

THE GREAT FIREWALL POLICY OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT: A FORM OF LIMIT AND RESISTANCE TO COSMOPOLITANISM

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the *policy, the Great Firewall* (GFW), which is considered to limit the freedom of Chinese society, against the background of the Chinese government restricting its citizens from interacting and obtaining information from abroad. The purpose of this study is to analyze how the Great Firewall policy is used by the Chinese government as both a tool to limit the flow of global information and a form of resistance to cosmopolitan values. The research method uses a qualitative descriptive approach, drawing on secondary data and qualitative analysis related to the GFW policy, which is a form of limit *and resistance*. This research is also limited to document analysis and secondary literature, so it does not involve the direct perspective of internet users in China. Restricted access to government-released official data means some interpretations based on open sources may be incomplete. This research presents a novel perspective on the Chinese government's policy, namely The Great Firewall, as a form of resistance to the universality of global values or a form of *Limit & Resistance of Cosmopolitanism*. The authenticity of this research is based on earlier research that used similar case studies but differed in the main topics discussed.

Keywords: Chinese Government, The Great Firewall, Cosmopolitanism, Limit & Resistance, China's Information Policy

INTRODUCTION

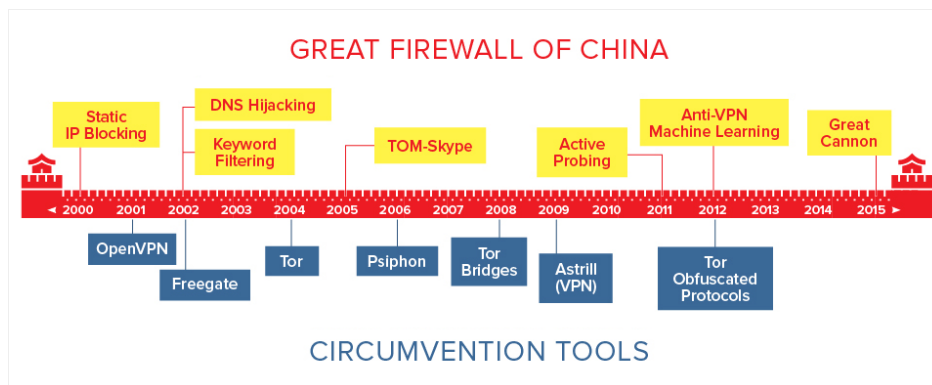
Globalization can be described as a process that creates interdependent relationships among countries, thereby triggering the emergence of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism as current global issues. The interdependence and easy access created by globalization facilitate the development and spread of cosmopolitanism across countries. Cohen (1999) has provided several examples of cosmopolitanism, as there is currently no precise, comprehensive description of it. The development of technology and information also benefits human civilization (Cohen, 1999).

People have easy access to information that connects the world, making it a necessity. The internet cannot be fully controlled; both developing and developed countries recognize that it has spread and has both positive and negative impacts on each country. This is what the Chinese government has used as a reference for creating internet-related regulations, as China itself is a communist country. To maintain its ideology, the Chinese government has implemented a regulation called "The Great Firewall of China" (GFW), which can be used to regulate internet access for Chinese people (Mueller, 2011).

In the late 1990s, the number of internet users in China grew rapidly. Although Chinese leaders recognized the potential value the internet could offer by expanding access to global markets and technology, they were reluctant to jeopardize their authority and control (Damm, 2007). To gain greater control over the internet, in 1998, China's Ministry of Public Security launched the Golden Shield Project to control the flow of information. This project sought to monitor and control citizens' internet activity and prevent access to websites that did not comply with the Chinese government's strict policies (Harwit & Clark, 2001). The result of this project was a virtual border known as *the Great Firewall*.

China's vast reach and intensive censorship are evident in the number of internet users, which will reach 1.12 billion by 2025, representing 79.7% of the population. This figure is up from 1.092 billion in 2023. According to the report, *the Great Fire monitored* 184,332 domains/sites, and 23,218 were blocked from China. This number indicates that many domains/sites continue to plunder the internet for Chinese citizens, especially those seeking free internet access (Xu, Y., 2016). In this regard, the government divides capacity between national and regional governments, which play a crucial role in restricting and blocking internet access in China. China's regional governments have successfully blocked 5 to 6 times as many domains/sites as the national government's GFW, according to a survey. Through statistics

Blocked domains from censorship monitoring organizations show that hundreds of thousands to millions of domains are captured by national and regional GFWs. This demonstrates that censorship is not limited to a few large sites but is rather extensive and dynamic. Due to the presence of regional GFWs, censorship coverage will become more complex, and blocking can be implemented in different ways across different regions within China. Although many sites are blocked, and internet penetration is very high, indicating that the majority of the population in China uses the internet and is subject to systematic censorship (Xu, Y., 2016).



