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An Introspective Analysis of the Public Debates and International Responses towards Russian and Chinese Internet Policies

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ABSTRACT

Digital Media has evolved as one of the leading opinion-shaping platforms in today's modernized world wherein the masses have the freedom to share their viewpoints on a particular aspect irrespective of its alignment or opposition to the narratives supported, promoted, and most often sponsored by the states. Nevertheless, Russia and China have imposed severe restrictions on the freedom of speech of its citizens wherein they are not allowed to voice any perspective that goes against the policies of the state. China and Russia employ digital surveillance to keep a strict check on their citizens while their institutions overlook respect for human rights, human dignity, and principles of basic fundamental human rights in apprehending the culprits who violate domestic restrictions placed over them by the state. Western states, international organizations, and media channels have categorically highlighted the restrictions imposed by Russia and China on the freedom of speech whereas several cases have been registered against the Digital Authoritarianism of these states in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). This research study is Qualitative and deductive in nature since it pertains to highlighting the specific conclusions and further orients toward general observations. This research study concludes that China and Russia have been pursuing a two-pronged multifaceted strategy to compete with the United States in the contemporary global and regional order; hence, such challenges will continue to advance in a multipolar world.

Keywords: Digital Authoritarianism, China, Russia, United States, Multipolar World, International Organizations, Media

INTRODUCTION

The equilibrium of power dynamics between democratic states and dictatorial regimes is shifting as an outcome of the employment of electronic and digital authoritarianism to monitor, persecute, and regulate masses by autocratic governments. Due to the development and dissemination of novel technologically driven practices exercised by the leadership, China and Russia are at the edge of this challenge (Sarfraz, Raju & Aksar, 2018). Because of its expertise in employing electronic means for domestic regulation and monitoring, Beijing is the top choice for conservative regimes seeking help establishing their electronic systems of surveillance, whereas Russia's inexpensive digital disinformation resources prove to be efficient at suppressing potential opponents at domestic levels and threatening democratic states globally (Treyger, Cheravitch, & Cohen, 2022). Another international standard is developing for the regulation of online information. Although the general public along with researchers tend to think of the web as an unrestricted information and technology, states have shown themselves to have been highly adept at censoring information. Secretary of State of the United States, Hillary Clinton in a pivotal address on internet freedom in January 2010 asserted how the advancement of communication technologies and the unrestricted dissemination of data would inevitably lead to greater freedom and democratic values across the globe (Oad, Zaidi, & Phulpoto, 2023; Figliola, 2010). Following that time, Russia and China have emerged as two distinct nations that have successfully learned about the best ways to use information technology to limit instead of enhance freedom for humans (Azhar, 2024). What constitutes worrisome is the fact that they have begun importing forms of technological dictatorship from other states and have applied those models in their respective states. This research study takes into account, as how Russia and China have continually implemented digital authoritative techniques as state policy, and how this policy has been perceived by Western states, media, and international organizations (Sarfraz, Raja, & Malik, 2022). A thorough analysis of this subject will highlight the tendencies adopted by Russia and China and their impact on the public debates in the Western world (Phulpoto, Oad, & Imran, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study is qualitative in nature, with a focus on secondary sources to gather the data. Data has been gathered from books, research articles, reports of the think-tanks and reputed media networks and analysis of reputed authors published on different platforms. Systematic analysis of data has been carried out, with a focus on how the Western states, media outlets and international organizations perceive the state-led digital authoritarian tendencies of China and Russia. Bibliography has been quoted from the Russian and Chinese writers as well, in order to curtail the potential for any bias in this research study.

Opposition to Internet Censorship in the Context of Digital Politics in Russia and China

There's severe opposition from the liberal world and human rights activists claiming that censoring the free flow of information or restricting the general masses

