



SEMINAR

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Internet Suzerainty

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The global proliferation of the Internet has given rise to a debate about civil rights and liberties online. Comparative studies have focused on how different countries limit or suspend online civil rights. Some studies have resulted in findings of interesting similarities between unlikely subjects. China and Turkey are two countries where there seem to be unexpected similarities in political interference online. The aim of this project is to further investigate what the similarities are and how they can be explained. The hypothesis is that there are fundamental political traditions of suzerainty in both countries. Suzerainty is a political order under which individuals and civil society actors can be granted relatively high autonomy while submitting to authoritarian rule. This allows for authoritarian governance of networks of independent and autonomous subjects. Suzerainty is often used to describe the political history of the Ottoman and Qing empires. Is the concept still relevant for understanding contemporary online politics in Turkey and China?