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International Politics and the Media: The Case of the Press/Media in the War on Terror

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Abstract

The fundamental changes and deterioration in state-news media relations since 9/11, particularly in the relations between the United States, US' allies in the war on terror and international news networks in the post-9/11 world, have necessitated a reassessment of existing theoretical framework that describes the state-media relations. This paper, after providing a brief summary of theoretical framework for the press-state relations within a historical context, analyses the impact of the post-September 11 events on the freedom of expression and press freedom to introduce the changing and deteriorating environment for the press-state relations since then. The paper concludes that the power politics applied widely by states in domestically and internationally in the post-9/11 world have caused serious violations of the freedom of expression in general, these therefore resulted setbacks and deteriorations in press freedom in particular. The paper also concludes that this new state of affairs consequently necessitates new theories and approaches to explain the post-9/11 state-media relations.

Keywords: September 11, International Politics, War on Terror, Civil Liberties, State-Press Relations, Press-Media Theories

Introduction

It took centuries for democratic societies to achieve the current level of civil rights and freedoms, and to establish a free and open society based on them. The press,¹ academia and the whole society needed these rights to discover and achieve the truth. However, throughout the course of the development of democratic societies there have been different approaches towards liberties in general and towards press freedom in particular. Governments and political society have often (if not always) been sceptical towards a liberal and free press, and stemming from this fact there have been various press theories or media systems explaining the press' relationship with the governments . In 1956 Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm presented the "*Four Theories of the Press*" as the first comprehensive attempt to define the mass media-political society relations within a theoretical frame.² They set up four normative theories, the authoritarian, the libertarian, the Soviet, and the social responsibility theories, with which they defined the relationship between the press and domestic political environment. Siebert's four theories, which have been in place for decades to explain state-press relations, are still somehow viable and convincing in mass media studies in order to describe how different media systems operate in the world, despite increasing criticisms.³

Since *the Four Theories* were born and maintained their dominance in the media studies literature especially from the late fifties towards the end of the Cold War, the radical political crises and changes within states, new developments in international politics and also ideological shifts within press environment have occasionally paved the way for new approaches and theories for press-state relations. There have been new explanations, theorization and understanding with special attention to particular societies, different political systems from authoritarian regimes to democratic societies, such as

from China⁴ and Russia⁵ to Spain⁶ and Israel.⁷ In the meantime, the end of the Cold War and the demise of the communist system from the former Soviet states and other communist countries were a striking point for new studies and approaches in press-state relations globally. Another remarkable moment, of course with overturning effects, for such a study was the terror attacks on September 11, 2001. Therefore, given the political developments in the last two decades and their impact on the state-society relations, a similar study explaining media-state relations with special regard to international relations was long needed. That need has become more apparent and gained urgency since, in the terms of US President Bush, ‘a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen’ and with ‘an unknown course’⁸ has been declared worldwide against terrorism in October 2001. Because, the terror attacks of September 2001, continuing threats of terrorism and the war declared against terrorism have changed international relations dramatically in the recent years. Power politics and realist approaches have been shaping the world affairs from international relations to community level policy-making since September 2001. Also, strict domestic policies and legislations have been introduced to establish effective social control systems over societies. They are shaping every aspect of daily life from travel to communication, from inter-societal relations to understanding one another. There have been serious setbacks in the post-September 11 episodes era in basic rights and freedoms, as basic as freedom of communication and freedom of expression. It is important to pinpoint and highlight the negative impacts of the post-September 11 domestic and international political developments on the press freedom and the freedom of expression. This paper largely identifies the setbacks in these freedoms attributable to the power politics that has been pursued by states around the world.

Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm’s theories that explain the relations between state, politics and the press in modern times are still worthy to be a starting point to look into the present time and to look into international politics-press relations. Within the

domain of political society-press relations, their main thesis was that “the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social, political structures within which it operates. Especially it reflects the system of social control whereby the relations of individuals and institutions are adjusted.”⁹ These phrases have been quoted by many for the last fifty years including many recent studies.¹⁰

Within this thesis, the relationship between the press and the state during the War on Terror is an interesting topic to look into. For this, I aim to summon up and extend the existing press theories into the present time in order to study the relations between mass media and international politics since the 9/11 events. In addition to the theories and approaches analyzing the relations between the mass media and domestic political environment, I shall focus more on the international political environment and the global news media relations from 2001. Although the current situation of the press-state relations can be explained with a mixture of Siebert’s authoritarian, libertarian and social responsibility theories –leaving the Soviet theory aside to explain the Soviet period and remaining communist states only, that seems very indistinct for a conclusive verdict. That is why a new theoretical dimension or assertion, ‘*neo-authoritarian theory of press*’, may be derived from the international and domestic political environment within which the press operates. As this terminology is not new as it was used in earlier studies,¹¹ the present study does not aim to fill a theoretical gap on the subject of study, but instead aims to bring the press theories into a new sphere, namely international relations and media relations since the September 11, and to our time.

