

HOW THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT MANAGES AND USES THE INTERNET

SHAN Wei

EAI Background Brief No. 922

Date of Publication: 29 May 2014

Executive Summary

1. Contrary to popular belief that the internet will bring down authoritarian regimes, the Chinese rulers have not only kept the internet under control, but also shown great capacity in turning the technology to its favor and building the country into a “global internet power”.
2. With the largest internet infrastructure and netizen population in the world, the Communist Party’s general guidelines on internet management are to develop it, use it and control it.
3. Chinese leaders believe that the internet can both be a challenge to regime stability and an important tool for governing the country, if it is under well management.
4. A comprehensive and complex system of internet management that covers a dozen of party-state agencies and departments has been established. The three principal players are the Internet Information Office (国家互联网信息办公室), Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (工业和信息化部), and Ministry of Public Security (公安部).
5. In February 2014 the Party announced the creation of a Central Leading Group on Internet Security and Informationization (中央网络安全和信息化领导小组) to centralize management and tighten its grip on the cyber world.
6. Strict rules have been made to regulate internet content, especially online news reporting.
7. Beijing has demonstrated great commitment in developing the information technology industry and using it as a driving force for economic growth.
8. The internet has become a handy tool for the Party’s propaganda. The Party is getting more adept at using internet applications for publicity and public image building.

9. In the eyes of Chinese leaders, the internet is also a place where the Party can access public demands and supervise local officials.
10. Looking ahead, the Internet will continue to be a means for the leadership to promote economic development, achieve its policy goals, and ultimately shore up its legitimacy.