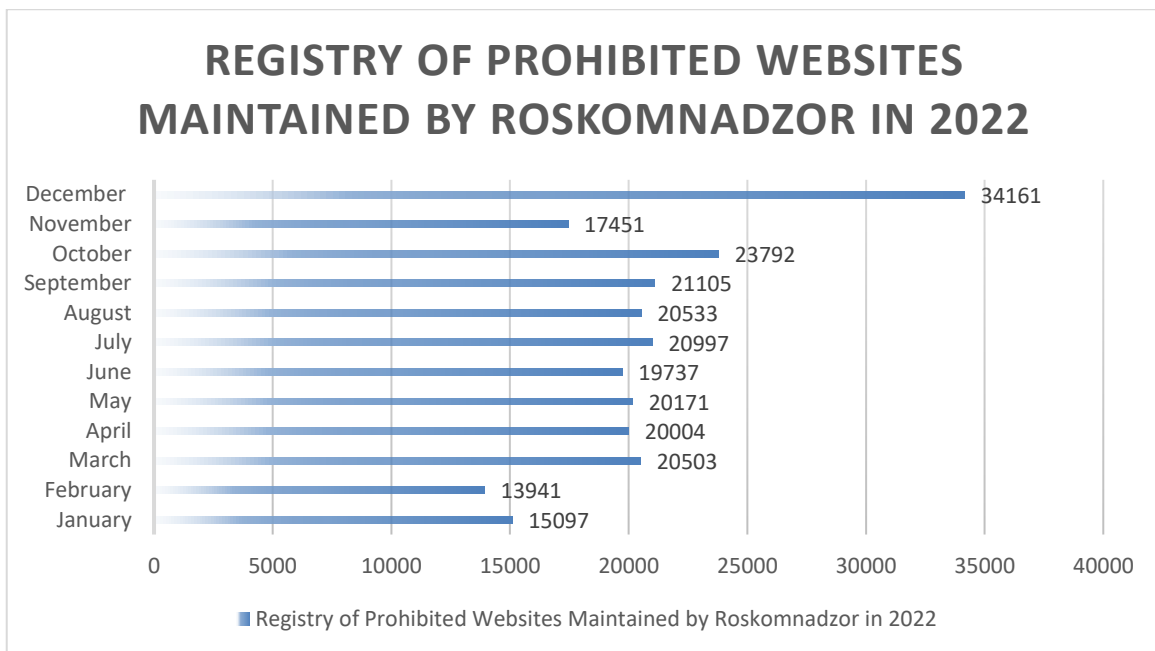
from using certain social media apps or banning websites infringes the fundamental rights of freedom of expression. Such authoritarian states often resort to violent ways to stifle dissent, suppress minority voices, and limit access to alleged critical information which are human rights violations. Subsequently, these digital barriers are harmful to fostering a culture of creativity and innovation hence impeding economic growth. Under a 2018 ruling from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), Moscow restricted the messaging application Telegram which was highlighted as compromising the fundamental rights of Russian citizens to freedom of expression (Voorhoof, 2024).

List of Organizations Who Have Faced Censorship After the Beginning Of Russian Invasion In Ukraine										
DOXA	BBC	Voice of America	Radio Freedom	Meduza	Echo Kavakaza	Sobesednik	DW	Mediazona	Bumaga	TJ

According to the ECHR, the censorship order's legal representation was insufficient and consequently, the order had an effect on many web-based services; thereby seriously impacting the socioeconomic and freedom of Speech status of the Russian citizens. Russia considers these digital activists as resilient individuals who protest these censorships by taking help from social media websites and encrypted technologies to organize mass awareness protests. Subsequently, the Russian state blocked around 138000 websites that were supposedly involved in the spread of terrorism and extremism, pornography, and drug trafficking through propaganda approaches (Burkhardt & Wijermars, 2022). However, it needs to be highlighted that most of these websites are widely used open sources, being run from the Western world and employed by the masses on an almost daily basis for the consumption of daily news and happenings.

Roskomnadzor, the Russian digital censor which was established in 2008 has been instrumental in this quest by regularly taking down whole websites and requiring Russian companies to ban accessibility to these specific websites (Khan, & Hassan, 2020; Khan, Sarfraz, & Tabassum, 2020; Khan, Sarfraz, & Tabassum, 2020; Khan, Sarfraz, & Afzal, 2019). It was also highlighted those Russian regulations regarding data protection must be implemented which falls under the purview of censorship. The legislation forced the IT businesses to abide by the increasingly stringent regulations by introducing the legislative infrastructure to keep the open internet. Unlike China, Russia has no thriving domestic telecom or internet industry; hence, the consequences are far more widespread and have severe implications. The gradual strengthening of the Russian President Vladimir Putin regime's implementation of laws and regulations concerning the web and social networking applications may be attributed in large part to Roskomnadzor which additionally

has enforced multiple surveillance directives to social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and search engines such as Google, YouTube as well as Pinterest. Roskomnadzor also manages a digital block list alongside over 1.2 million URLs(Reethika Ramesh, 2019). It has been recently established that Moscow's web filtering system additionally functions as an electronic surveillance device. The following table highlights the number of blocked websites by the Russian agency during 2022.

