

## Defying China . . . for Now

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According to a *New York Times* report, "American Internet giants are struggling to respond" to China's recent crackdown on Hong Kong.

For now, the outcome of the struggle is that Facebook, Twitter, and Google have stopped sharing data with Hong Kong officials. Doing so has become tantamount to sharing data with the Chinese government.

If this wasn't clear before China's repressive new "national security" laws in Hong Kong, it's clear now. The Chinese government is systematically working to muzzle and punish anyone who threatens "national security" by openly criticizing the Chinese government.

Yahoo has changed its policies as well, so that users are now governed in their dealings

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with Yahoo by American law, not local Hong Kong law (rapidly becoming synonymous with the mainland's edicts).

So far, so good.



Worrying, though, is how inconsistent the tech giants have been. Yahoo once helped the Chinese government to identify and imprison two dissidents, claiming it had "no choice" but to turn over the info. Google and others have worked with China to censor information that the Chinese government doesn't want its citizens to see.

These companies should never — in no way, shape, or form — help China go after dissidents.

They should never cooperate, rationalize, compromise.

It would be better to pack up their services and leave Hong Kong altogether than to "struggle" to find a middle way that "sort of" cooperates with China's repression — and "sort of" leaves Hong Kongers in the lurch.

To bolster these companies' new backbones, we had best leverage our power as *customers*.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.