

China - The Censor State

Why is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- China Quarterly, a reputed journal on China studies was recently ordered to block hundreds of its articles in China.

\n

- The order faced severe criticism & was eventually withdrawn.

\n

\n\n

What is the reason?

\n\n

\n

- While it is common that scholars remove 'sensitive' information from their work published in Chinese in China, academic work published in other languages isn't subjected to severe censorships.

\n

- In an unprecedented move, "China Quarterly" (CQ) - a reputed academic journal for China studies, published by the "Cambridge University Press" (CUP) in English was asked to remove many of its articles in China.

\n

- The censorship was sought with retrospective effect going back to the first issue in 1960.

\n

- The intension was to remove all content that wasn't compliant with the government's version..

\n

- Most of the articles to be removed were on Tibet, the Cultural Revolution, Tiananmen Square protests, Taiwan independence, Falun Gong, Xinjiang, Democracy and human rights.

\n

\n\n

What impact did this move have?

\n\n

\n

- China's invasive censorship to academic content in English was perceived as an alarming sign.

\n

- This kind of censorship would effectively prevent Chinese scholars from participating in China related academic conversation abroad.

\n

- This predictably saw the academic community reacting swiftly with stinging criticism of the Chinese government for the ban & the CUP was for its failure to stand up for academic freedom.

\n

- This backlash worked and within three days and the CQ reinstated the banned content in China.

\n

\n\n

How has surveillance sustained for so long?

\n\n

\n

- The Chinese surveillance has evolved greatly from the initial years of communism to the current online regime.

\n

- **The Markets** - It has successfully bent global companies and its own citizens to cooperate with it.

\n

- The latest casualty is the "virtual private networks" (VPNs) used by Chinese and foreigners on the mainland to access banned content.

\n

- **Academia** - While the Chinese universities and research institutes have always functioned under tight political boundaries, the government periodically tightens things further.

\n

- This aids in turning universities into uncritical factories churning out loyal foot soldiers of the state.

\n

- While surveillance network has been robust, it remains an Achilles heel requiring constant political interventions.

\n

\n\n

What are the emerging challenges?

\n\n

\n

- To better its surveillance, China has been advocating changes in the rules of Internet's functionality globally.

\n

- It has proposed the concept of '**Internet sovereignty**' to territorialise cyberspace, giving national governments greater control over online content.

\n

- This is philosophically opposed to the very vision of the Internet as global space for building communities without borders.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

