

## How Obama might find a way to limit carbon emissions in his second term

By: Ronald Brownstein — February 20, 2013

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As its censorship prowess has shown, the Chinese government is great at removing things from the Internet. What it's not so great at, though, is creating things. Things that its people might plausibly want. Things that other businesses would eventually want to spend money on.

A recent hullaballoo over internet censorship captures these points perfectly. It all began in 2010 with the appointment of a former Olympic ping-pong goddess, Deng Yaping, to head the launch of a search engine by the state-owned People's Daily newspaper. Despite government assurances that a Cambridge economics doctorate had prepared Deng for the role, the pick seemed political. At the time of her appointment, Deng was deputy secretary of the Beijing Municipal Committee of the Communist Youth League of China, a powerful group associated with China's more populist political faction.

Deng's vision was to build the search engine in the image of Google, as Caijing reports. The name, "Jike" ("instantly" in Chinese), was settled on because it sounded like "geek," a word the People's Daily thought of as "representing a computer expert or enthusiast." But what those computer experts or enthusiasts created was an engine with a thick ideological filter.

And unfortunately for Jike, Chinese internet users either aren't up for ideological filtration or don't know the search engine exists. Jike's market share is infinitesimal—as in, less than 0.0001% ([link in Chinese](#)). Baidu, for comparison, claims at least 70%.

So on Feb. 16, tech blog Huxiu quoted an anonymous Jike source saying the company has spent 2 billion yuan (\$320 million) and that the People's Daily deputy editor wanted a quarter of Jike's staff cut. The blog-post instantly sparked media attention. By the next morning, Kai-fu Lee, the former head of Google China and current venture capitalist, leapt into the fray.

On Lee's Sina Weibo microblog, which has 30 million followers, he wondered, among other things, why taxpayer money was being invested in developing a search engine and why the Communist Party had appointed its head. "If back in the day America's Democratic Party had appointed [Olympic swimmer] Michael Phelps to be the CEO of Google, could Google have beaten Yahoo and become the leading search engine?" wrote Lee, according to Fei Chang Dao, a blog that monitors free-speech issues in China.

Later on Feb. 17, as Fei Chang Dao documented, posts relating to "Kai-fu Lee banned" and "Kai-fu Lee banned from speaking" had been blocked. Lee explained on Twitter that Sina and Tencent had barred him from microblogging for three days. Meanwhile, the "relevant departments" told Huxiu to pull the post. (Huxiu complied, but left up a clunky English version.)

Then late that evening, the Global Times—another party mouthpiece—reported that Jike is *not* cutting jobs. In fact, it's *adding* jobs. And the reason is that it's “focused on building up its technology, not gaining profits.”

What's more, Jike does indeed have plans for differentiation. “With the support of the government, it aims to release the latest food and drug safety information to the public, which will set them apart from rivals,” a Jike public relations staffer told the Global Times. Take that, Kai-fu Lee.