

**Forum:** Special Political and Decolonisation Committee  
**Issue:** Ensuring the freedom of political speech over the Internet  
**Student Officer:** Angelina Tsilimpari  
**Position:** Co-chair

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Angelina Tsilimpari and I will be serving as Co- chair on the Political and Decolonization Committee in this year's PS conference. I have participated in eight conferences up to now and this will be my third time chairing. I am an IB1 student at Costeas- Geitonas School and though I thought I expected to have more difficulty dealing with such a demanding program, I admit that I find myself doing really well.

Over the three day span of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of March I will do my best in order to assist and consult with you on any problems you have concerning the procedure, resolutions and debate. I hope that my study guide will prove helpful to your research. However, it is my firm belief that you should conduct further research on the topic as well and have a strong understanding of the position of your country on the issue. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions concerning your preparation for the conference.

I am looking forward to meeting you all.

Regards,

Angelina Tsilimpari.

## INTRODUCING TOPIC

The issue of freedom of political speech over the Internet, has become really controversial nowadays as opinions differ on the matter and many people believe that the right to free political speech via the internet, should not exist. There are many states supporting that online political speech should be censored, because it is regarded as a means of propaganda and brainwashing, while others support that it is a way to exchange ideas with people all around the world and should exist with no limitations. The question therefore arises: What does freedom of expression actually entail and how can it be applied correctly?



<http://pilir.blogs.law.pace.edu/2014/09/23/protection-of-desirable-free-speech/>

However, the delegates of the Political and Decolonization committee, are called to find ways and measures which when applied, will ensure that freedom of political speech will exist online and define the limits that should be posed to the freedom of expression, if any.

## DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

### Term 1:

**Political speech:** As defined by the Legal Dictionary, political speech is the non- private expression of comments upon an issue concerning the actions of the government.

### Term 2:

**Freedom of speech:** Freedom of speech is the right people have to express their opinions and views publicly, without intervention of the government and being able to disagree against laws. [11]

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The problem of freedom of political speech started when countries censored media and banned specific sites in their regions. This decision deprived the right from people to express themselves and their ideas online as far as politics are concerned and exchange ideas with other all around the world. Nevertheless, there are two main issues in the pertaining situation: the great controversy that the First Amendment of

the United States Constitution has caused concerning freedom of expression and limits that should be posed and secondly, the long debates upon the issue of “cyberdemocracy” as it is now called.

Specifically, the First Amendment protects the right to freedom of speech, press and expression of people in the United States and none of these rights can be deprived. Furthermore, as far as the second topic is concerned, cyberdemocracy is a new term, which refers to the right of others expressing what they want online and it is closely associated with human rights and the freedom of expression in general. Nonetheless, the issue has gone out of control in some countries and governments

either exaggerate on the measures set or are unable to restore control in the use of the Internet and the way certain views are expressed. Two years ago, there was an issue on WIKIleaks and they were accused for revealing classified documents online, having more information than they were allowed to publish. Specifically, the names of some Americans and Iraqis involved in the Afghanistan war were publically revealed, an unacceptable and unethical incident since it violated the human rights and anonymity required in such issues.

**THE FIRST AMENDMENT**  
**CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF; OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS; OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.**  
**PROTECT THE FIRST AMENDMENT, SUPPORT THE CBLDF**

<http://freedomoutpost.com/2014/11/actually-protected-first-amendment/>

### Benefits of existence of political speech over the Internet

Firstly, using the Internet as a means of expression gives the opportunity to speakers internationally to speak their minds and address a larger audience, concerned in politics and other global issues. Proponents of this view, claim that it totally represents democracy and all member states should be supported to allow political speeches on the Internet. Moreover, it cannot be doubted that the Internet has offered humans the chance to discuss and debate on public and non-public issues and communicate their messages in another way. However, it was argued that it is a good way to use the Internet in order to solve several problems that have occurred in many democracies during the last century. In fact, it is a cheap and simple way for people to get informed about issues of great concern and even motivate voters to vote so as to reduce voter apathy and help citizens contribute in voting procedures in elections. In addition, it is considered as another source of media and provides political organization in certain times. Through the hot debates taking place in social networks everyday and blogs, political candidates have the chance to engage in these debates and provoke thinking to the ones commenting and expressing their opinions, as well as persuade them for their stance.