In this study, in association with the criteria that were used by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm to explain and distinguish different media systems, such as chief purpose of media, who has the right to use media, how are media controlled, what is forbidden, and ownership,¹² two criteria were chosen as fundamental for re-examining the theoretical framework: what to publish, and whose interests to serve. Therefore, in the analysis of the relationship between the press and the state during the War on Terror

these two topics will be kept in mind and any conclusions that may come out of this study should be read and considered within these lines.

Understanding and Theorising the Press-State Relations

Although the birth and the rise of modern press dates back to the middle of the 19th century, media studies as a distinct field has been developing since the interwar years. Therefore, this area of study needs a historical footing and focus, because the understandings of the media are situated in historical context which has so far been neglected.¹³ Historical focus in media studies is not only needed for the pre-war period, however, another era in media studies which needs historical scholarship has started with the events occurred on September 11 and afterwards, because of the impact and significance of the developments happening in this era. One of the questions for the press and media studies in this historical period is that what theory is applicable to explain the press and media's position in the society, especially to understand state-media-society relations.

Before moving to the post-9/11 world, it is quite helpful to summarize the theoretical footings in media studies during the 19th and the 20th centuries. Hampton notes that contemporary understandings of media (in Britain) first developed during the 19th century at the time of printed media, and later got complicated with the emergence of cinema, radio and television after the First World War.¹⁴ Before the latter development, the emergence and proliferation of newspaper in the 19th century was revolutionary at the time of a media that largely consist of 'platform, periodical and sermon'.¹⁵ The dominance of newspaper was helped by technology for large-scale production and distribution.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, theories of the press were mostly related to the relationship between the press, the readers and the political order.¹⁶ In the meantime, according to Hampton, two analytically distinct and sometimes overlapping

motifs have engaged the relationship between them in this period: the press' educational function and the commercialization of the press.¹⁷ For the educational functionality, the press was used as a forum or platform in which free discussion and exchange of ideas would produce a consensus on truth and common good, and this is also called the 'liberal' theory of the press. In this understanding of the press, the process of discussion was seen, by J. S. Mill for example, as educational itself.¹⁸ On the other hand, towards the end of the 19th century, besides the press' educational aspect, the commercialization of the press has become another reality and this shaped the theories of the press into a certain extent.¹⁹ Despite the understanding of the press as a commodity around the 1880s, from that time on the press' representative aspect has become popular as it meant that the press would represent people not educate them.²⁰ With the contribution of this aspect, the press was expected to write the news not opinions, provide the facts not the views.

The first impact of the proliferation of newspaper on the state and the society was that, in Britain, as the political system moved towards democracy, the dominant classes viewed the newspaper as an important component in the relationship between the people and the government.²¹ This can be interpreted as the first and foremost trouble that the newspaper, the press or the media have produced for governments. That is why it can be argued that a new kind of struggle between the state and the society (the latter includes the press and media) has begun with newspaper, and later accelerated with the rise of other media systems such as radio, television and the internet from the 19th century into the 21st. Within this process, as Hampton borrows the narrative from Hall; "Attempts to make sense of modern press also constituted attempts to make sense of the changing relationship between the dominant and dominated classes".²² At that point, the most prominent issue about the press during the 19th century was that the press held a huge power which could be good or bad, positive or negative depended on the stake holders. From the general public's viewpoint it could bring hope for political awareness and

democratization. On the other hand, it could bring fear and worries for the state or for the ruling class with the emergence of mass readership.

With this background at hand, in 1956 Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm presented the “*Four Theories of the Press*” as an attempt to define the mass media-political society relations within a theoretical and comprehensive frame.²³ They set up four normative theories, the authoritarian, the libertarian, the Soviet, and the social responsibility theories, with which they defined the relationship between the press and domestic political environment.

