

**Remarks by Congressman Dan Burton
U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission
Hearing on China's State Control Mechanisms and Methods
April 14, 2005
Room 385, Russell Senate Office Building**

I would like to thank Chairman D'Amato and the Members of the U.S.-China Commission for the opportunity to be here this morning. I also want to thank the Commissioners and your excellent staff for continually providing China watchers like me a reliable and steady stream of value-added, timely information about China.

The subject of today's hearing -- political repression in China, and media and Internet censorship by the Communist Regime in Beijing -- is a subject that I have been monitoring closely for quite a while and one I feel strongly about.

For years, I have worked with like-minded colleagues in both chambers and parties, to send a strong, consistent message to repressive regimes like China, to open the floodgates and make a real commitment to support and promote political openness, respect for human rights, and more democratic governance.

I believe that if we are serious as a Nation about our desire to enhance the spread of human rights, democracy and freedom across the globe then we can send no other message to the Chinese. If we compromise those principles for the sake of political expedience then we do a disservice to the memory and the sacrifices of those who died in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and the ideals of freedom they died for.

China's leaders seem to think that continued market reforms and rapid development will placate their citizens to the point that the populace will simply forego true political reform.

I fervently hope that will not be the case; I trust that the Chinese people are not that easily duped. And testimony from Chinese dissidents and exiles does give me reason to believe that it will be otherwise.

In addition, in China, an emerging middle class is benefiting from China's recent economic growth. Chinese citizens are now starting to become independent homeowners, traveling internationally, studying abroad and engaging in international commerce; and historically, governments that grant citizens the right to engage freely in commerce find it difficult to simultaneously deprive citizens of political and civil liberties.

The key to economic growth and the key to civil and political freedom is of course the same, the free flow of information and data. Every repressive regime seeks first and foremost to control the flow of information. After all, the people cannot ask for something they do not know exists.

Chinese citizens cannot change their government democratically - beyond direct elections of officials at the village level - or express their opposition to government policies. Why, because the Communist Party holds all the strings of power and bars the media from criticizing leaders or their policies, challenging communist ideology, or discussing such "sensitive topics" as constitutional and political reform.

The government owns all television and radio stations and most print media outlets, and uses these vehicles to propagate and promote only state-sanctioned ideology and information.

Media professionals operate under strict orders to follow central party directives and to 'guide public opinion' as directed by political authorities even going so far as to directly censor both the domestic and foreign media to ensure compliance.

I would like to share with you an anecdote to highlight and illustrate the lengths to which China's rulers will go to control information: Despite the growing economic strength China projects in the region, in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and Tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004, China conspicuously failed to step up to the plate.

In fact, China's contributions to the massive international humanitarian relief effort were minimal and hence a potential embarrassment for Beijing.

The American response to similar, and unwarranted, complaints of stinginess was to dramatically increase our pledge of assistance. In contrast, the Chinese responded by having the Propaganda Department simply ban all domestic news media from reporting the donations made by other countries.

The heavy hand of Chinese censorship even extends into the untamed electronic wilderness that is the Internet. As I understand it, the official communist party line is to promote the use of the Internet, but in reality they heavily regulate access to and monitor use of the Internet.

According to the State Department's estimates, China's Internet control system employs more than 30,000 people through an official bureaucracy to specifically target and punish Internet users who question, criticize, or stray from the accepted, heavily-censored landscape of topics and communist party dogma. In other words, in China one uses the Internet at great risk of punishment and imprisonment – more so than even conventional media.

This movement towards blanket censorship is not surprising for a repressive regime but it is disconcerting to discover that U.S. firms like Google and Cisco Systems are in fact complicit in China's attempted control of the internet.

Google has decided that its “Google News China” edition will NOT include sources that are inaccessible from within China, thereby keeping Chinese users from knowing what their government has blocked.

Cisco’s participation and expertise was integral to the establishment of Beijing’s so-called “Great Firewall.” And arguably as a reward, in November 2004, Cisco announced that it had been given the job of building China’s next-generation Internet backbone, slated to become operational in ten to twenty years.

I believe that fostering and nurturing democratic reform in China is critically important to the long-term economic and security interests of the United States. As a Member of Congress and Senior Member of the House International Relations Committee, I am deeply concerned when I see U.S. firms apparently facilitating Chinese censorship. So you can be sure that I will continue to monitor the activities of these two companies in China.

Every avenue of information or free thought feels the heavy hand of authoritarianism.

Chinese political activists no longer use mobile phone text messaging to disseminate information and organize their activities as that avenue too has been closed off. China’s cellular phone network is now subject to heavy police surveillance.

The government monitors the activities of the official religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism). And it targets leaders of unauthorized religious groups for harassment, interrogation, detention, and abuse; destroying or seizing unregistered places of worship.

The Chinese government’s crackdown on the Falun Gong and other unauthorized religious groups continues. I could go on and on but I know you are well aware of

the plight of political dissidents, advocates of human rights reform, pro-democracy activists, and religious worshipers in China.

The question that I have been struggling to answer is how long can Chinese Authorities keep the lid on this potential powder keg?

I believe that the Chinese cannot stop the inevitable tide of democracy and freedom that is beginning to sweep the globe. The flow of information in today's digital satellite age is simply too vast to contain forever.

In time we will see whether a human-rights-abusing Communist State can sustain a development program which prioritizes the eradication of poverty but places little if any emphasis on political freedoms.

Whichever way China goes, whether towards more oppression or greater freedom, will have a profound effect on the sustainable growth of China, the political stability there, and the nature of power that China projects abroad.

I believe we should continue to encourage movement towards freedom whenever, wherever and however possible, but I am also pragmatic enough to know that we need to be prepared for either eventuality.

Thank you.