

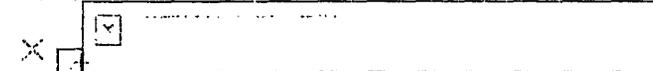
RELEASE IN PART
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From: sbwhoep [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2010 10:20 PM
To: H
Subject: H: early review. Sid

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H: Jim Fallows told me he was at your speech and thrilled by it. He's just returned from three years in China. He didn't expect you would be so frank. Here's his post on The Atlantic website. Sid

http://jamesfallows.theatlantic.com/archives/2010/01/a_momentous_40_hours.php#more



[x Hillary Clinton's "Internet freedom" speech | Main](#)

A momentous 40 hours, leading to Clinton/China/Internet

21 Jan 2010 04:12 pm

Apart from two obvious pieces of momentous news in the past day-and-a-half -- the new junior Senator from Massachusetts, and the new Buckley v. Valeo (by which I mean today's lamentable, straight-party-line Supreme Court ruling that removes limits from direct corporate underwriting of political campaigns) -- there is one other event today that will have big ripple effects. I mean SecState Hillary Clinton's speech this morning about "Internet Freedom," mentioned here and with a prelude discussion here.

I'm not going to take time for a thorough gloss of the speech. Instead I highly recommend reading the full text, here, or watching the official video, here. And for now some of the main points while listening (and noting main points down in real time with the handy LiveScribe pen.)

- In contrast to the dreamy Internet optimism of a decade or so ago -- I'm not naming names, but I remember! -- when many people imagined that info technology, by itself, would undermine oppression and bring the world together, Clinton started off with a very astringent reminder that this technology, like others, was neither good or bad in itself and is already being used in both helpful and destructive ways:

"Amid this unprecedented surge in connectivity, we must also recognize that these technologies are not an unmitigated blessing. These tools are also being exploited to undermine human progress and political rights. Just as steel can be used to build hospitals or machine guns, or nuclear power can either energize a city or destroy it, modern information networks and the technologies they support can be harnessed for good or for ill. The same networks that help organize movements for freedom also enable al-Qaida to spew hatred and incite violence against the innocent. And technologies with the potential to open up access to government and promote transparency can also be hijacked by governments to crush dissent and deny human rights."

And a very nice pivot out of this section, effective because it's so blunt and plain:

"On their own, new technologies do not take sides in the struggle for freedom and progress, but the United States does."

- Underscoring the "this is a big deal" tone of the speech, she enumerated the "Four Freedoms" that FDR proclaimed in 1941, as part of the struggle for the world's future, and said there were a comparable set of Four Freedoms for the Internet age. Check out the speech yourself for details.

- The China surprise: the speech was a more frontal challenge to Chinese internet and overall censorship policy than I expected, and than I recall in other US-China interactions in a very long time. For instance, early in the speech, an itemization of the places where suppression is getting worse:

"In the last year, we've seen a spike in threats to the free flow of information. China, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan have stepped up their censorship of the internet. In Vietnam, access to popular social networking sites has suddenly disappeared. And last Friday in Egypt, 30 bloggers and activists were detained."

Tunisia, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Egypt -- this is not the grouping of countries that the Chinese government, in its recent sense of rise to superpower status, is used to being lumped with. Compared to the US as a financial power, OK; overtaking Japan in economic size, yes; being a crucial player in environmental negotiations... all that is one thing. Bracketed in the same sentence with Tunisia and Uzbekistan is different. Sentences like this don't appear in formal, big-deal SecState addresses by accident.

Other passages to the same effect:

"As I speak to you today, government censors somewhere are working furiously to erase my words from the records of history. But history itself has already condemned these tactics...."

"Those who disrupt the free flow of information in our society or any other pose a threat to our economy, our government, and our civil society. Countries or individuals that engage in cyber attacks should face consequences and international condemnation...."

And then the Google section itself.

I had wondered whether the speech would mention Google by name -- and had reason to think it might not. (Main argument for leaving it implicit rather than referring directly to the Google case: in the company's ongoing efforts to find a "win-win-win" acceptable way to remain in China, rather than a lose-lose-lose permanent split, it's not necessarily a help to have the U.S. government standing officially by its side.) But the way Sec. Clinton introduced the point was significant: as a proxy for China's own ability to fulfill its potential; and sustain its economic rise:

"To use market terminology, a publicly listed company in Tunisia or Vietnam that operates in an environment of censorship will always trade at a discount relative to an identical firm in a free society. If corporate decision makers don't have access to global sources of news and information, investors will have less confidence in their decisions over the long term. Countries that censor news and information must recognize that from an economic standpoint, there is no distinction between censoring political speech and commercial speech. If businesses in your nations are denied access to either type of information, it will inevitably impact on growth.

"Increasingly, U.S. companies are making the issue of internet and information freedom a greater consideration in their business decisions. I hope that their competitors and foreign governments will pay close attention to this trend. The most recent situation involving Google has attracted a great deal of interest. And we look to the Chinese authorities to conduct a thorough review of the cyber intrusions that led Google to make its announcement. And we also look for that investigation and its results to be transparent.

"The internet has already been a source of tremendous progress in China, and it is fabulous. There are so many people in China now online. But countries that restrict free access to information or violate the basic rights of internet users risk walling themselves off from the progress of the next century. Now, the United States and China have different views on this issue, and we intend to address those differences candidly and consistently in the context of our positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship."

There's a lot more in the speech, including about terrorism, disaster relief, religion, etc -- but it's there for the reading. Back to the to-do list for me now.

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