

Article Review #2: Conceptualizing the Reverse Great Firewall

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Introduction/BLUF

The article “*Conceptualizing the Reverse Great Firewall: cybersecurity and the logics of government geo-blocking in China*” by Brussee (2026) explores how governments increasingly are restricting foreign access to domestic online information. Normally, cybersecurity is focused on protecting internal networks from external threats. However, this study shows how states, like China, limit outward information flows and provides a technical analysis of geo-blocking with social, political, and institutional dynamics taken into consideration.

Relation/Connection to Social Science Principles

This topic strongly reflects sociological and political science principles, regarding state power, governance, and information control. Cybersecurity is framed not just as a technical protection but as a tool of political authority as well as social regulation. The study also includes organizational theory by showing how bureaucratic structures and incentives influence cybersecurity practices. Additionally, it reflects communication theory, as controlling information flows shaped global knowledge exchange.

Research Question /Hypothesis/ Independent Variable/Dependent Variable

- Research Question: How and why the Chinese government entities implement geo-blocking to restrict foreign access to domestic websites?
- Hypothesis: Geo-blocking practices emerge from a combination of top-down cybersecurity pressure and bottom-up bureaucratic decision-making.

- Independent Variable: Institutional and governmental pressures
- Dependent Variable: Degree and pattern of geo-blocking on Chinese government websites

Types of Research Methods used

The article uses a quantitative, empirical research design. The author conducts large-scale testing of website accessibility using HTTP requests from residential proxies across 14 countries. This method allows the researcher to simulate foreign access and systematically measure geo-blocking practices. The study is observational and data-driven, focusing on real-world internet infrastructure.

Types of Data Analysis used and

Connections to other Course Concepts

The dataset includes 13,508 Chinese government websites tested for accessibility. The analysis categorizes websites based on accessibility outcomes, identifying patterns of blocking and partial availability. Statistical and comparative analysis was able to show that over 50% of the websites are inaccessible from abroad, with almost 10% explicitly geo-blocked. The article is aligned with various course concepts, like risk perception and human systems integration.

Connections to the Concerns or contributions of Marginalized Groups

This study raises concerns around access inequality and digital exclusion as it showcases how restricting foreign access can impact researchers, journalists, and international organizations when attempting to gather information. The article also suggests that these practices reflect broader geopolitical tensions, where information control becomes a mechanism of national security.

Overall societal contributions of the study/Conclusion

Overall, the article contributes to society by expanding the definition of cybersecurity to include information governance and global access control. It highlights that state practices can reshape the global internet, influencing security, knowledge sharing, and international relations. This study demonstrates that cybersecurity is deeply intertwined with social, political, and institutional factors. The emergency of the “Reverse Great Firewall” illustrates a shift from protecting systems to controlling information.

Reference

Vincent Brussee, Conceptualizing the reverse great firewall: cybersecurity and the logics of government geo-blocking in China, *Journal of Cybersecurity*, Volume 12, Issue 1, 2026, tyag005, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cybsec/tyag005>