JMMUN
JAPAN METROPOLITAN MODEL UNITED NATIONS

United Nations
Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Background Guide Topic:

Discussing the Ethics of a Social Credit System

Director's Note

Dear Delegates,

Thank you for participating in the Japan Metropolitan Model United Nation conference 2020. My name is Kano Katayama, and I will be the director for Intermediate committee 2. All of us chairs in this committee is very excited to have this conference, and we hope to have a memorable time.

As a little introduction of myself, I would like to share some of my past Model UN experiences. I started participating in MUN in my first year of junior high school. My first ever simulation was at Senzoku, and I still remember being very nervous to speak up in front of many senpais. At the time I participated in simulations without preparing enough research on my country, and every time, I regretted it. Researching and really knowing your country's stance can become your first step to confidence and actually participating in a conference. Recently, I participated in a conference at New York, and learned from other participants' speeches and leadership skills coming from many different countries. This conference made me become even more intrigued in MUN. There are many skills you can learn from conferences and other participants, and I hope this conference will also be a great conference for delegates too.

Moving on to our committee, United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), we will be discussing the ethics of social credit system. Because the social credit system is currently running only in China, please note that we will focus on China's social credit system at times. Furthermore, some subtopics we will also be discussing are ethics, human rights, adaptation of social credit system in other countries, and privacy protection. Us chairs look forward to an active discussion in these areas.

As I have mentioned, making a speech at Model UN can be frightening, However, with enough preparation, MUN will become a fun event for all delegates. This committee is an intermediate committee, so we may experience difficulties during discussions, and this is all right. We are here to make mistakes, and I hope you will learn many skills from this conference.

I hope you have a wonderful time in this conference! We are looking forward to meeting delegates at JMMUN!

Sincerely,

Kano Katayama, Director
United Nations Human Rights Council
Senzoku Gakuen Model United Nations Club
Japan Metropolitan Model United Nations 2019

History of the Committee

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them. The Council is made up of 47 United Nations member states, replacing the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

The Council was created by the United Nations General Assembly on March 15, 2006. Ever since the creation, UNHRC has been taking actions to provide a forum for identifying, highlighting, and developing responses to today's human rights challenges and act as the principal focal point of human rights research, education, public information, and advocacy activities in the United Nations system.[1]

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[1] United Nations Human Rights Council. "Welcome to the Human Rights Council." *Ohrhr.org*, Ohrhr.org, https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/pages/aboutcouncil.aspx

Statement of the problem

Ethics

One of the key reasons on why China decided to carry on the Social Credit System is to make citizens act ethically. As a developing country that has recently gained a very high and stabilized economy, there is a large difference between the development of economy and social security in terms of people's safety. For a solution to alert and warn citizens with unsatisfiable morals and behaviors, the government of China has been developing the Social Credit System for about five years now. Governments and political leaders clearly see this system as a way to make the country ethical, thus leading to a safer country as a whole. Despite this, Social Credit System still has many issues to combat for it to become successful and be able to achieve what the country wants. First of all, there are not enough transparency on how this system is runned for the citizens to decide the reliability of this system. China is planning and is creating an algorithm which contains many factors to score each individual. However, this will mean that individuals will be judged from only one perspective. With a lack of transparency, there is a small percentage of presentiment that some

might fiddle with the algorithm and control the scores.

Privacy Protection

The Chinese government is planning to put the names of people who have low scores on a blacklist which will be released to the citizens. Although government officials are announcing that this will be done to be responsible for one's actions, this aspect of Social Credit System will take time to be accepted by the government. Furthermore, regulations regarding the Social Credit System has not been established enough to determine the lines of what can and cannot do. Lack of privacy protection might lead to other technology related crimes as well.

Freedom of Expression

With the Chinese Communist Party in control of the Chinese government, the government stands in a position that limiting "freedom of expression enables the government to better monitor potentially problematic social issues"[2] (Congressional-Executive Commission of China) and has gained criticisms regarding this in recent years. Making Social Credit System mandatory will limit freedom of expressions even more.

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[2] "Freedom of Expression in China: A Privilege, Not a Right." *Freedom of Expression in China: A Privilege, Not a Right | Congressional-Executive Commission on China*, 0AD, www.cecc.gov/freedom-of-expression-in-china-a-privilege-not-a-right.