According to authoritarian theory of Siebert, the mass media operates under the direct control of authoritarian governments. These governments do not allow the media and the press to operate freely. Thus the press can be disabled from broadcasting the things that may disturb the state and the established authority. In that system, any possible offence to the state authority is prevented and the media is allowed to operate only within a controlled ideology and broadcasting sphere. Government or a governmental institution controls media and press institutions in their functions and operations.²⁴ This kind of broadcasting is not limited to a totalitarian society, it may also been practiced within non-totalitarian societies as well. According to Skjerdal any government may also adopt an authoritarian media system without being openly totalitarian.²⁵

Siebert’s second theory is called libertarian theory which is also known as the free press theory. Siebert explains that the libertarian theory defines a media system in which the press is free to publish whatever it likes. The libertarian theory of the press comes out of the writings of J. Milton, J. Locke and J. Stuart Mill and as well as of general philosophy of rationalism and natural rights.²⁶ According to Siebert, the transfer of the press from authoritarian to libertarian principles was completed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the inspirations provided by Locke’s political philosophy and later with the contributions of Milton and Mill.²⁷ In addition to Locke’s revolutionary

liberal views that influenced the political sphere during the seventeenth and eighteenth century 'Enlightenment', John Milton in his 1644 book, the *Areopagitica*, contributed to libertarian principles in his argument for intellectual freedom from media to academia. According to intellectual freedom argument, man can distinguish between right and wrong so long as he has unlimited access to the ideas and thoughts of others.²⁸ Later in the nineteenth century, Mill contributed to the libertarian principles by emphasizing the importance of the individual's freedom of expression in his this famous writings: "if all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and the only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind"²⁹ In the libertarian system of the press, the main purpose of the press and media is to inform, entertain and sell, but especially to help discover the truth and to act as a check on government. Also, in that view, only defamation, obscenity, indecency and wartime sedition are forbidden. The media can be controlled only by 'self-righting process of truth in free market place of ideas' and by courts.³⁰ In this view of free press, there should be no restrictions on import or export of media messages across the national frontiers. Moreover, journalists and media professionals ought to have full autonomy within the media organization.³¹

While these developments were taking place in libertarian grounds, two other media systems, the Soviet theory and the social responsibility theory, were born in the early twentieth century. The Soviet theory was developed with the rise of the Soviet Union and the Communist Eastern Bloc within the Marxian ideology through later alterations by the influences of Lenin and Stalin.³² Its roots hailed from state-centric thinking of Hegel and from 19th century Russian thinking.³³ Main characteristics of the Soviet theory, which was a product of the communist ideology of Marx and Engels, were that media organizations were to serve the interests of the Soviet socialist system and the Communist Party. The media was state-owned and closely controlled by the state as an arm of the state by surveillance and economic or political action of the government.

Although it was widely used in the Soviet Union, similar applications were also used by the Nazis and Italians,³⁴ and the latter examples suit authoritarian systems to a greater extent. Hence, the Soviet theory differs from the authoritarian theory that media organizations have a certain responsibility to their audience. The primary responsibility was to provide an inclusive view of the world according to Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist thought.³⁵

Another system of the press, social responsibility theory, was formed in the twentieth century to meet a need that was identified when the press failed to fulfil its promises for revealing the truth, especially during conflict and war. Mainly, it was the product of the work of the US Commission on Freedom of the Press (CFP), the writings of William Hocking (a member of the Commission) and of practitioners.³⁶ Two studies, which have contributed to the development of social responsibility theory of the press, are important to mention in this regard; as one was published by W. Hocking, *Freedom of the Press: A Framework of Principle* (1947), and the other by the CFP, *A Free and Responsible Press* (1947).³⁷ On the issue, especially the CFP, created in the late forties, defined certain principles for the press, which are outlined as: “the power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly presented and the public has enough information to decide”.³⁸ About the time that the CFP was working on the issue in the United States, the Royal Commission on the Press and the General Council of the Press were founded in Britain to do similar work. Indeed these establishments in Britain reached supportive results to that of the CFP, as a sense of public responsibility and sense of public service within which the press was encouraged.³⁹ In that regard, according to social responsibility theory of the press, the duties and responsibilities of the press were expressed in the words of ‘informativeness, truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance’. With these principles in mind, the press or media are to act with the purpose of informing, entertaining, selling, and particularly raising the conflict to the plane of