Picture 1. The Evolution of the Great Firewall and Opposing Circumvention Tools

Sumber : thousandeyes.com (<https://www.thousandeyes.com/blog/the-war-between-chinas-great-firewall-and-circumvention-tools>)

Virtual Private Network (VPN) services and Secure *Shell* (SSH) are powerful tools for bypassing censorship, functioning similarly to proxy servers. However, both SSH and VPN rely on privately owned or externally hosted accounts to create a private, encrypted tunnel that is inaccessible to GFW. This tunnel connects each user to an internet server outside China, causing

browsing and download requests to be sent to a foreign server, which then detects and responds (Xu, Y., 2016). In late 2012, GFW also began using another mechanism to block VPNs. This involves identifying encrypted VPN connections and terminating them. GFW likely uses machine learning algorithms to analyze internet traffic and identify unique VPN features. Due to the high number of connections to IP addresses outside of China, the pursuit of these VPN connections will continue until 2025, given China's extensive system and censorship reach (Xu, Y., 2016).

GFW is a censorship system in China that allows the Chinese government to virtually regulate the flow of international traffic through various access controls. The Chinese government owns the server. This allows the Chinese government to monitor and control information from outside China. GFW will block social media, VPNs, foreign websites, some online news, and other indicators if the Chinese government deems the information inappropriate or defamatory of the Communist Party or the Chinese government (Liu, 2019). In a narrow sense, GFW is a screening, blocking, and filtering technology implemented at the international gateway for internet service provision in China.

The GFW was designed by Binxing Fang, president and professor at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (Li, 2022). The GFW is often interpreted as the Golden Shield Project, a public security information technology project aimed at building a nationwide computer application and communications system for the police. Most filtering devices are concentrated on border routers. Still, a small number are internal autonomous systems, leading observers to suspect that the GFW can also filter and monitor domestic traffic. The GFW has made China one of the most sophisticated and stringent internet control systems in the world.

Since 2012, Xi Jinping has been the General Secretary of the CCP and continued as president in 2013. GFW has been tightened, as evidenced by the restrictions and regulations governing online content (PEN America, 2018). The Chinese government considers it necessary to encourage internet surveillance to monitor illegal behavior with stricter online censorship, so that the Chinese government itself has created a communication crisis that produces negative sentiment from the Chinese people. Internet censorship itself has significant social implications that are expected to shape public space. Community discussion, opinions, and emotional expressions are one type of online collective action (King et al., 2013).

The Chinese government has become more active in shaping global cyber governance. Generally, the Global Cyber Warfare (GFW) is designed to control the flow of technology and information within the country and prevent the entry of ideas or ideologies from the outside world. After examining the GFW, one of the Chinese government's policies to monitor the flow of internet access and information entering China, the author is interested in learning more about the GFW, which has become a barrier between Chinese society and the outside world. Therefore, this research is essential for observing the development of the GFW policy established by the Chinese government, which prevents Chinese society from reaching the global stage, making the GFW itself a form of *limit & resistance* to cosmopolitanism.

Based on the description of the problem background above, the author is interested in studying **“Why is the Great Firewall a limit & resistance of cosmopolitanism?”** In this study, the author also has objectives that cover several points, namely analyzing how China's digital censorship policy represents a deliberate form of resistance to global cosmopolitan norms and transnational digital integration and analyzing how the Great Firewall policy is used as a tool by the Chinese government to limit the flow of worldwide information and as a form of resistance to the values of cosmopolitanism.

As for the *thesis Statement* proposed by the author, namely, *The Great Fire Wall* Restricting the freedom of Chinese people to interact with the global community, and GFW is also a form of resistance by the Chinese government against Cosmopolitanism because it rejects outside culture and information from outside China from entering China, which could damage the ideology that has been built up to now. *Through the Thesis Statement* Above, it can be seen that this problem has become so serious that the author explicitly discusses GFW: the Chinese government has restricted its people and refused to allow foreign cultures to enter China, or what is also called Cosmopolitanism.

