The role of free press in the United States political system

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# Introduction

The Press is considered as an important tool of communication between politicians and the public. In the present times, there is hardly any phenomena that have remained uninfluenced by the press. This is true for every country whether politically stable or not. With time, the press has turned itself as an important instrument of the statecraft. It’s a portrayal of events greatly impact largely on the political sphere of the country. The importance of this can be gauged by its role in the happening of international events. It portrays incidents in such a manner that people start formulating opinion which is based on the analysis printed or otherwise telecasted live. A. Jones argues that this is how the press has become an important element of the statecraft (Jones, 2016). This role of the press is just not limited to the international events, but it also plays an important role in the political makeup of the country. In many smaller countries of the world, the ruling elite or the influential elite use this tool to increase the confidence of their voters.

In the United States, the press role in the political system is different from other countries. In the US, the political system is much different from many countries in the world, therefore the role of the press remains too narrow or regularized (Jones, 2016). To understand the role of the press in the political process, it is important to analyze the role of political statecraft. The statecraft includes political offices and state institutions. The importance of it can be judged only if one understands what the press is and what role does it needs to play. Since it has turned itself as a business and a private entity, therefore at many places its role can either be questioned or can be misleading. The political system in the US is so transparent, that press and many other influential factors can play many definite roles. As this research paper is related to analyzing the role of a free press in the US, therefore it will be hypothesized that the biased role of the press in the US threatens the political stability of the country.

## Press as the fourth pillar

The role of any persons related to press swings between two extents. Either it can be neutral or otherwise, it can play the role of an active participant. For example, it is believed that some media channels (the latest form of the press) played the role of influencers to drag the country into the war with Iraq and Afghanistan (Peterson, 2015). Similarly, such active participation has been observed many times during the political campaigning previously in the country. The concept of the fourth pillar can be gauged from the text of the first amendment in the US constitution which calls that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise, or abridging the freedom of speech (Henkin, Glennon, & Rogers, 1990)”. The freedom of speech is not just limited to the general masses, but it equally transcends upon the elected representatives. This shows that what exactly are the factors which justify the importance of press or media as the fourth pillar.

With time the constructs of media have also evolved. The role of the present time press is just not related to transmitting news or broadcast the real-time happenings. It has now expanded to include spreading awareness in the general masses. This aspect of it is debatable. Since awareness is not specific to some pre-defined phenomenon, but also it requires educating people politically (Peterson, 2015). This aspect of it is debatable, as one thing or a fact might be right for one person and false for another person. According to this view, media is considered the fourth pillar of the statecraft. It has changed the public’s perspective on different things. In the present times, it is also right to argue that political governments sometimes enjoy less authority compared to the media organizations. Some political commentators and the influential persons related to media or press industry also argue that since it this business attracts major profits; therefore, this attraction has given birth to it say in the matters of public importance (Peterson, 2015).

## The United States political system

The political system in the US is much depending, neither of the founding institutions of the state enjoys authority. The public representatives elected to the Congress go through a vibrant and a fair process before they are elected to Congress. The elections of the President are also much fair and enjoy the complete faith of the public. Parallel to this political system is the judiciary, executive and the legislative branch which works under the constitution of the US. Fowler argues that the press is not referred to as the direct organ of the statecraft in the US (Fowler, 2018). The constitution of the US, however, talks about the freedom of speech and the freedom of expression enshrined in the first amendment. Opposite to all its generally specific role, it has evolved to a level never experienced before. Today, media and the press enjoy a strong and vibrant presence in almost every country of the world, and the United States is no exception (Fowler, 2018).

In this complete scenario, it is much noticeable that the press does not enjoy any authority in the public domain. Different to many other countries where the political system is not mature, or any other institution has the charge of information dissemination, the press has enjoyed massive powers. As the above paragraphs show that the political system in the US is much strong and transparent, therefore it has a little say in the matters of state importance. In the US, undeniably the role of the press is limited to just information dissemination and public awareness (Fowler, 2018). Other roles which it takes on from time to time include working as the watchdog, propaganda against the rival states and provoking public for thoughtful decisions. Rather than acting as a tool to manipulate political results, it provides the platform to political rivals to showcase and debate in support of their narratives. Conclusively, considering American politics and the role of the press, it is viable to argue that the press is just a form of political expression.

## Free press and the political system

Free press and the political system are two distinctive, but a knitted phenomenon. The political system in one way or another remains dependent on the press or media to communicate with the public. Similarly, the political system is what which brings viewership and readership to press. Since the last two or three decades, there has been an increase in the business related to the press. Berger writes that the reason for such an increase is the new term *Media* which is largely attributed to it (Berger, 2017). Some new terms, for example, biases and unbiases have also attributed to the Press (Berger, 2017). These terms indicate how the public now see the role of the press. Some events in recent history have proved that press manipulates things in specific manners. It creates and motivates public opinion in a certain direction. This is where it leaves the space for the political elites to impinge into the system and mould things in their favour (Berger, 2017). This suggests that how the press is linked with the upbringing of a political system.

Many scholars and the political analysts argue that where ever the role of media or press has remained biased or opposite to what the state policy is, it has damaged badly the statecraft (Bettig, 2018). Countries of the third world and militarily strong are proof of this fact. Similarly, some analysts argue that if at any stage of the political life of America, the press played a biased role it will damage the United States of America more than any other country. They base their reason on the fact that America of the present time is most dependent on its fourth pillar compared to any country of the world. Some recent facts related to countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and some countries of South Asia are also proof of this fact. This dependency is just not in America but in many other countries too. Whenever the state press turns toward either side or restricts the presence of some political figures it impacts negatively on the internal politics and the global image of the country. This is how the press impacts on the statecraft.

# Conclusion

Technological advancements are impacting the performance in each sphere. On one side it has reduced the distances and has turned the world into a real-time global village. Like every field in this world, this technological advancement has impacted the field of the press. Things at present are quite different from what they were some decades ago. The press has evolved itself into a watchdog, which monitors the performance of state institutes at one side and the public’s participation on the other side. With all its expanded role, it has the power now raise the public sentiments against any elected or selected government. This has been proved with some events of the recent past. Ideally, the press should contribute to the search of truth and should expand its role for the political stability in the country. By this way, it can support the state’s search of the truth as well.

The events mentioned above, or the examples referred to suggest that an unbiased role of the press is mandatory for sustenance and sustainability of many processes which takes place with in a state. These events also suggest that wherever the role of Press has remained suggestive, biased or in case restricted it has affected negatively on its performance. This research, therefore, proofs the hypothesis that biased threatens the political stability of the country.

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