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Internet Censorship

Sedláčková Petra · Informačné technológie

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This paper deals with the internet censorship. It investigates subjects of the Internet censorship and motives which lead to censoring. After that there is mentioned what types of websites are censored by democratic countries and what types are censored by countries which are on the list of "enemies of the Internet". China, North Korea and Iran belong to the most internet censoring – they have their own articles. There is also mentioned the Czech Republic with almost no internet censorship and the USA with new controversial anti-piracy law which is not passed yet.

1. Introduction

The Internet provides important and unimportant information to millions of people all around the world. But if we search for the same information in China and in the Czech Republic, data found may differ, because of censorship. Internet censorship is the control of information on the Internet. In the past, information was also censored. There was and there is censorship of press, radio, books, music, films and many others. Books were burned during Pinochet regime in Chile in 1973, because they included unsuitable information for regime. In some countries, there is censored almost everything, in others just a little, for instance just a racist stuff. On the Internet censorship some government may control publishing of articles that are not suitable for them, or suppress web pages they do not like. A country may increase the Internet censorship due to events like Arab Spring.

Internet censorship is very specific, because it has many distinctions from other media. It is a decentralised medium. It is interactive, so readers can write comments, for instance. There are almost no state borders on the Internet and we can read information from very distant countries. Who should have the right to censor the Internet? What should be censored? In the addition, the legal relationship between censors, website owners, users and internet connection providers is very complicated.

2. Subjects of Internet Censorship

There are three main motives for Internet censorship; politics and power, security and social norms, and morals. Censorship has some advantages. Censorship is a great tool to protect young children from porn websites and videos. On the market, there are software products for parents that can block certain web sites, called web filters. It may adapt search results to the age of children. As the result, parents do not need to

worry about that their child will find porn on the Internet. It is also used in some schools, for instance.

Figure 1. Internet Censorship

Most countries censor stuff against moral and legislative like child pornography and Nazi websites. Some countries censor also gambling sites, gay and lesbian sites, sites promoting drugs and criminality, pornographic sites, sites that contain blasphemous or hate speeches and satire sites. Countries use censorship to websites which could endanger security in their country. South Korea blocks pro-North Korean sites, many countries blocks WikiLeaks, Pakistan blocks Balochi independence movement sites. However, censorship is not only used to block extremists, terrorists or insurgents group sites. Censorship against opposition of ruling government is usual in dictatorial and repressive regimes. They often censor web sites of minority groups or religion groups; summarized, they censor everything which is against or in contradiction to the ruling regimes.

3. Types of Internet Censorship

According to censor's practice, internet censorship can be divided into two types, passive and active. Passive means blocking of content. Active means prosecution of people who spread unsuitable content, for instance arresting them. In Afghanistan was a man convicted to death penalty. It is the only one case known, that somebody died because of spreading unsuitable content, but there may be more similar cases in the world. For example, in China which do not post real number of executed people and it is also a country with a large number of people convicted because of the internet censorship. Active type of internet censorship is also forbidding the Internet (in North Korea), restriction of the Internet and controlling, how people use the Internet.

As a passive censorship of the Internet, blocking, can be used blocking of TLD, blocking of whole servers, blocking of particular websites, blocking of specific services of web applications, filtering of sought-after words and phrases, blocking by particular events, which have to stay censored (for example "Tiananmen square protests in 1989", censored in China), blocking of specific words (for example "democracy").

4. The Most Censoring Countries

Countries that use Internet censorship too much are being listed. In 2011, countries known as enemies of the Internet were: Bruma, China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Countries under surveillance: Australia, Bahrain, Belarus, Egypt, Eritrea, France, Libya, Malaysia, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela [1]. The motives and range of Internet censorship vary in every country.

The Internet is censored because of political reasons in East Asia, Central Asia and North Africa. In France and Germany, there are Holocaust denial and Nazi websites blocked. Many countries block websites including child pornography and hate speeches. On the other hand, according to WikiLeaks, Australia, Finland and Denmark trade on child pornography problem to censor legitimate websites [2].
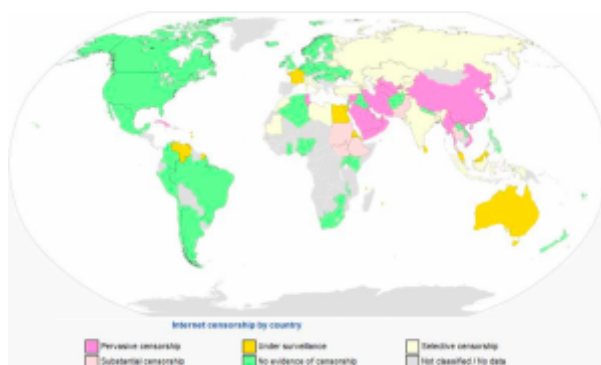

Figure 2. Internet Censorship in the world

5. China

In China, there are many laws and regulations that censor the Internet. The People's Republic of China is one of the most Internet restrictive countries in the world. Chinese government fears that free expression on the Internet may endanger regime, the single-party state. However, the censorship is not applied in Hong Kong and Macau, because in these two areas most of China's laws do not work. The Internet population in China is the second largest in the world, following the United States of America. In contrast to the USA, it has the largest number of people convicted in connection to the Internet censorship.