Right now, many private companies are practicing the use of Social Credit System. With this, a Chinese journalist called Liu Hu was listed in the black-list for transmitting information which goes against the policies of Chinese authorities. Increasing the spreading of Social Credit System will make cases such as this appear more often in the world.

Current Situation

Social Credit System is a Chinese government based reputation system that assesses the citizens' trustability. By 2020, it is intended to standardize this system to all residents in China mainland.

If a citizen has a moderately low score, s/he will be subject to restrictions on such as but not limited to transportation, internet services, education and employment.

Regional Situations

Africa

One of the positive impact of the Social Credit System is that this will create a new source for money lenders to rely when lending a some sort of valuable product. With many of the countries in Africa either still developing or recently became developed, many countries have opened eyes to take in this system in their own countries. Many governments and private companies are considering to implement a similar sort of system.

North America

The United States of America

There is a possibility of the social credit system being implemented in the United States. China started their social credit system using database from companies such as Bach, Alibaba and Tencent. In the U.S, GAFA (Google Apple Facebook Amazon) are major IT companies. These companies gather personal information from users all over the U.S., and this information could be used by the government. In 2018, Facebook started a program "that assigns every user a reputation score, which predicts their trustworthiness" (kazusa research)[3]. These similarities between China and the U.S. show future implementations of the social credit system in the U.S.

Canada

Canada's Risk-drive Tracking device (RTD) "provides a standardized means of gathering de-identified information on situations of elevated risk for communities implementing multi-sectoral risk intervention models, such as Situation Tables."(Ministry of Community and Correctional Services)[4]. RTD's methods are similar to the social credit system in China, concerning the problem of privacy. RTD Officials claim that data collected through this system is "de-identified"(Breitbart)[5], removing personal details such as name and date of birth. However, there is no certain proof that all information is kept anonymous, therefore there is a possibility of RTD becoming similar to the social credit system in China.

South America

Ecuador

Police in Ecuador control security cameras and scan the streets for drug dealers and murders. Ecuador uses monitors made with technology from China, a country with the current ongoing social credit system. According to The New York Times, "Ecuador's system, which was installed in 2011, is a basic version of a program of computerized controls that Beijing has

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[3] "China's Social Credit System - It's Coming to the US." Katusa Research, 24 Apr.2019,katusaresearch.com/chinas-social-credit-system-coming-to-united-states/.

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[5] Hayward, John. "Canada's 'Risk Tracking Database' Similar to China's Social Credit System." *Breitbart*, 1 Mar. 2019, www.breitbart.com/national-security/2019/02/28/canada-creates-risk-tracking-database-disturbing-parallels-chinas-social-credit-system/#.

spent billions to build out over a decade of technological progress"(The New York Times)[6]. Critics warn that these systems could lead to loss of individual's privacy. Furthermore, there is a possibility that technology used in these systems are used for darker purposes for example, by the government.

Asia

China

By 2020, China plans to implement Social Credit System to rank all its citizens based on "social credit," ie. trustability. People can be rewarded or punished according to their scores, which is heavily influenced by individuals' behaviours and actions, specifically adherence to law and compliance with the government's ideological framework. At the moment, this system has not been forced upon every citizen, however, several cities and companies are attempting to gradually increase its importance on reliability and credibility in China. Although experimentally, a website listing names of "bad citizens" already exists.

According to a survey done by the Washington Post, approximately 80% of the Chinese respondents approve Social Credit system. The news engine has also discovered the fact that wealthier individuals are more prone to finding the system effective than poor people. Furthermore, is should also be considered that social trust among the Chinese society is extremely low. [7]

Japan

One June 27th, LINE introduced one of its most ambitious in-app services: LINE Score. LINE Score is "an AI-driven social credit rating system that will provide deals and various offers to users based on their score. A separate loan service called Line Pocket Money will determine rates and credit limits based on a user's Line Score,"[8] states *the Verge*. However, this newly implemented system greatly differs from that of China, for firstly LINE will not share the scores with third-party organizations and secondly, at least currently, LINE does not plan to integrate LINE Score with non-LINE services.

Europe

[6] Mozur, Paul, et al. "Made in China, Exported to the World: The Surveillance State." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 24 Apr. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/04/24/technology/ecuador-surveillance-cameras-police-government.html.