discussion.⁴⁰ The goal of the social responsibility theory, and the efforts that have created it, is to achieve a pluralized media which reflects the diversity of society and provides an access to various points of view.⁴¹ The social responsibility system's major difference from the libertarian theory is that it aims to provide easy access for both different mass media and minority groups in the press. Also whoever uses the press is accountable to his audience as well as to the government.⁴² The social responsibility system aims to control media by community opinion, consumer action and professional ethics, as the press or media can be used by everyone who has something to say. In accordance with that control system, violation of the recognized private rights and vital social interest are strictly forbidden.⁴³

In addition to *the Four Theories*' framing, there have been various other efforts to explain the relationship between political systems and the press. For example, Herbert Altschull⁴⁴ also proposed three press theories which are Market-oriented, Marxist-Communitarian and Advancing press movements.⁴⁵ Beyond *the Four Theories*, Altschull's study was neutral, valuable and satisfying and it has contributed normative press theories.⁴⁶ Later, Hallin and Mancini introduce another three different media systems as the Mediterranean or the Polarized Pluralist Model⁴⁷, the North-Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model,⁴⁸ and the North Atlantic or Liberal Model.⁴⁹

Among other efforts, Marxist media studies or theories provide a wide range of issues and approaches for the subject from the Orthodox Marxism to the neo-Marxist formulations and critical theories. Within the account of Marxist media theories, Schramm's Soviet Theory⁵⁰ was already discussed earlier. Other conceptualization of Marxist media theory can be found in Chandler⁵¹ and Altschull.⁵² Besides the Marxist media model, in which the press and the media operates to serve the interests of the Soviet socialist system and the Communist Party, as outlined in Schramm and Altschull, Marxist critiques of media is independently valuable to explain why governments and states are so keen on controlling the press and the media. According to Chandler,

Marxists consider the mass media as a tool in reproduction of the status quo, and with this they differ from liberals and pluralists who categorize the press and the media as something promotes freedom of speech.⁵³ In line with this, Herbert Marcuse's phrases are worthy to cite here:

The means of... communication..., the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers... to the producers and, through the latter to the whole [social system]. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood... Thus emerges a pattern of *one dimensional thought and behaviour*.⁵⁴

Also, the Frankfurt School concluded that the media is making ordinary people no more than a 'mass society' which is helpless to resist media manipulation.⁵⁵

September 11 Events and the Press

September 11 was unquestionably a defining moment when the centuries-long course of the development of civil liberties and civil rights has been paused if not totally reversed. It was also sharp turn and the opening of a new but an intricate era for the free press and freedom of expression in particular. There have been many cases of abuses of power against the press, media and civil society in general, as stated by Marjorie Cohn when she claimed that "under the guise of the 'war on terror,' the Bush administration had launched a war on civil liberties".⁵⁶ This war has had serious global ramifications for society, from the press to academia, and from civil society organizations to public life.

It should be pointed out that pressures and difficult times for the free press and liberal voices in the new era began with an irony. It was the case that the civil rights and freedoms, that have been redefined, deteriorated or totally eradicated since 2001, had long been widely enjoyed by people living in the victorious and free West, with Halliday

and Kissinger's terms,⁵⁷ in comparison with the suppressive Communist Bloc. It was in the West where the libertarian and social responsibility press systems were being promoted until very recently, as the rival Soviet theory had ruled some parts of the world until its demise. In other words, the states that once supported and promoted the free press ideology and liberal views domestically and internationally have made sharp turns against press freedom and civil rights starting from the early days of the War on Terror.

In order further to explain the irony mentioned, it should be exemplified during the first phase of War on Terror that the Western media had primarily been banned from entering and reporting from Taliban controlled Afghanistan by the hard-line Taliban movement prior to the September 11 attacks. However, later, apart from the Taliban's violations of freedom of expression and other fundamental civil rights, similar problems emerged for the free press in the liberal world as well. At the time Robert Fisk stated "the West and the Western media has balanced distorted picture which had remained from the Taliban pressures, with the half-truth"⁵⁸ of the Western official and private intelligence and news resources which is dominating the flow of the news from the battlefields of the War on Terror.