There are rumours, that People's Republic of China has more than 30,000 members of the Internet police. As the result, they can erase unsuitable comments on websites in a very short time. Government do not just block websites, but it also monitor what individual people do on the Internet, what they search for and who they communicate with. China's Internet censorship is very sophisticated. Websites mentioning change or overthrowing of communist regime in China, democracy, free Tibet, Dalai Lama and many others are censored. Even Google searching results in China are censored, popular program Skype is also censored. China has mascots for the Internet censorship and "the good browsing" purposes, policemen Jing-Jing and Dža-Čcha.

Figure 3. No public access to the Internet

6. North Korea

Democratic People's Republic of Korea is country ruled by communist party. Although, there are prepared several kinds of internet connection in the biggest cities, there is no program for connecting people to the Internet. Just a few people with high posts have access to the Internet. Places with access to the Internet are also in luxurious hotels and in "foreign visitors' zones". Ordinary North Korea people are also forbidden to speak with foreigners, so they cannot get any information. To sum up, North Korea's internet censorship program is that government does not allow ordinary people to have the internet connection.

7. Cuba

The Republic of Cuba is also a communist state. Access to the Internet has less than two percentage of population, so the situation is a little bit better than in North Korea. In Cuba, there are publicly accessible terminals for e-mailing. However, they do not allow browsing the Internet. Private internet is forbidden by law. Just academics and a few people with high posts who have special authorization could have internet access. Ordinary people cannot even buy a computer. Foreigners can access the Internet only in a few very luxurious hotels, but it is censored.

Just some authorized Cuban websites are allowed. Foreign servers are blocked. Cubans find out how to elude laws and they buy passwords on a black market to access the Internet. In the case, that somebody finds out that someone has access to the Internet and he or she reports against him, the person with the Internet is going to be jailed. Punishment is imprisonment for five years. In combination with against revolution activity it may rises to twenty years in a jail.

8. Iran

Another country, which is one of the most internet restrictive countries, is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Besides tough internet censorship, Iran government wants to create own internet, which will be perfectly isolated from outside world. It claims that it is

because of security and cultural content. Iran population will have almost no connection to outside world. The Internet will be perfectly censored. Government plans that 60 percent of Iran households and companies will have the access to the new internet soon. All Iran will be connected in two years.

According to Wall Street Journal, Islamic government wants to protect Iran from protests, which were in many African states in 2011 (Egypt, Libya and many others). Internet helped protesters to organize and to inform outside world about what is happening and about their ideas. Still, cancellation of access to the worldwide internet may endanger economy of Iran. Nowadays, 11 percent of Iran population has access to the ordinary Internet. Iran government uses internet censorship hugely. It modifies content of websites, monitor dissidents, tap and blackmail enemies of government and deletes "outrageous blog posts" [3].

9. The Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, there is any censorship forbidden by law. Only court can forbid access to some information. The first internet censorship case in the Czech Republic was in 2008. Vodafone Czech Republic, a. s. informed, that it is the first operator automatically blocking websites with illegal content. Vodafone also offers service, that block websites which include unsuitable content. Unsuitable content, which Vodafone's service block, is erotica, violence, drugs and alcohol, hazard and guns.

Vodafone allowed customers to block these websites because parents wanted safer internet for their children. This service is optional, customers can use it or not, but automatic blocking websites with illegal content may be considered as illegal in the Czech Republic. Nowadays, Vodafone automatically blocks only child pornography, like other operators in this country. They use a database of British organization – Internet Watch Foundation. Censorship rules are often set in the contract between user and a company [4].

10. The USA – new anti-piracy laws

The government in the United States of America does not censor private internet connection. However, schools, libraries, companies and government offices may use filters, which block unsuitable websites, in the case that they do not endanger freedom of speech. Nowadays, Stop Online Piracy Act and the Protect IP Act are proposed to be new laws in the USA. It would make illegal websites that infringe intellectual property, like free download websites or websites which sell counterfeit pharmaceuticals. It means that if the law was approved a few years ago, there would be no YouTube nowadays because there are many videos that infringe intellectual property.

Silicon Valley experts say that laws may be a treat to the industry. "These bills are targeted at "rogue" websites that allow indiscriminate piracy, but use vague definitions that could include hosting websites such as Dropbox, MediaFire, and Rapidshare; sites that discuss piracy such as pirate-party.us, p2pnet, Torrent Freak, torproject.org, and ZeroPaid; as well as a broad range of sites for user-generated content, such as SoundCloud, Etsy, and Deviant Art.

Had these bills been passed five or ten years ago, even YouTube might not exist today — in other words, the collateral damage from this legislation would be enormous." [2] Experts claim that laws can endanger innovation and development of industry. Many influential corporations want to stop bills. Google, Facebook, Twitter, Zynga, eBay, Mozilla, Yahoo and AOL wrote a letter to Congress. They also think that if the bill becomes a law, they will have to constantly monitor their services. In addition, if some kinds of websites will have to be removed, it is the internet censorship. [5]

11. Conclusion

In these days, the world is somehow divided into two parts. The first is democratic, and every assessment of censorship they cannot stand. Other governments censor everything, what may endanger their position. They watch what people do on the Internet and if they do something unsuitable, they are prosecuted. Governments of democratic countries should struggle for observance of human rights and limitation of internet censorship, because this can help these countries.

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Coauthor of this paper is David Vavra, Tomas Bata University in Zlin, Faculty of Applied Informatics, Department of Mathematics