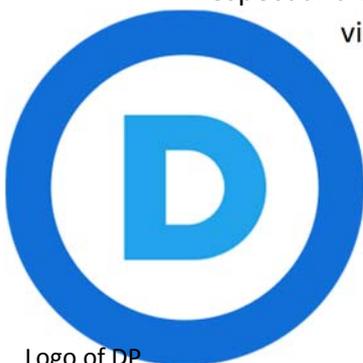
## Disadvantages of existence of political speech over the Internet

However, there are some disadvantages concerning political speech via the Internet. There are issues prevailing on the kind of material uploaded on the Internet such as cartoons published on blogs being offensive towards politicians and other public officials. There have been many cases in which people have uploaded offensive, critical and provocative material and thus hot debates have started online, having devastating results. Moreover, media in general tend to distort information and when it comes especially to the Internet, there is a greater potential of distortion of political information given because the audience addressed is wider and interests play an important role as well. Another great disadvantage is that the information published online can be really harmful for a country as a whole, as anyone can post something and they may not have the expertise of distinguishing whether something is right or harmful, due to the fact that when it comes to politics a great level of subjectivity is present. Thus, when such information is published on the web it is hard to come down and it may influence the rest of the society as well. Furthermore, political opinions can be posted online anonymously thus enlarging the already existing problem. Finally, one of the most crucial issues is that documents uploaded may “provide information about patterns of behavior, about tactics, procedures and techniques” [19] used to handle economic, social and political issues. Either way, if such information is published online, opponents will be able to know how to beat down the government and this will lead to a disastrous situation.

## COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

### United States of America:

The role of the United States of America in this issue is substantial mainly due to the First Amendment of the US constitution concerning the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment prohibits the establishment of any law by the Congress concerning respect and establishment of any new religion, diminishing the freedom of speech and violating the freedom of press in publishing materials [9]. Moreover, the Democratic party is the second contemporary political party in the United States with the Republican party existing earlier and it holds minority control in issues concerning the state. Its president now is the president of the US, Barack Obama and concerning the topic, his aim is to alter the presentation of political campaigns uploaded on the Internet and reduce political speech on the Internet.



Logo of DP

### China:

The Chinese Government has long kept a strict position and posed measures as far as the media are concerned, so as to avoid having any problems occurring with the authority of the country. The severity of censorship started in 2013 and since then, bloggers and journalists have been jailed and the government has managed to control what is uploaded on the Internet through firewalls and monitoring systems, even banning some terms in Google search. Although the authorities promote citizen's freedom of expression and speech, they are allowed to take down from the Internet everything that may reveal state issues and the country has "*revised its existing Law on Guarding State Secrets to tighten control over information flows*" [12]. All in all, it appears that the Chinese government is not keen in giving their people the right of freedom of speech and press.

### Russian Federation:

Russia is another country that banned the use of Facebook, Gmail and Skype in the country so as to prevent terrorism incidents from occurring and safeguarding data. Additionally, all three companies were requested to return any data concerning Russian citizens being members of the companies. Moreover, the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, has signed a bill with the aim to reduce online attacks from his opponents and so the citizens of the country push the government to keep a less domestic stance in their policies concerning the use of the Internet in general.

### Turkey:

The Turkish government has also faced similar problems as they tried to censor certain companies and especially Twitter, by asking to disseminate any documents and audio recordings of Turkish citizens and after the denial of the company the Turkish president banned the use of this specific social network within the country. After all, Facebook was blocked as well in Turkey and so political candidates did not have the opportunity to advertise themselves in a way through the creation of pages and so on. Additionally, people did not have the chance to exchange ideas and debate neither on Twitter nor on Facebook, considering both social networks as the larger in our era.

### FEC:

FEC stands for Federal Election Commission which is an agency created by the Congress made up of six members each one of them serving for six years. The main idea of this agency is to "administer and enforce the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) - the statute that governs the financing of federal elections" [3]. However, what

FEC democrat want to do now is to set limits so as to have better control over political speeches published online.

#### OSCE:

OSCE stand for Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe and it is the organization representative for the media. It is considered as the largest security organization in Europe consisted of 55 states from Europe, Central Asia and North America as well. Furthermore, OSCE has expressed its deep concern on issues dealing with freedom of expression and has created a separate institution to handle all type of such issues coming up.

#### UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, EVENTS AND TRIETIES

##### Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 19):

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly and it mainly provides the human right standards signed by all member states of the UN. Article 19, is the one referring to the right of freedom of speech and expression given to people all around the world.