In the meantime, at the propaganda level, a physiological warfare was employed on the free press with political blows and even threats that were basically targeting the freedom of expression. Those pressures were very strong as they were attached to the statements of state officials in Washington, London and other capitals around the globe. Not very long after September 11, top officials in these capitals stated publicly that limitations on publications and broadcasting will be a crucial part of the War on Terror. For example, on September 26 2001, the US presidential spokesman Ari Fleischer warned that "all Americans need to watch what they say, watch what they do".⁵⁹ In line with Fleischer's statement a television journalist, Bill Maher and a columnist, Susan Sontag, were condemned and censored in the weeks that immediately followed September 11 events. Susan Sontag's comments in *The New Yorker's* 'Talk of the

Town' column was one of the few opinion pieces that appeared in American media in terms of dissent and that attracted official and public outrage.⁶⁰ Perhaps the worst example of this was the sacking of various journalists that went against what seemed to be officially deemed acceptable. Journalist Tom Gutting criticized President Bush for being out of Washington and in hiding on the day of 9/11, and was subsequently sacked by Texas City Sun.⁶¹ Similarly, the Daily Courier of Oregon fired columnist Dan Guthrie for criticizing President Bush for his poor performance as the leader during a day of national tragedy.⁶² In another example, Jackie Anderson of the Sun Advocate in Utah was also forced to leave her job after writing a column about American state and public reaction to the events saying "War is not the only action available to us. Seeking justice is action. Making peace is action".⁶³

It was not only media bosses that put pressure on the people with liberal or alternative views regarding the events of 9/11 and their aftermath, but the behaviour of the manipulated general public was also notable in the same direction. In order to make a reference to Siebert's main thesis on the interaction between political-social structure of the society and the press, many examples can be spelled out during the War on Terror. For instance, it was reported that Howard Rosenberg, a TV critic with the Los Angeles Times of nearly 25-years experience, received hundreds of telephone and email messages questioning his patriotism because of his criticism of the Bush Administration on the same grounds as Gutting, Guthrie and Anderson.⁶⁴ In another occasion, on October 16, 2001, when the liberally-oriented Berkeley City Council adopted a resolution⁶⁵ which had requested the City Manager to send a letter to the members of the US Congress to take whatever action they can to cease the bombing of Afghanistan and to seek a legal, non-military resolution, it received thousands of phone calls, e-mails, and letters tagging the members of the Council as traitors.⁶⁶ All these were the start of a battle against the free press, liberal media and freedom of expression as the further pressures and problems

were going to come about for journalists and independent voices during the War on Terror that began in October 2001 over the skies of Afghanistan.

Similar reactions have also come from other governments towards circles that have alternative views on the war on terror. In addition to Ari Fleischer's statements quoted earlier, it was noticeable in this context that the British Government summoned news editors in October 2001 to discuss the way they were covering the "war against terrorism" and the bombing campaign in Afghanistan.⁶⁷ In a later case, Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi told Italian television and radio networks not to broadcast the incident and the footages of the Italian hostages in Iraq.⁶⁸ Similarly, it was revealed that when the US news network CBS was about to broadcast the images of American soldiers and contractors abusing and torturing Iraqi inmates in the Abu Ghraib prison, CBS admitted that it had faced considerable pressure from the Pentagon not to do so.⁶⁹ Moreover, there have been countless reports that the White House reacted angrily to the broadcasting and publication of footage and pictures of the coffins of US soldiers who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is moreover interesting to note that when President Bush and Vice-President Cheney appeared before the Commission investigating the 9/11 attacks there was no press coverage allowed and no recording or transcript was made;⁷⁰ therefore without any discernable good reason for those restrictions on the public's right to know what the top two officials of the administration knew about the 9/11. Many such cases have also been reported worldwide for the last six-seven years.

On the position and opinion of the society and state, those and similar reactions can be read as the confirmation of the assertion that was laid out by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, as they were to say: "To see the differences between the press systems in full perspective, then, one must look at the social systems in which the press functions. To see the social systems in their true relationship to the press, one has to look at certain basic beliefs and assumptions which the society holds: the nature of man, the nature of

society and the state, the relation of man to the state, and nature of knowledge and truth”.⁷¹

