
Our New Anti-Terror Law Is No Worse Than Yours, Says China

28/12/2015



The law, passed on Sunday, creates a new counter-terrorism agency, requires technology firms to help decrypt information, and allows the military to venture overseas on counter-terror operations.

It also bans anybody other than pre-approved media outlets from reporting on terrorism or the authorities' response.

The law has attracted deep concern in Western capitals, not only because of worries it could violate human rights such as freedom of speech, but because of the cyber provisions. US President Barack Obama has said that he had raised concerns about the law directly with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

But the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Monday that the new law was no different to similar legislation in Western countries.

"I only want to point out two things. One is that (the law) was rolled out in accordance with the current situation's development and the needs of reality. Second, if you have a serious study on it, the relevant rule is no different to the relevant laws in Western countries. I believe there are no double standards on this issue," Lu Kang, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said at a daily briefing in Beijing.

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Chinese officials say their country faces a growing threat from militants and separatists, especially in its unruly Western region of Xinjiang, where hundreds have died in violence in the past few years.

State media referenced a knife attack in 2014 — blamed on a group from the persecuted Uyghur Muslim minority from Xinjiang — as evidence the law was necessary. "The Chinese government is keen that the undoubtedly tough measures it takes [in Xinjiang] are viewed as "counter-terrorism" (similar to measures taken by Western countries)

rather than as the oppression of an ethnic minority," [wrote](#) the BBC's Stephan Evans.

Rights groups, though, doubt the existence of a cohesive militant group in Xinjiang and say the unrest mostly stems from anger among the region's Muslim Uighur people over restrictions on their religion and culture.

The new law also restricts the right of media to report on details of terror attacks, including a provision that media and social media cannot report on details of terror activities that might lead to imitation, nor show scenes that are "cruel and inhuman".

Police will now be able to use weapons directly in "emergency circumstances" when attackers have knives or guns. The anti-terrorism law also permits the People's Liberation Army to get involved in anti-terrorism operations overseas, though experts have said China faces big practical and diplomatic problems if it ever wants to do this.

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Other parts of the legislation deals with access to information and telecommunications. While a provision in an initial draft that would require companies to keep servers and user data within China was removed from the final law, technology companies will still have to provide help with sensitive encryption information if law enforcement authorities demand it.

Officials in Washington have argued the law, combined with new draft banking and insurance rules and a slew of anti-trust investigations, amounts to unfair regulatory pressure targeting foreign companies.

China's national security law adopted in July requires all key network infrastructure and information systems to be "secure and controllable".

Nobody other than pre-approved media outlets is now allowed to report on a terror attack or the authorities response, reported the BBC. Dissemination information about terrorist activities or making up stories about fake terror incident is now banned.

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