##### International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (article 19):

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is a treaty adopted from the UN General Assembly in 1966 and afterwards came in force in 1976. It consists of 74 signatories and 168 parties among them the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Turkey, China, Sweden and many more. The Covenant deals with the promotion and respect of political and civil rights as well as freedom of expression and speech and lastly electoral rights and right to life, are also mentioned.

##### Global Online Freedom of Act:

The Global Online Freedom of Act refers to the promotion of freedom of speech and expression online. In order to do so, according to it U.S. businesses were not allowed to cooperate with other governments that had violated the freedom of speech right, by using the Internet as a means for censorship. This, was approved by the Subcommittee on Africa, Human Rights of U.S. House of Representatives and Global Health.

### First Resolution on Internet Free Speech:

In July 6<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> 2012 the UN Human Rights Council adopted this resolution in Geneva in order to promote and ensure protection of free speech on the Internet including all topics, political, economical, humanitarian and so on. Furthermore, among the 47 members who approved the adoption of the resolution was China and Cuba along with the United States of America and Sweden being co-submitters.

### UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression:

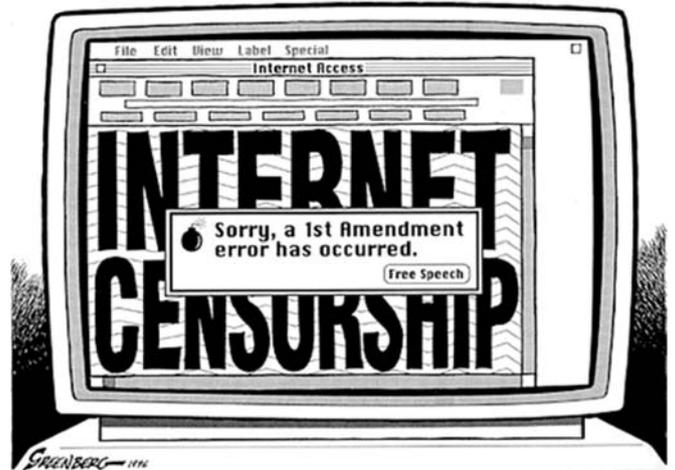
There have been several attempts to solve the issue especially from the United Nations. More specifically, a special rapporteur wrote a report “on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression” [17], which investigates the challenges faced from individuals to publish and seek information through the Internet. The report mainly provides arguments in favor of the protection of human rights concerning freedom of speech over the Internet and specifies in political speech towards the end of the report, giving possible ideas to balance the pertaining situation.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of events</b>
1948	UN Declaration on Human Rights
1952	Convention on the International Right of Correction
1976	Adoption of ICCPR
1996	Adoption of Communication Decency Act
2000	Declaration of Internet access as a basic human right by Esthonia.
2011	Global Online Freedom Act
2012	First Resolution on Internet Free Speech
May 3	World Press Freedom Day

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

There are many possible solutions one can discern in order to solve the problem concerning freedom of political speech and ensuring its existence over the Internet. The key word is balance. So as to protect the right of freedom of speech and expressing in terms of democracy, no democratic government should be allowed to censor expression over the Internet. Therefore, one possible solution could be the restriction to published information. In other words, in order to solve the issue governments are to impose as little restriction as possible to the content published online, but still keep control of what is being published in order to avoid provocation of opponents. In other words, if they do so they will manifest their will not violate the right of freedom of speech in general and they will also have the chance to exchange ideas internationally as well as get a deeper insight on other political situations around the world. Secondly, another idea would be the adoption of criminal laws and rules on Internet expression. This means that all member states can be called to create new laws or, their own rules on Internet expression and thus they will be able to distinguish whether something published can be considered as a crime or not. For instance, a cartoon making fun of a politician may be extremely offensive and disrespectful and in many states it can be considered as a crime. In addition to, journalism plays a substantial role in the way the freedom of speech and expression is applied. Hence, as far as restrictions are concerned, governments could impose special constraints in the way journalists are allowed to express their views on certain topics. In fact, the incidence occurring recently in France was thought by many to be a fault of journalists, who made satirical cartoons of a specific religion that were, according to some, extremely provocative. So, if there was a specific international legal framework based on the regulation of journalistic practices, there would be no war of words. Also, another effective idea could be to call governments to review the current application of legal standards and hate speech laws (if existed and if not they should be implemented) and afterwards impose their own regulations according to their stance on the matter. Last but not least, campaigns could be launched in order to inform people about their right to freedom of expression as well as, informing them about what it entails finally and how it can be applied correctly. In other words, in which cases it can be criticized as offensive, provoking, right and so on.



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