

## U.S. Must Put a Ban on Google Helping China Develop a Global Digital Dictatorship

Google's decision to help China is paving the way for Beijing's 'digital dictatorship.' Ultimately, Washington must make a political decision to criminalize such collaboration.



[Gordon G. Chang](#)



opinion

**Photo Illustration by Lyne Lucien/The Daily Beast/Getty**

General Joseph Dunford, America's top military officer, has [announced](#) he will be meeting with Google representatives this week to talk about the company's assistance to China's People's Liberation Army.

Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, first stoked the controversy over Google on March 14 during his appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee. "The work that Google is doing in China is indirectly benefiting the Chinese military," he [said](#).

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"We watch with great concern when industry partners work in China knowing that there is that indirect benefit," he added later. "Frankly, 'indirect' maybe not be a full characterization of the way it really is. It's more of a direct benefit to the Chinese military."

Google [issued a firm denial](#) in response to Dunford's comments. "We are not working with the Chinese military," a spokesperson said. "We are working with the U.S. government, including the Department of Defense, in many areas including cybersecurity, recruiting and healthcare."

But Dunford is correct. The denial, even if technically accurate, is nonetheless misleading. Google maintains arrangements that it either knows or should know directly benefit the Chinese military.

For instance, in December 2017 the company [announced](#) the formation of the Google AI China Center in Beijing.

Due to Chinese ruler Xi Jinping's announced policy of "civil-military fusion," there is no longer any meaningful distinction between civil and military research, especially in areas like AI that Xi has determined China must dominate. As Bob Work, once U.S. deputy defense secretary, [said](#) of the new facility in the Chinese capital, "Anything that's going on in that center is going to be used by the

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military.”

Similarly, acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan sounded the alarm at that Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on March 14. “The fusion of commercial business with military is significant,” he said. “The technology that is developed in the civil world transfers to the military world. It’s a direct pipeline. Not only is there a transfer, there’s also systematic theft of U.S. technology that facilitates even faster development of emerging technology.”

Google’s work with the University of Science and Technology of China is perhaps the most sensitive. Weichert, who publishes the Weichert Report, [told](#) radio host John Batchelor in October that Google has expressed interest in investing in and [contributing personnel](#) to a new Chinese quantum computer center in Anhui province, slated to be operational next year.

The National Laboratory for Quantum Information Sciences, a multi-billion-dollar facility taking up 86 acres, will conduct both civilian and military research and, according to Weichert, has close links with the People’s Liberation Army. The University of Science and Technology of China is a participant in the lab’s projects.

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Google’s AI efforts in China, Weichert says, will require the company to expand its cloud computing capabilities in the country—it is [exploring cooperation with China’s Tencent](#) in this area—and it will need quantum computing. Google will be making substantial contributions to China’s advancement of these critical technologies.

Of all companies, Google should know that any research conducted in China will find its ways into the hands of the Communist Party and the Chinese central government. Theft for Google is not a theoretical concern. China, after all, [stole Google’s source code](#) back in 2010. (The Chinese government said Google’s claim about an attack by hackers based in China was “groundless.”)

Google must know that China’s military, which reports to the Party, will benefit directly from its research.

As Weichert told me, “China has been anticipating this for a few years and they are making moves to coopt Google research on quantum as best as they can, just as they did with Western manufacturing firms 20 years ago.”

“The Chinese,” he said, “are replicating the very same behavior they used to gut the manufacturing sector from the United States.” “And they are applying those techniques and capabilities in gutting America’s high tech sector.” Enticement, theft, and forced transfer are commonplace in both multi-decade efforts.

As Google moves closer toward work with China’s military, it is distancing itself from the U.S. military. The company bowed to [protests from thousands of its employees](#) last June, issuing a [statement](#) committing itself not to “design or deploy AI” for “weapons or other technologies whose principal purpose or implementation is to cause or directly facilitate injury to people.”

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As a result, Google is walking away from the Pentagon. It is [not renewing the Project Maven contract](#), an AI project, and it has [decided not to compete for the JEDI cloud computing project](#).

“By refusing to help the U.S. government to obtain necessary advantages to defend freedom, Google is only accelerating the day in which China achieves its goal of a global digital dictatorship,” Richard Fisher of the Virginia-based International Assessment and Strategy Center told The Daily Beast.

So Google is helping the Chinese military in applications that are certainly lethal while not participating in similar American efforts. The company deserves condemnation for this choice.

As questionable as Google’s decision appears, this matter is ultimately not a Google issue. Corporate executives are not charged with defining and implementing national security policy.

This is a U.S. leadership issue. Until the American political system identifies China as an enemy or merely a foe—something that should have been done some time ago—Google is free to work for Beijing, however wrong that cooperation is.

President Donald Trump has [mentioned the problem on Twitter](#), but what’s required is far more comprehensive than a tweet.

The way to get Google to stop working for China is to make it illegal to do so. That’s up to 536 individuals who are often found in Washington, D.C.: President Trump, 100 senators, and 435 members of the House of Representatives.

- [Gordon G. Chang](#)

[@GordonGChang](#)