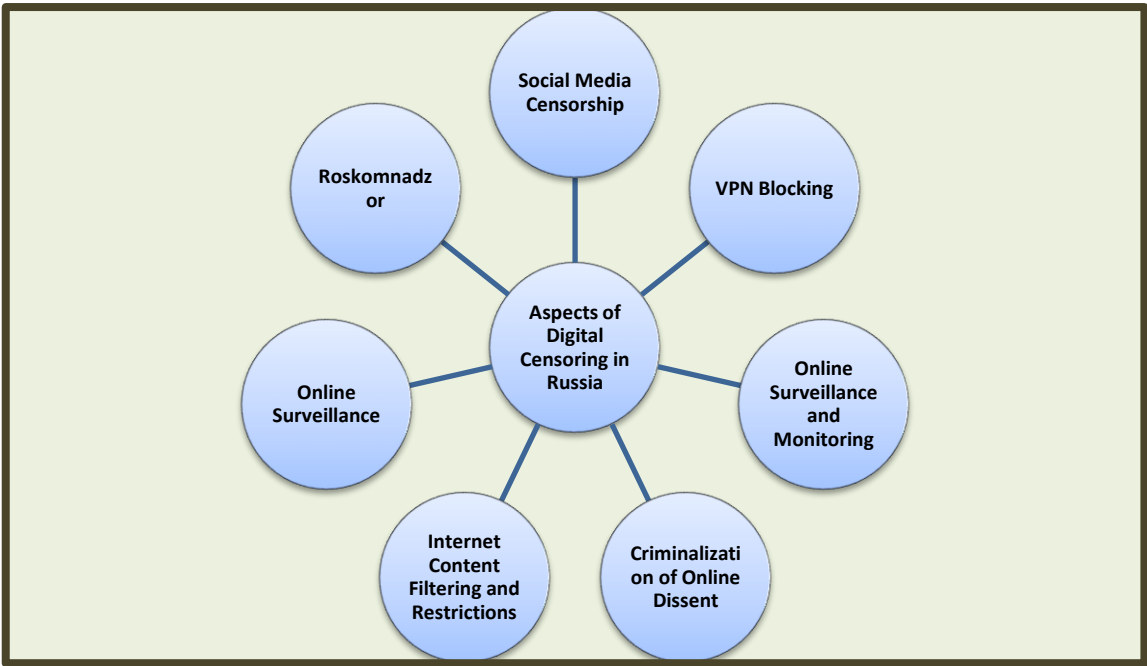


Source: Open Observatory of Network Interference

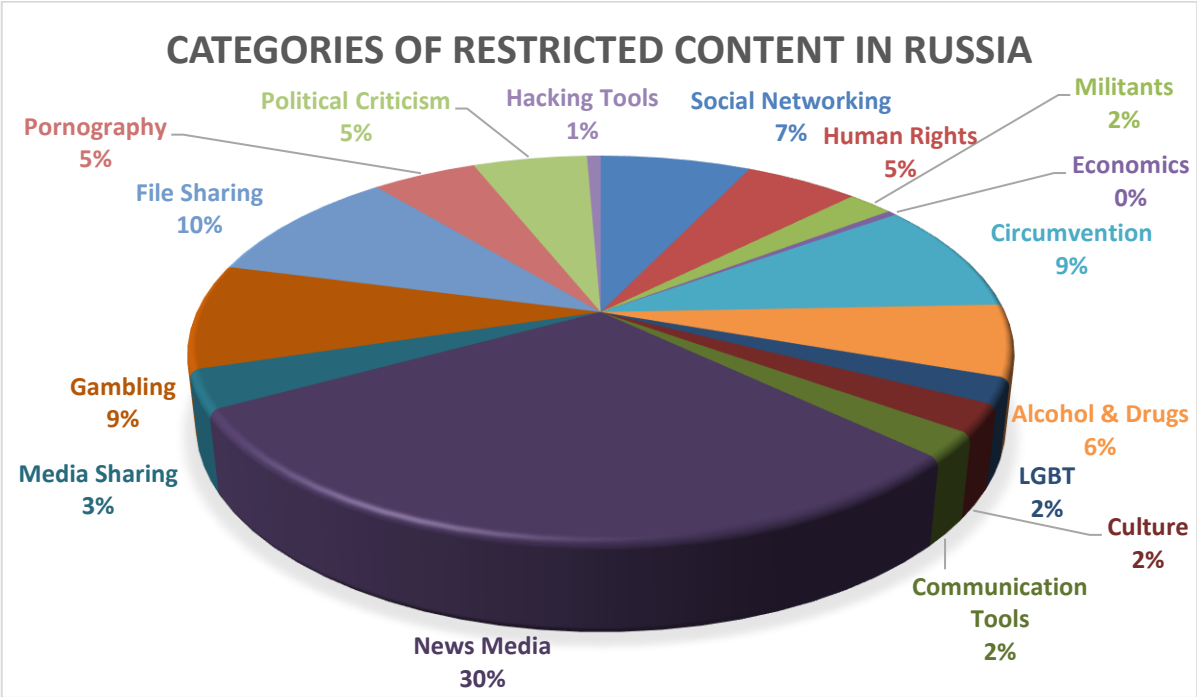
They seek to control messaging products and services, decipher protected web traffic, and tamper with evasion technologies such as Proxies as well as the Tor network(Creemers, 2020). Following its response, Chinese leaders solicited advice from Moscow on how to deal with criticism from society and the oversight of the media. Nonetheless, individuals and organizations are repulsing this censorship and restrictions independently and with the help of the Western world. According to the Azhar, Iqbal and Imran (2025), one such initiative is the Open Technology Fund (OTF) which is a program funded by the United States Agency for Global Media that advocates for the freedom of the Internet globally and supports individuals seeking open Internet access(Osipova-Stocker, Shiu, Layou, & Powers, 2022). It focuses on censorship and surveillance techniques creating technologically focused solutions that directly address the issues that people confront in their daily lives (Khan, & Hassan, 2020; Khan, Sarfraz, & Tabassum, 2020; Khan, Sarfraz, & Tabassum, 2020; Khan, Sarfraz, & Afzal, 2019).