However, because the author examines Chinese government policies, the research is limited by the context of a specific country. China's socio-political context heavily influences the findings, so their application to other countries requires caution. This research is also limited to document analysis and secondary literature, thus not involving the direct perspectives of internet users in China. Restricted access to official government data means that some interpretations are based on open sources that may be incomplete.

Although this study has limitations, it also presents new insights into Chinese government policy, *namely the Great Firewall*, which is viewed from a new perspective as a form of resistance to the universality of global values or as a form of *Limit & Resistance of Cosmopolitanism*. Another novelty is the GFW's emphasis on not only maintaining political stability and controlling information within China but also preventing the spread of global values synonymous with cosmopolitanism, such as freedom of information, cultural openness, and participation in the international public sphere. While previous studies have mainly discussed the effectiveness of the GFW for the government, this study highlights how these restrictions reshape Chinese society's relationship with the outside world, particularly in terms of access to global information, participation in global culture, and engagement in international conversations. This approach also offers novelty in its social and cultural aspects, not just in technical politics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several previous studies were needed to gather information and data regarding the GFW policy established by the Chinese government. This data was used to analyze the research problem formulation in this study. Therefore, the author attempted to draw on several related studies and data from previous research to support the research. Several sub-themes are as follows:

The Great Firewall of China

Before delving further into the policy, the author conducted a literature review of various studies on the GFW. Several previous researchers, including Wowor (2021), have discussed how China uses GFW to secure its country against global threats, *cyber threats*, and political threats. Policies used to protect political interests also have the side effect of protecting other aspects of *cybersecurity*, which creates problems for China with companies in the ICT sector. Strengthening Wowor's (2021) view, in his research results, Yusrizal (2014) has a similar opinion, according to Yusrizal (2014), the Chinese government has made strict censorship of one of the ICT companies, namely Google, which must go through a screening process by the Chinese government which caused problems with Google to make the company leave China in 2010. For the Chinese government, this conflict has a positive impact on local ICT companies such as Baidu.

In contrast to Durrani's (2022) view, which sees GFW through the lens of Utilitarianism, despite security arguments, the lack of balance and oversight, and government censorship that indirectly restricts Chinese society's engagement in politics, affect political minorities. The implications of social The political implications of any harsh practices by the Chinese government could hinder long-term social development, prosperity, and security in Chinese society. Agreeing with Duranni's (2022) opinion which stated the limitations of Chinese society due to the GFW policy, Yahya and Mutia (2023) also saw the same thing in the GFW policy but in the Xi Jinping government in 2014-2021, that the GFW policy in the Xi Jinping era which was implemented to maintain China's sovereignty and build China into a world cyber power.

Substantially does not comply with the norms and values of freedom to access information and have freedom of expression on the internet as stated in the International Convention on Political and Civil Matters, which has been signed and agreed to by China. As Aurellia (2024) stated effectively, GFW limits freedom of expression and access to information in China, a form of government-imposed censorship. Not only does it control domestic information, but it also influences the international community's perception of China. The GFW policy and its implications create complex international political dynamics, in which each country must navigate interactions with China amid its strong censorship policies.

Limit and Resistance of Cosmopolitanism

Kleingeld (2011) views cosmopolitanism as a form of individual ideals, freedom, and anti-authoritarianism. The interconnectedness of these identities is inextricably linked to their scope and the elements contained within them. It can be argued that these identities emerge as a form of resistance to cosmopolitanism. This suggests that both society and its government are not yet ready to become a cosmopolitan society living alongside the world's citizens. For a country, cosmopolitanism has been widely criticized for being too abstract and disregarding national loyalty. Kleingeld (2011) criticized cosmopolitanism for failing to reject special bonds. Cosmopolitanism is widely considered to abolish the nation-state and to establish a utopian, dangerous world government. One country that rejects cosmopolitanism is China *through the Great Firewall*.

Within Kleingeld's (2011) framework, GFW often rejects or limits moral, cultural, and political cosmopolitanism. Humans have universal rights to access information, freedom of expression, and interaction across national borders. GFW's policies themselves limit cross-border moral and cultural relations and reject the principle of openness to cosmopolitanism. Kleingeld (2011) regarding the forms of cosmopolitanism, namely moral cosmopolitanism, that all humans are members of a single moral community and have ethical obligations to all other humans, second is legal cosmopolitanism which regulates the interaction of states with individuals from foreign countries as long as valid interstate agreements do not regulate the laws of such interactions, third is cultural cosmopolitanism, which is the view that humans express themselves in various forms.

