Political Science

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**Introduction**

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.

(Amendment-I)

The United States of America won independence from the British Empire on July 4, 1776, and the US forefathers passed a document on September 17, 1787 to create a national government consisting of Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary, and to divide power between the center and the states; the document is called the US constitution. The first amendment to the constitution was submitted for ratification on September 25, 1789, and the states adopted this amendment on December 15, 1791. This amendment supposedly empowers media which claims to be the forth pillar of the country. This amendment prohibits Congress to propagate any particular religion or to create hindrance for anyone to practice a religion. Moreover, it criminalize media censorship and oppression of the peaceful protesters (Franks, & Ribet, 2009). The media celebrate revere this amendment as a milestone in the history and claim full freedom of speech under the light of this amendment. Moreover, it considers itself the guardian of society that protects the American values and helps the society to grow dynamically.

**Body**

The first amendment to the constitution appeared soon after the promulgation of the constitution and it solved a great matter that helped the USA to evolve as a democratic society. The third clause of the first amendment is typically about media and it mentions clearly the even Congress do not have legitimate power to censor any media platform (newspaper, TV, or radio, etc.) or any media person (Boykoff, 2012). Precise description of the freedom of press nulls any kinds of doubt that media has legal authorization to claim a credible place in society. Thomas McPhail argues in his article *Development Communication: Reframing the Role of Media* (2009) that the first amendment where gives the right of speech, it also increases its responsibilities. It must have a code of ethics to follow while spreading news. The current accusations that media spread fake news question the credibility of this *forth* pillar.

The United States is a democratic country and a democratic state attempts to provide maximum possible freedom to its citizens. Democracy belongs to people as the honorable President Abraham Lincoln pointed out that democracy is the government of the by the people, of the people, of the people, for the people. Such a kind of society requires all the minds to contribute to the development of the country. The legislators make required laws to facilitate the people and the executives execute those laws for the same purpose whereas the judiciary watch if the laws are being executed with their soul. The possibility of error still remains as masses might not feel satisfied with the laws made by the legislators. Here comes media to point out the flaws in the laws in action and suggest possible changes apart from suggesting the forming of new laws. This amendment helped America to evolve as a dynamic society where the better law formation process continues. This American tradition of free-press is a norm in the large part of the world including South and Central Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Authoritarian states like Russia, China, and the middle-eastern states have a different rather opposite approach regarding the freedom of media. They do not believe that there is any need of having this forth pillar because they think that their legislators have enough capability to form the required laws for people (McPhail, 2009). They support the existence of only guided media. Therefore, media in such states cannot claim to have the status of the forth pillar of the society. Joseph Man Chan writes in his article *China: Media Liberalization under Authoritarianism* (2003) that China has the potential to become a super-power in the contemporary century, but it cannot rise until it has free-press rather it might fall like the Soviets (Chan, & Qiu, 2003).

**Conclusion**

The first amendment to the American constitution awards media with full freedom and authority to play a critical role for the betterment of society. This assurance by the American forefathers enabled media to play a productive role in society. It is the reason the media claim to be the guardian of American society because it played instrumental role for the prosperity and development of America. Such kind of freedom might not surprise an American or a person living in any Capitalist country, but it could be quite alarming for a person who lives in an Authoritarian country (Chin, 2011). The non-capitalist and non-democratic countries feel comfortable with a subjugated kind of Media, but they perhaps do not know that a society cannot develop like America without having free-press. Nevertheless, the media’s claim they it is the guardian of the American democratic values is justifiable.

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