Whilst Beijing emphasizes actual time censoring as well as the shutdown of complete networks including web pages, Moscow prioritizes the alarming consequences in order to create an environment of continual potential self-repression of data. China's tremendous growth in the economy has not been slowed by widespread communication controls, but the country's censoring may function as a safety net for its technological firms. China's censoring of the internet in the country threatens the foundations of a fair global financial structure while current trading regulations and agreements fail to adequately address the challenge of censorship. Actual-time censoring is given the highest priority in the Chinese mainland wherein legions of moderators clear offending remarks from communities on the web (Liang, 2022). The barring of entire systems and web pages such as Google, Facebook, and Instagram, that have remained unreachable to people on the Chinese mainland during the last many years has been deemed acceptable in Beijing. However, Russia has the most online users in Europe and a huge number of users are still less than 45 years old (Кулик, 2023). Bloggers and self-claimed activists are only allowed unlimited political freedom in Russia as long as their audience is limited and they do not threaten the National Security interests of the country. Similarly, Russia has employed disinformation campaigns to confuse and undermine digital information environments, particularly in relation to Ukraine. These campaigns aim to create chaos, hinder consensus-building, and challenge the legitimacy of Ukraine's response. International efforts are being made to counter these disinformation threats, but strategies may differ in peacetime compared to times of conflict (Azhar, 2024). The following infographic highlights the multilateral aspects of digital censoring in Russia.



Following its occupation of Ukraine in 2022, Moscow blocked the applications of a few American technological companies since it moved towards a more constrained and closely monitored cyberspace (Wilde, 2023). Chinese-style development of the internet which would probably create the most tightly regulated digital space globally will nevertheless occur in the distant future as there still exist loopholes in the ability of Russian citizens to circumvent present regulations. The categories of blocked content in Russia are also different and it has been highlighted in the following graph. This data has been extracted from multiple open sources.