Furthermore, romantic cosmopolitanism is a form of individual idealism, freedom, and anti-authoritarianism. The interconnectedness of these identities is inextricably linked to the scope of these identities, the elements contained within the cosmopolitan identity. It can be argued that this identity emerged as a form of resistance to cosmopolitanism. This suggests that both society and its government are not yet ready to become a cosmopolitan society living alongside the world's citizens.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, drawing on secondary data and qualitative analysis, to explain the phenomenon of GFW policy problems, which have become a limit & resistance to cosmopolitanism. The qualitative analysis approach in this analysis emphasizes the interactions between processes involving interrelated critical variables (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Data collection in this study was conducted through library research and various literature, which is the primary method for obtaining data and information from documents such as written materials, images, photographs, and other electronic sources that support the research (Sugiyono, 2005). After the data collection stage, the author conducted a systematic analysis of the obtained data.

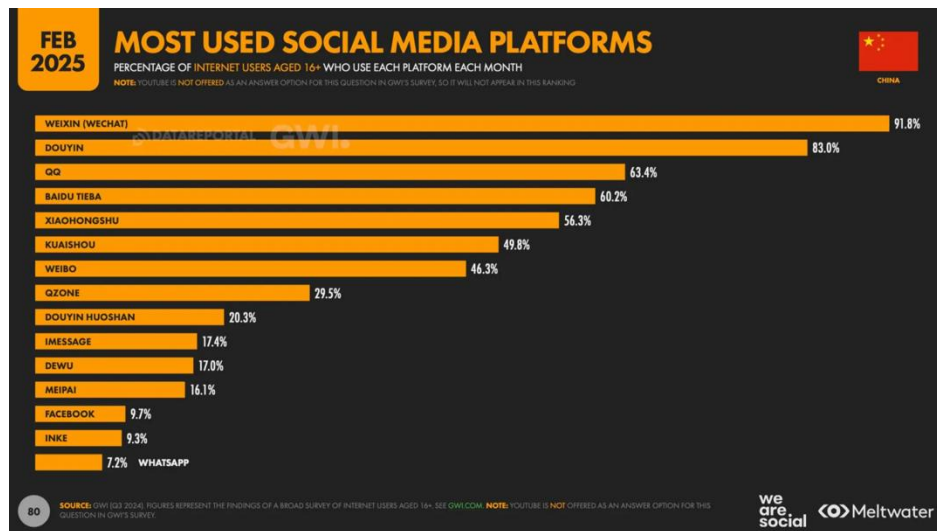
The analysis aims to organize data in a structured, accurate manner according to the research topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 1990). After conducting data analysis, the author processed the data using data reduction techniques. Using data reduction, the data were summarized and focused on the important and relevant aspects of the study, then presented in an organized, systematic narrative form so that the reader easily understands them. The final stage of this analysis process is drawing conclusions that yield new findings, in the form of a description or a complete picture of the problem object, which has not previously been studied in depth by other researchers regarding the GFW policy being investigated—*limit & resistance* towards cosmopolitanism (Sugiyono, 2018).

FINDINGS

The Great Firewall of China: The Form of Limit & Resistance to Cosmopolitanism

China's minority policies and GFW are one form of Chinese resistance against cosmopolitanism. GFW is a policy created by the Chinese government in 1999 (Xiao, 2023). By controlling and censoring various internet features, GFW is considered to limit the freedom of Chinese society, meaning the Chinese government limits its people's ability to interact with and access information from abroad. The government has created this policy, because the Chinese government considers that when its citizens are given freedom of speech and exchange of information it can bring damage and destroy the Chinese government regime (Spires, 2011), it is seen that the form of cosmopolitanism limits lies in the Chinese government which maintains its regime and ideology which is contrary to its society who wants to accept cosmopolitanism freely.

To further strengthen GFW, the Chinese government has enacted a law (UU) that requires every citizen who uses the internet in China to register with an internet service provider using a genuine identity card (Yang & Liu, 2014). This law is implemented so that when using the internet, it is not used to spread false or prohibited information or misused. Use The Chinese government, which implements a communist system and ideology, plays a role in shaping social and political security policies. The Chinese government does not want its citizens to have free access to information, particularly through Google (Guo et al., 2021).



