

Ousmane Ndure

Ms. Raasu

English 1113, Section 34

1 October 2013

Breaking down the Great Firewall of China:
The Endemic Issue of Internet Censorship

The Internet has evolved to the stage where it has the capacity to contain information on everything we know, say, or do. It is perhaps the most evolutionary invention in the history of human development. The Internet has had a profound impact on the way we live our lives; one of the greatest uses of the internet is that it allows one to connect with the rest of the world, and this is becoming more apparent as innovators reveal new media for people to share information. However, despite the immense utility of the internet, there is a vast amount of information that is at anyone's disposal. The vulnerability of this information is in that it can be accessed by anyone, and some governments are not comfortable with their country's information being available to others. In 2000, China's government resorted to implementing Internet censorship in order to suppress the people's free-access to information on the Internet. Since its conception, there have been numerous debates aimed at evaluating China's decision to enact censorship at a time when the world is facing rapid development in communication technology. The censorship police's draconian measures in enforcing the policy have also been spotlighted; anyone who violated their internet

censorship policy could be subjected to non-commensurate punishment. The consensus of those who oppose the censorship act is that it is a violation of the Chinese people's right to free speech, as articulated on their 1982 Constitution. However, in order to bolster the argument against the Internet censorship, one must consider the changes that would follow if the censorship act were to be repealed. The purpose of this essay is to justify the point that China should accept a compromise between free expression and censorship on the Internet. The essay explores and evaluates the internet censorship policy in China, and covers a quasi-proleptic analysis of China's development so as to adumbrate the possible effects of repealing the censorship.

China has come a long way with regards to socioeconomic development. For this reason, it is understandable that the governing party would want to take measures to protect the Chinese citizens and preserve their future. The Chinese government purports that they have benign reasons for imposing censorship on their Internet, although they have remained silent about allegations that they intend to suppress free speech amongst the people. One of the proponents for the censorship of the Internet is that it could lead to societal amelioration. The Chinese government may aim to restrict their country's youth from being exposed to pornographic material on the internet. In this regard, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) dons the figure of a guardian against "spiritual pollution" (Sebag-Montefiore). Furthermore, the CCP would certainly want to censor the information on the

internet for the sake of national security. China is now revered as one of the world's most powerful nations due to its prominent economic and military status. For this reason, China must employ measures that promise to prevent any vital information about China from being accessed by any of her enemies. For a nation that is facing potential threat from enemies in foreign countries, the "needs of scientific openness and national security must be carefully balanced" (Wallerstein 212); these enemies may be interested in accessing information or designs on China's bounty of highly destructive weaponry. Hence, the CCP would aim to censor information on the Internet to ensure that their scientists refrain from making such information widely available to the public. On the contrary, there have been claims that CCP has a more malignant ulterior motive for censoring the internet; they intend to suppress free expression so as to prevent the people from using it as an impetus for political change.

The power of speech resonates throughout history in the voices of the valiant people who stood up against strong opposition to represent what they believed in. Although one could probably argue that the Chinese should learn from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X, it is crucial to note that it is a very difficult task to speak up against the CCP. Ironically, China's constitution has a very democratic structure, even more so than that of the USA; the constitution of the USA has a Republican structure. In fact, Article 35 of the constitution of the People's Republic of China dictates that the "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of