While the Ukraine conflict has brought to light, the restrictions imposed by Russia in the context of Digital Politics, it is an acknowledged fact that Russian President Vladimir Putin intends to create distance between the Russians and the Western populace while augmenting the differences between the two sides (Aviv & Ferri, 2023). Though China President Xi Jinping is addressing these challenges through his vision of enhanced economic interconnectivity as well as restrictions on Western tourists visiting China, its widespread issues of human rights as well as its competition with the United States for hegemonic influence in the regional order as well as the global politics cannot be overlooked. Russia and the United States must realize the fact that curbs on digital censorship are not the solution to minimize the repercussions of their strict geopolitical decisions and history has proven that such bindings have usually backfired the leadership of a country (Imran & Akhtar, 2023). While Moscow appears to be inclined to employ technological advances as a tool for targeted influencing operations, Beijing is at the forefront of technologically advanced societal control innovation. Both countries have established and propagated modern tech-driven governance playbooks, but their strategies diverge greatly (Bashir, Saba & Hussain, 2023; Fatima, & Saba, 2020; Fatima, et al., 2020). Shaukat, Rehman, and ul Haq (2021) the Chinese were among the initial users of technological devices for internal regulation along with monitoring from the Great Firewall's initial introduction over twenty years back (Ensafi et al., 2015). Beijing is becoming the manufacturer option of choice for dictatorships looking to deploy their own electronic surveillance apparatuses, which is a result of Beijing's considerable expertise in building a trustworthy digital surveillance infrastructure. While the Russian, as well as the Chinese model of digital authoritarianism, has greatly influenced the capacity of Russian and Chinese citizens to benefit from the internet, subsequent reactions were also recorded from the Western states, media, civil society organizations as well as international organizations (Polyakova & Meserole, 2019). A thorough assessment of how these reactions have constituted the debate regarding the digital censorship of China and Russia is discussed as follows,

Reactions by the Western States

A thorough analysis of how the Western world perceives the digital authoritarianism of Russia and China is being carried out as follows;

United States

The United States of America is concerned about the increasing likelihood of digital authoritarianism emanating from both Beijing and Moscow. The United States is working on preventing China from selling oppressive technology to other countries, while it is aware of the obstacles that come with Beijing prioritizing electronic authoritarianism (Ensafi et al., 2015). The United States additionally remains aware of the Chinese and Russian requirements for companies to retain information inside national borders, which could eventually give rise to greater regulation and monitoring of digital information. Beijing has been diligently attempting to broadcast what the Communist Party of China refers to as its external disinformation globally as relationships with the European Union and the United States have deteriorated over

the course of the past few years; thereby, undertaking a strategy it describes as a conflict without flames. It has disseminated deceptive data on several topics, including COVID-19, the clinical efficacy of Westernised vaccinations, the ongoing ethnic cleansing in Xinjiang, and many others.

Via Chinese online communities, the world appears to be painted in the most blatant blacks and whites. Increasingly sophisticated reporting on international issues is virtually unattainable in China due to limitations, yet social media content that demonizes Western nations and their leaders is free to circulate there. Both China and Russia have only become close in their respective campaigns of deception towards the West primarily as a result of the unfolding events in Ukraine. To some policymakers in the United States, China is actively disseminating this techno-authoritarian system (Ryan, Fritz, & Impiombato, 2020). For example, Beijing has given authoritarian nations like Zimbabwe and Venezuela electronic surveillance and censorship capabilities with Venezuela acquiring a marketed rendition of Beijing's Great Firewall (Codreanu, 2022). Washington is concerned because a techno-authoritarian Chinese approach may deepen the prevailing constitutional crisis by influencing hybrid regimes as well as autocratic states. On the other hand, Russia as well as China seek to establish cyber sovereignty, which advocates for governmental authority over internet usage (Mirza, Ali, & Qaisrani, 2021). Shaukat, Qureshi, and ul Haq (2020) stated that this is opposed by an unrestricted, freely accessible internet that is governed by civil society as well as the general public. Beijing is aiming to establish what it considers cyber sovereignty and validate its domestic restrictions on speech. Russian President Vladimir Putin became one of Beijing's initial friends to support the idea of cyber sovereignty. Over the last 10 years, high-ranking Russian and Chinese officials have had meetings in Beijing and Moscow on multiple forums to devise policies on this pertinent subject. A technological and financial separation could occur from aggressive efforts to defy Chinese widespread monitoring, restrictions, or technology dictatorship. The United States, China, Russia, and the world's economy may all suffer because of the consequences of this. China's growing impact on the web could eventually eclipse the influence of the United States along with other democratic states. China will have an impact on the digital landscape if it proceeds to develop the instruments of digital authoritarianism and is successful in using them both locally and globally.