Gambar 2. Top Social Media Platforms in China

Sumber : Meltwater.com (<https://www.meltwater.com/en/blog/social-media-statistics-china>)

Using Chinese applications across all government-mandated social media platforms, the percentages in the image above show that almost all Chinese people use social media originating in China. GFW severely restricts global access to social media in China. As Kleingeld (2011) notes, many countries reject or restrict moral, cultural, and political cosmopolitanism. Humans have universal rights to access information, freedom of expression, and interaction across national borders (Zhao, H. 2025).

The most widely used platforms among the public reflect a balance between usability, entertainment, and discovery. The top platform is Weixin (WeChat), used by 91.8% of internet users. The second-highest is Douyin (83%), which serves as the backbone of China's short-video and influencer economy, thanks to its commerce-friendly design and algorithmic management. Chinese citizens spend their free time online (Zhao, H. 2025). GFW is currently considered a form of resistance to cosmopolitanism, as it is overcome by technology. GFW also seeks any evidence that GFW enables citizens to live by cosmopolitan values (Wood, 2022). Technology is a means for people to begin interacting with other communities. Another form of resistance to cosmopolitanism is a minority policy; GFW has restricted Chinese society from interacting with the internet so that they cannot coexist with the internet or external ideologies that try to enter China (Cao, 2015).

This is not reflected through the Chinese government, and it can be said that China is one of the countries that opposes Cosmopolitanism not only in cyberspace but also in the real world. When GFW is analyzed according to Kleingeld (2011) through the definitions of the forms of cosmopolitanism mentioned, GFW can be said to be a form of resistance by the Chinese government against romantic cosmopolitanism, moral cosmopolitanism, cultural cosmopolitanism, and law (Price, 2017). Considering that GFW is also not in accordance with Kleingeld, GFW is also a form of resistance to cosmopolitanism.

GFW is also *considered a limit & resistance* because it becomes a structural barrier inherent in the principle of cosmopolitanism. By restricting the flow of global information, GFW strengthens

ensorship of foreign media, international opinion, and global academics, creating global political narratives, international news, and human rights discourses that the Chinese government disapproves of. GFW's form of resistance to cosmopolitanism involves narrowing the global public sphere due to limited access to international platforms. Chinese citizens thrive in a more homogenous and nationally centric discursive ecosystem.

In addition, GFW also fragmented the internet. This policy created a splinternet, or an internet divided into two parts: global vs. domestic China and cosmopolitan vs. protectionist. This fragmentation can weaken the idea of cosmopolitanism that humans are connected in a shared digital space. GFW also limits transnational identity, making it difficult to form a cosmopolitan identity in China, and perceptions of foreign cultures are shaped by China's ideology. The rejection of the idea of a universal internet is not embraced by China; instead, the Chinese government prioritizes complete control over the internet. This is a form of resistance to cosmopolitanism because it wants a borderless internet. GFW is not only a "wall" but also a political project aimed at restraining cultural globalization and cosmopolitanism.

DISCUSSION

Criticism and Concerns regarding The Great Firewall of China

Many parties have widely discussed criticism of GFW, and many human rights organizations have criticized the Chinese government for its state surveillance. The strict and intrusive nature of GFW (Dogbey, 2023). International critics argue that by implementing incentive censorship on GFW, the Chinese government has restricted its citizens' ability to access information freely and without restriction. The implementation of GFW has been the target of widespread protests and domestic resistance. When China banned Google in 2010 because the company refused to comply with government demands to filter search results, online activists gathered at Google's Beijing offices. They distributed flowers as a symbolic gesture of protest. Although GFW received widespread criticism, many Technology companies that agree to the Chinese government's self-censorship regulations have developed different versions of their technology products (Cao, 2015).

Impact of the Great Firewall of China on Chinese society.

The Great Firewall hurts the lives of the Chinese people. The influence of the Chinese government's political policies on Chinese society makes people feel like criminals who are constantly monitored at all times. Chinese people desperately want to feel freedom from political policies that require them to live within a system run by the Chinese government. Chinese people think that the Chinese government has interfered too much in their internal affairs and lives. Information that is easily accessible to the public through social media is a significant factor in the government's surveillance of its citizens (Chandel et al., 2019).