[7] "China's Social Credit System - It's Coming to the US." Katusa Research, 24 Apr. 2019
[8] Byford, Sam. "Line announces social credit scores, a Google Duplex competitor, and much more"

In Europe, credit systems are not as penetrated as in China. However, credit systems are being used in the area of education: ECTS. The EU created European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) as a way to "make it easier for students to move between countries and to have their academic qualifications and study periods abroad recognised."(European Commision)[9] This system works very similar to the Social Credit System which is being developed in China. Students will earn points based on their academic results and achievements, that will be used to evaluate which stage the student is at academically.

Europe and China has built their friendship for over 40 years now. As much as Europe influences China, China influences Europe even more because of their trade systems and cultural exchanges that is being held together. Now, Europe is starting to feel fear towards China's new system. In order to be resilient whenever China tries to promote the Social Credit System, EU is planning to enhance their democratic resilience in order to oppose against China. Recently, an independent expert group in Europe called High-Level Expert Group has proposed a remote that insists on banning all AI system that scores people, and promote

a more strengthened regulations regarding the use of AI.

Relevant UN Actions

China's two guidelines on social credit system was issued by the State Council on January 5th, 2017. The two guidelines specified priorities in building the social credit system. "Real-name registration will be promoted in the fields of the internet, postal services, telecommunication and financial accounts to expedite the formation of personal credit records" (UNPAN)[10]. Individuals will track records in areas such as traffic safety and paying taxes, while professionals such as civil servants and doctors will be the first to register their credit profile. People who gain points will be given benefits in education and employment. On the other hand, people who lose points may suffer as some wrongdoings will be made public. In addition, China offers better protection of personal information and privacy, introducing "a mechanism to restore mistaken and damaged credit records"(UNPAN)[11], and third-party

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[9] BONJEAN, Dominique. "European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)."

[10] UNPAN - United Nations Public Administration Network. "China Speeds Up Creation of Social Credit System-UNPAN - United Nations Public Administration Network."

[11]

institutions will also participate in this system.

UN Resolution

Currently, UN is specializing in researching and collecting information, with UNPAN taking the lead.

On November 26th 2013, the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee adopted a resolution, focusing on human rights regarding privacy. This resolution that was sponsored by Brazil and Germany surely had a significant impact to the world, regarding the valuable information it contained. However, the United States and their allies managed to exclude a "clause in an earlier draft stating that mass surveillance is a violation of human rights".[12]

On March 26th, 2015, UN Human Rights Council members passed a resolution[13] regarding privacy and human rights on the internet to adapt to the digital age as well as to ensure the safety of internet users. The advancement of technology has led to countless positive effects, yet, the committee emphasized the fact governments can also manipulate and avail the information of their citizens without their content. This resolution:

- Reviews the collection of communication history and personal data in order to avoid unwanted manipulation of private information,
- Strengthens the international and domestic legislations on internet privacy,
- Encourages private sectors to preserve human rights online,
- Helps developing nations to adapt to the digital age in a safe manner, and
- Raises awareness on governments' ability to monitor citizens' private information and on the importance of protecting human rights and freedom on the internet.

Possible Solutions

Please be aware that listed below are just ideas on how delegates could solve this problem. It does **not** mean that they must choose their stances from the list.

- Social Credit System should be banned worldwide, including mainland China.
- Social Credit System should be implemented into every country.
- Social Credit System should be regulated to protect individuals' rights and privacy.
- Governments should take total responsibility of Social Credit System.

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[12] "UN Committee Adopts Resolution Against Mass Internet Surveillance."
[13] "UN: Major Step on Internet Privacy."

- Private companies should take total responsibility of Social Credit System.
- It should be investigated to what degree Social Credit System can influence an individual's quality of life.

Questions to Consider

- What is your country's stance on social credit system? Is your country for adapting social credit system? If so, why does your country think this way?
- What are the pros and cons of social credit system?
- What does your country think of China's social credit system?
- What is your country's ethics? Based on your country's ethics, is it possible for your country to adapt social credit system?
- Has your country taken any past actions regarding social credit system?
- What is your country's opinion on human rights and privacy protection?
- What is a solution for the current social credit system in China?

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