Canada

Canada is concerned about the autocratic digital practices of Russia and China. The Canadian government has advocated for greater accountability and transparency in the use of technological advances (McKune & Ahmed, 2018). It has urged for closer scrutiny of Chinese acquisitions in Canada's technology industry and expressed reservations regarding the development of China's version of digital authoritarianism worldwide. The Canadian government has likewise voiced opposition to the exportation of coercive technologies. It recently requested that export guidelines for technological surveillance be made more stringent, and exporting limits have been established and placed for several products that may be employed to infringe basic human rights. Canadian officials have made public comments on China's digital

authoritarianism initiatives. Beijing was charged with digital authoritarianism and attempting to destroy democratic structures worldwide in a report issued by the United States Senate in July 2020. While acknowledging the report, several Canadian parliamentarians raised concerns about China's use of technical developments to stifle opposition and abuse fundamental freedoms. In a statement published in May 2021, Marc Garneau, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister expressed concerns about China's reputation on issues related to human rights, notably its application of technological advances to crush opposition while disrespecting the rights of individuals(Toomey, 2022). He urged China to maintain the supremacy of laws and respect for human rights. Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs advocated for increased transparency and responsibility in the application of digital technology in February 2022(Narine, 2023). He expressed concerns regarding the global development of the Chinese digital dictatorship and advocated for a cohesive international response.

United Kingdom

The British government has expressed worries about digital authoritarianism in both China and Russia. General Sir Nick Carter of the United Kingdom indicated that two of the United Kingdom's enemies, China and Russia, are ramping up their investments in technological warfare capability(Corfield, 2020). The autocratic cyber governance arrangements in China and Russia, that enforce limits on freedom of speech as well as data availability, concerns the UK. Reservations have also been expressed in the UK over the unbalanced partnership that exists between China and Russia in digital authoritarianism, a strategy that is constantly enhancing at odds with Moscow's geopolitical ambitions. As noted by General Carter, who additionally pointed out that Russia and China for exporting digital authoritarianism and cautioned the fact that innovations in technology could be employed to strangle democratic and free speech at the time of conception, the notion also examines how the CCP is quickly transferring mass surveillance as well as societal credit ratings to various regions throughout the world(Corfield, 2020). United Kingdom has an understanding of how closely both Russia and China truly cooperate to watch over and regulate their respective online activities, notably trying to figure out how to decode secured web traffic and manage chat platforms.

International Organizations

Global organizations have repeatedly expressed their concerns regarding the digital authoritative tendencies of China and Russia. A thorough analysis of concerns expressed by different international organizations is highlighted as follows;

Human Rights Watch

Maya Wang, the Associate Director of Human Rights Watch has argued that the Digital authoritarianism of China has evolved as a global phenomenon and the United States must provide an alternative to this issue(Wang, 2021). She argues that monitoring is a fact for citizens of Chinese citizens in addition to citizens of countries like Kyrgyzstan and Ecuador who have embraced Chinese technologies for surveillance. The resulting network of Chinese-based technology is more dangerous than ever since it represents an assortment of ideas that underpin the Chinese state

and a form of totalitarianism for the 21st century that blends control over society with efficiency.

European Union

Subsequently, the European Union also expressed its concerns and attempted to tackle the subject of whether Chinese digital authoritarianism was impacting European groups including business organizations. This necessitated the imposition of exporting limits on specific technologies that may be employed to infringe fundamental freedoms while also requiring working alongside other countries to establish a concerted reaction to the application of digital technology for purposes that suppress civil rights while weakening democracies (Taylor, 2022). The European Union has implemented an array of distinctive steps in response to the Chinese digital authoritarianism practices. Several technologies that could potentially be utilized to violate the rights of individuals have restrictions on export imposed by the European Union. Featured are technologies that have the potential to be employed to crush opposition and infringe fundamental liberties, such as surveillance systems. Chinese investments in the European technology sector are now subject to stricter scrutiny. This is partly because of concerns over the export of oppressive technologies to other nations. In a joint statement issued in February 2021, the Netherlands and several other European Union nations expressed concern regarding China's human rights history and particularly the application of technological advances to stifle opposition while violating fundamental freedoms (Gehrke, 2022). The proclamation encouraged China to safeguard legitimacy and respect for human rights. In March 2021, the European Parliament voted a resolution urging the EU to respond more aggressively to the Chinese abuses of freedom of speech, particularly its use of technological advances to suppress criticism while disrespecting human rights (Pereira, 2023). The motion asked the EU to impose specific punishments on officials of the Chinese government who infringe on human rights, as well as to work with other democratic nations to stop China's technological dictatorship from spreading across the world.

