

## Handout 1 for Techniques for Reviewing Vocabulary

Extract from:

# China's 'splinternet' will create a state-controlled alternative cyberspace

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As part of that mission, Raab announced a £22m investment in a British-funded cyber-operations hub in **Africa**, hoping that the continent might be charmed into playing cyber ally. The bad news is, **Africa** has already found a partner.

It has been showered with Chinese investment for decades. As I write, Beijing is planning to lay undersea cables along Africa's western and eastern coasts to provide internet access to previously neglected towns and villages. Connectivity sounds like progress, and many in Africa are understandably pleased.

But here's the problem: the Chinese are **building their own internet**, in a potential fragmentation that has been called the "splinternet", an alternative cyberspace in which Britain does not even get a look in, unless invited. Many developing countries are likely to sign up to it.

The Chinese version of cyberspace would be separate and ideologically distinct. Beijing is not interested in improving the existing internet in an interoperable and open way, or helping the world become more resilient to cyber-attacks. It is engaged in creating a completely different digital architecture, complete with its own ideological governance and values – and incompatible with our own.

In building this architecture, the Chinese have turned to an unlikely freedom-loving technology: blockchain. It's a word that baffles many people. But it's simply a decentralised, digital network made up of blocks of data stored on nodes – and all our laptops could be nodes linked in a chain, which means we are all connected without censorship or interruption.

Part of the attraction of blockchain is supposed to be that it is a peer-to-peer system with no intermediaries and, crucially, no central power. But China plans to subvert that because the

Chinese state would own the blockchain, and have its agents operating each node. The Chinese Communist party would have the power to monitor every communication in perpetuity.

The blockchain would become a superpowered tracking device and a warehouse of data on an unimaginable scale. How is Britain's African cyberhub going to help prevent all that?

Any country signing up to China's splinternet would almost certainly expose its people to the same levels of state control. For some leaders, that would be tolerated as a byproduct of China's technological benevolence, as Beijing hands out free internet to Africa. To others, it would be welcomed as an opportunity to subjugate their own people. It would, in effect, herald the beginning of a new cold war-style split, not between east and west, but between an open and free internet, and one used to control and oppress.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/03/chinas-splinternet-blockchain-state-control-of-cyberspace> (Accessed on 03/06/21)