

# Great Firewall of China

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**In news:** Honk Kong Website blocked fearing over Great Firewall of China

## Key updates

- A website dedicated to publishing first-hand accounts of the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement has warned its users to prepare for large-scale internet blocks, filters, and censorship in future, in the first indication that China may be exporting its Great Firewall to the city under a draconian national security law that took effect on July 1.
- Since the city was handed back to China in 1997, Hong Kong's seven million residents have enjoyed unfettered internet access free from the complex system of block, filter, and human censorship that limit what users in mainland China can see or do online.
- But the national security law, which took effect on July 1, 2020, gives sweeping powers to national security police to take action against public speech that criticizes the Hong Kong or Chinese authorities, or is deemed to encourage action against Hong Kong by foreign entities.
- While protesters and pro-democracy figures have already been arrested under the law, sometimes on the basis of what they have posted online, the apparent blockage of HKChronicles is the first indication that the newly imposed national security system is beginning to use its powers to censor online content directly.

## What is the Great Firewall?

- The Great Firewall of China is the combination of legislative actions and technologies enforced by the People's Republic of China to regulate the Internet

domestically.

- Its role in internet censorship in China is to block access to selected foreign websites and to slow down cross-border internet traffic
- The effect includes: limiting access to foreign information sources, blocking foreign internet tools (e.g. Google search, Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, and others) and mobile apps, and requiring foreign companies to adapt to domestic regulations.
- Besides censorship, the GFW has also influenced the development of China's internal internet economy by nurturing domestic companies and reducing the effectiveness of products from foreign internet companies.
- The techniques deployed by the Chinese government to maintain control of the Great Firewall can include
  - modifying search results for terms and petitioning global conglomerates to remove content, as happened when they petitioned Apple to remove the Quartz business news publication's app from its Chinese App Store after reporting on the 2019–20 Hong Kong protests
- The Great Firewall was formerly operated by the SII0, as part of the Golden Shield Project.
- Since 2013, the firewall is technically operated by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), which is the entity in charge of translating the Communist Party of China's will into technical specifications.
- As mentioned in the "one country, two systems" principle, China's special administrative regions (SARs) such as Hong Kong and Macau are not affected by the firewall, as SARs have their own governmental and legal systems and therefore enjoy a higher degree of autonomy.
- Nevertheless, the U.S. State Department has reported that the central government authorities have closely monitored Internet use in these regions, and Hong Kong's

National Security Law has been used to block websites documenting anti-government protests