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

Various cases have been reported against Russia in the European Court of Human Rights. The organization issued a press release on 23rd June 2020 in which details relating to different cases regarding websites blocked in Russia over the violation of fundamental human rights were given (Court, 2020). A list of these cases is enlisted as follows,

S. No	Case	Decision by the European Court of Human Rights
1)	Russia Vs Vladimir Kharitonov (Application No. 10795/14),	The petitioner discovered that the Internet Protocol (IP) address of his web page, Electronic Publishing News (www.digital-books.ru), had been temporarily blacklisted by the Roskomnadzor telecoms authority at the end of 2012. Since it used the same server company as well as the IP address that was used by the applicant's web page, the Federal Drug Control Service decided to block access to rastaman.tales.ru, a collection of folk tales with a cannabis

		background. By blocking the Internet Protocol (IP) address, the complainant claimed in a lawsuit that accessibility to the applicant's website which contained zero prohibited information had been additionally prohibited. The judges confirmed Roskomnadzor's ruling as valid without first taking into account how the decision would impact the complainant's website.
2)	Russia Vs OOO Flavus and Others (Application No. 12468/15, 23489/15, and 19074/16)	The company that submitted the initial application, OOO Flavus, operates grani.ru, the subsequent applicant, Garry Kasparov, established www.kasparov.ru, while the final applicant, OOO Mediafokus, who operates Daily Newspaper at ej.ru, all operates publications that express a critique of the Russian state. In March 2014, Roskomnadzor restricted accessibility to the petitioners' webpages under the Prosecutor General's recommendation and in line with article 15.3 of the Freedom of Information Act because of material that had been purportedly inciting actions of public disturbance or extremist discourse. No order from the courts was required. The parties involved attempted to have the censorship action reviewed by the judiciary but failed. They claimed that the accessibility of their web pages was barred and added that because they had not been made aware of the specific problematic content, therefore they were helpless to remove the content as a means to restore accessibility.
3)	Russia Vs Engels (Application No. 61919/16)	A judge in Russia instructed the local Internet Service Provider to block access to (rublacklist.net), the petitioner's webpage on freedom of speech as well as privacy concerns, primarily the outcome of a prosecutor's complaints. The defense said that because the defendant's webpage made it possible for visitors to view extremist material on an unaffiliated web page, information on how to get around filtering content shouldn't be made accessible throughout Russia. The incidents were not made known to the petitioner. After the decision by the court, Roskomnadzor demanded that the petitioner take down the offensive material; otherwise, the website's functionality would be disabled. He carried out the instructions that were given. The judges dropped the petitioner's case without considering his main argument that it was acceptable underneath Russian legislation to disclose details about programs and applications that safeguard surfing confidentiality.
4)	Russia	The applicant was unaware that an April 2012 ruling by the

	<p>Vs Bulgakov (Application No. 20159/15)</p>	<p>court ended up resulting in the town's broadband provider blocking accessibility to the applicant's web page, Worldview of the Russian Civilization (www.razumei.ru), in November 2013. That decision, which was reached in compliance with section 10(6) of the Information Act, was made about a particular eBook that was located in the archives of the website's file section and was formerly designated as extremist literature. The blocking process must be implemented, and the tribunal ordered that the service provider prohibit connection to the internet protocol address of the applicant's webpage.</p>
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While all these cases were heard by the ECHR by their legislations, several countries in Europe have criticized Russia over their digital censoring and surveillance policies. On September 16, 2022, the Russian Federation ceased to be an adherent to the European Convention on Human Rights (Magliveras, 2023). The European Court of Human Rights was nonetheless authorized to hear complaints regarding Russia for deeds or failures committed until the date of September 16, 2022. There are currently 17,450 applications before the Court that have been aimed at Russia. In accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights, Moscow is required by law to comply with the Court's rulings (Strasbourg, 2022). The Standing Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will keep on monitoring the successful implementation of the relevant judgments and amicable agreements. Moscow has not yet completed implementing 2129 judgments and decisions, and many of them remain unresolved before the Standing Committee of Ministers.

Media

Western media has repeatedly expressed concerns over the Chinese and Russian disinformation campaigns as well as state-sponsored digital authoritarian tendencies. A review of the Western media is being carried out as follows;

