新闻,包含有时政新闻,国内新闻,国际新闻,社会新闻,时事评论,新闻图片,新闻专题,新闻论坛,军事,财经,的专业时事报道门户网站.

news.hsw.cn/2008-06/16/content_10072914.htm - 94k - [类似网页](#)

[吴德: 天安门事件发生经过](#)

粉碎“四人帮”后, 一些报刊上说在天安门事件中天安门广场“血流成河”等等。当时吴忠曾在一次中央工作会议上发言, 说天安门广场没有死一个人, 结果吴忠的发言在会场上引起 ...

www.wyxsx.com/Article/Class14/200704/17723.html - 24k - [类似网页](#)

[吴德: 十年风雨事1976年天安门事件真相\(2\)](#)

2007年12月4日 ... 粉碎“四人帮”后, 我对在天安门事件中所犯的镇压群众的错误作了多次检讨。我还检查说: “我在天安门广场事件的广播讲话中, 诬蔑了邓小平同志。 ...

www.heb.chinanews.com.cn/news/shmw/2007-12-04/36372.shtml - 61k - [类似网页](#)

据当地法律法规和政策, 部分搜索结果未予显示。