Chinese citizens are often punished for using foreign websites or social media outside of China. Those who post comments that are not supportive of the Chinese government regime can be imprisoned. China has introduced sophisticated system mechanisms. On May 19, the Public Security Bureau of Ankang, a prefectural city in the northwestern province of Shaanxi, issued an administrative warning and fine of 500 RMB (approximately \$70) to anyone accessing foreign websites through a VPN (Kohn, 2018).

The decision was posted on the bureau's Weibo account, a Chinese microblogging site similar to Twitter that has become a popular platform for Chinese citizens to discuss. It also called on authorities to treat everyone equally and to punish Hu Xijin, the editor-in-chief of *the Global Times*, Chinese foreign ministry spokespersons, and other government officials who also bypassed GFW. The Chinese public was also negatively affected, feeling that ordinary people were not allowed to bypass the GFW, while officials could access the internet freely (Fallows, 2008).

Chinese police also arrest people for accessing foreign websites because they are considered to be accessing foreign websites and only reporting rumors. They also prohibit Chinese people from accessing, reposting, and liking these websites. People will be released if they sign a statement of repentance and do so. In addition, people who violate are considered to disturb social order, and they must stay away from these sites to stay away from America and be loyal to the Chinese government because the Chinese government considers America to be carrying out doctrines when the communist party raised it. The government monitors some community groups because they are deemed dangerous, as they are caught bypassing the GFW (Mueller, 2011). Many posts that criticize the Chinese government on non-Chinese social media will face harsher penalties.

Forms of Protest by Chinese Society Against the Great Firewall

For most of 2021, Chinese people also engaged in similar behavior on Weibo, a Chinese social media platform. The government shut down Weibo, prompting people to switch to Twitter, which was also blocked by the Chinese government (Rauchfleisch & Schäfer, 2015). One of the accounts, "*Teacher Li is Not Your Teacher*," became a key channel for information about the COVID-19 protests in China in 2020 (Tan & Sayankina, 2023). The account was part of one of the most significant breaches of China's internet controls since the 1990s. Public anger had previously been expressed online, but never in widespread physical protests.

Cyber administrators are scrambling to plug loopholes in the GFW (Facebook, or GFW) to prevent a new wave of coronavirus from fueling further digital dissent. One reason for the breach is the sheer volume of public engagement. GFW automatically blocks politically sensitive terms and many foreign websites, including news, social media, and search platforms. China also requires domestic tech companies to deploy an army of censors who filter user-generated content using frequently updated lists of banned words and images (Heggie, 2022).

The sheer volume of information posted showcases a wide range of activities and slogans that have shaped algorithms and human censors. Many Chinese learned about the protests from local messaging apps, where comments and images were often copied or downloaded before censors could delete them and then reposted. Eric Liu, a former Weibo censor, said that China's bureaucracy is so centralized that when a foreign threat emerges, sensitive information can spread widely while censors wait for official orders (T. H. Zhang et al., 2024).

Others in the industry argue that some Chinese tech companies' spending on internal censorship has been constrained by financial difficulties since the crackdown on the sector began in 2020. Chinese authorities have ordered them to beef up their censorship groups and pay closer attention to protests. Chinese citizens have also become more creative, posting political messages on dating sites or in the comments sections of non-controversial content. Official social media posts often leave messages. Chinese citizens also maintain foreign accounts, such as Teacher Li, who collects and amplifies information from China (Chang, 2012).

While Chinese authorities and their representatives have cited this as evidence of foreign forces fomenting the unrest, researchers argue that it is caused by Chinese citizens abroad, particularly those in China, using VPNs to circumvent the GFW (Knockel et al., 2020). The Chinese government allows businesses to use licensed domestic VPNs. Still, many Chinese citizens own the illicit devices, and while the numbers are difficult to quantify, researchers have noted an increase in demand. There are signs Chinese people are joining Twitter via VPN but communicating only via direct messages (Tang, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the GFW, a policy created by the Chinese government that focuses on online security through the control and censorship of various internet features. GFW is considered to limit the freedom of Chinese society, meaning that the Chinese government restricts its citizens' ability to interact with and access information from abroad. The government has created this policy because the Chinese government considers that when its citizens are given freedom of speech and the exchange of information, it can bring damage and destroy the Chinese government regime. It is evident that the form of cosmopolitanism lies in the Chinese government, which maintains its regime and ideology, whereas its society seeks to embrace cosmopolitanism freely.

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