CNN

China is reportedly aiding the Russian disinformation campaign which highlights its close ties to Russia. To address concerns regarding the digital authoritarianism of both Russia and China, the US State Department established an information security division. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin announced an altogether new era in the global community, one that will more closely represent both of their states' aims and will no longer be influenced by the United States. The incapacity of China to denounce Russia has alarmed Central Asian countries, and China has continued to perceive Russia's war in Ukraine from an anti-American perspective. A CNN investigation of over 5,000 social networking communications made on Weibo, the Chinese equivalent version of Twitter highlighted that the initial eight-day period of the Russian incursion included postings from fourteen officially recognized Chinese press websites (Beijing, 2022). The study further highlights that 140 among more than 300 most frequently shared tweets regarding what was happening in Ukraine, or almost half, had been determined to be

favorable to Russia by CNN. The posts in question regularly included data that was either independently lifted from Russian state media or material that had been attributed to a Russian official statement. As reported by CNN, Western nations are growing concerned as China and Russia are uniting their approaches regarding global affairs. The fact that China finances the Russian disinformation campaign and does not condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine is seen as evidence of Beijing's hyperlinks to Moscow (Rob Picheta, 2023). The US State Department's newly established cybersecurity division constitutes a response to concerns related to digital authoritarianism in both of these countries.

The New York Times

Since the New York Times is one of the leading United States media outlets, it has highlighted various instances of digital authoritarianism in Russia and China. Thomas L. Friedman in an opinion article highlighted that by adopting severe restrictions and digital oversight, Russian and Chinese governments are discrediting dictatorships (Friedman, 2022). Another article highlighted that as dictatorial governments instruct other governments regarding how to leverage technological advances, those who export technology for surveillance from Moscow could get involved to offer an alternative, and probably less expensive version of a cyber dictatorship (Polyakova & Meserole, 2019). The New York Times is one of the most-read newspapers across the world, and its publications actually impact the international attitudes towards the digital policies of Russia and China.

Digital Authoritarianism Affecting Freedom of Speech in China and Russia

Digital authoritarianism profoundly undermines the constitutional right to free speech in China and Russia. China's media landscape is from the top down, strictly managed, and produced in conformity with state orders. China's official media outlets have boosted Russian disinformation that has been employed to support the notion that the Western world is aiming to undermine China and Russia. The tightly controlled media landscape that exists in China significantly influences shaping public perceptions and limiting freedom of expression. The inability of Beijing to condemn Putin's actions in Ukraine, particularly interpreted as a testimony to Beijing's close relationship with Moscow, has caused uneasiness within Central Asian states (Shah, et al., 2025; Imran, et al., 2023). On the other side, Moscow maintains a track record of stifling liberty of speech and controlling the transmission of data through internet restriction and surveillance. Russia reportedly uses misinformation strategies to manipulate public sentiment and interfere with global politics. The military occupation of Ukraine by Russia has received considerable global reproach, but the refusal of China to join in may be seen as a resounding support of the Russian president amid such condemnation. The Chinese government has traditionally exercised strict restrictions over traditional as well as contemporary media as a means to avoid any kind of possible threat to its dominance. It routinely employs surveillance techniques and network firewalls, shuts down periodicals and web pages, and imprisons activists, publishers, and reporters who disagree with it. Chinese citizens have been imprisoned by the state in China regarding remarks they made during confidential conversations on WeChat which is controlled by the Chinese company Tencent and is used by

government agencies as a monitoring tool(Zhang, 2024). People on WeChat who criticize the state risk repercussions, while messages containing sensitive keywords are prohibited. Subsequently, Russian authorities have penalized online trolls for purportedly insulting the state and disseminating false information. With regard to state media content shared on social media, the Russian government is putting pressure on foreign tech companies to stop limiting free expression. Additionally, a new law was recently approved that gives the government the authority to obstruct websites that censor Russian state media. Long before the announcement of the current protests, Russian legislation banning internet material has been generating questions, and the Russian government has a history of using libel lawsuits, arrests, and other tactics to push journalists and media outlets to self-censor.

CONCLUSION

Though it is a fact that Western states, media as well as international organizations have been extremely critical of Russia and China's digital authoritarianism policies, it is also important to note that both these states have put in place policies that have compromised the freedom of speech of their citizens. Moreover, they have also been maintaining strict surveillance of social networking sites through cyber security and AI patterns that allow them to know about the individuals who are in any way conspiring against the state. This is the very reason that social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, and the communications application WhatsApp cannot be used in China. Since China and Russia are pursuing a two-pronged jointly formulated strategy to compete with the United States in the contemporary global and regional order, such challenges will continue to further in the future since the world is swiftly moving towards multipolarity. Though it is an undeniable reality that the majority of the states in the international realm have a closer relationship with the United States, nevertheless, their ambitious objectives and affiliations will probably change as a result of the continually evolving geopolitical environment and China's commitment to international financial interdependence. This change will unavoidably affect the media environment and mold the perceptive dynamics of how institutions associated with both Russia and China are professed worldwide.

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