The Changing Press Attitudes towards the Events

After these initial incidents that have happened in the western societies, what changes the press attitudes have shown towards developments is an interesting topic to look at. On this, it may be appropriate to say that, as a result briefings, pressures and even threats upon media workers and press institutions, news sources operating in and around the war zone and especially independent news agencies were eventually forced to a line that was seen as tolerable by the U.S. By doing so, many of the American and Western European television channels were so disciplined somehow, and only concerned on destruction of the terror camps in Afghanistan, but dissuaded from recounting the truth about the methods used in war on terrorism, and about the despair of Afghan refugees and the slaughter of thousands of civilians. On the issue of reporting the civilian casualties, a theatrical attitude in the Western media (and also other world media which relied on the major global media sources), became the norm and was underlined with the phrase, ‘*not been independently confirmed*’ followed almost all news on the civilian casualties⁷² during the US bombings in Afghanistan and Iraq. Subsequently, it is partly due to this attitude that we now have confusing figures for the total numbers of civilian casualties in the Afghanistan War, and in Iraq since the occupation of 2003. The number of civilian casualties varies from one thousand⁷³ to four thousands⁷⁴ just for the first three months of the American bombardment of Afghanistan. Between October 7 and December 6 more than 3767 Afghan civilians were killed by American air strikes, equivalent of 62 civilian deaths per day within the mentioned period.⁷⁵ With regards human casualties, when only counting the death toll of the invasion of Afghanistan, Jonathan Steele of *The Guardian* stated these as being between 20,000 and 49,600 in May 2002 when reported from Herat, Afghanistan.⁷⁶ However, the figures from Iraq have been even much worse since the US

invasion of the country. The number of deaths of civilians and combatants are now exceeding a million.⁷⁷ Only 62,570 civilian deaths were reported in the mass media according to Iraq Body Count, a web-based project reporting the violent events leading to the death of civilians, or the bodies being found by the careful review and integration of hospital, morgue, NGO and official figures.⁷⁸ According to a Lancet Study, “as of July, 2006, there have been 654 965 excess Iraqi deaths as a consequence of the war, which corresponds to 2.5% of the population in the study area. Of post-invasion deaths, 601 027 were due to violence, the most common cause being gunfire”⁷⁹ These figures are a clear confirmation of the irrelevance and illegality⁸⁰ and a plain refutation of the coalition partners’ defensive case for waging war to avert potential civilian casualties at the brink of the war in order to convince a sceptical public. They also openly deny the politicians who orchestrated the war on terror purportedly on convincing rationale and for a better world. For example, British PM Tony Blair infamously had stated that: “this military plan has been put together mindful of our determination to do all we humanly can to avoid civilian casualties”.⁸¹ Overall, the number of civilians killed during the War on Terrorism, which includes the war in Afghanistan, the war Iraq and other military operations around globe, can now be given in millions. It is now not only the states which take part in the battles to blame for the confusing number of civilian victims of the war on terror, also the attitudes of some global media networks should be noted in this account.

The problem appears to be that the attitude of major and globally-operating media organizations towards the War on Terror has confirmed the historic assertion, “the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social political structures within which it operates”, made by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, mentioned earlier.⁸² However, the stance of some media institutions has been more problematic than the acts of state officials in terms of fulfilling press’ roles and promises for revealing the truth. The attitude of the media given below is a clear confirmation of this. Some examples that can

be quoted from the American media are as follows. Mara Liasson from National Public Radio and Michael Barone of U.S. News & World Report both agreed and stated: "Look, war is about killing people. Civilian casualties are unavoidable, Civilian casualties are not news".⁸³ The text of a memo circulated to editors of a small-town Florida newspaper stated: "'do not use' photos on Page 1-A showing civilian casualties from the U.S. war on Afghanistan. Our sister paper in Fort Walton Beach has done so and received hundreds and hundreds of threatening e-mails", and "'do not use' wire stories which lead with civilian casualties from the U.S. war on Afghanistan. They should be mentioned further down in the story...The only exception is if the U.S. hits an orphanage, school or similar facility and kills scores or hundreds of children".⁸⁴ The reaction of Jacky Anderson' superior at the Sun Advocates of Utah, Kevin Ashby, to Anderson's column (mentioned earlier) is worth mentioning in this regard, as he stated: "This is not the direction I want my newspaper to go in".⁸⁵ As Bivens reported, "the chairman of CNN has argued that it would be "perverse" to focus on civilian casualties, and has instructed reporters to, basically, justify such deaths with editorializing commentary".⁸⁶ Furthermore, in one more quotation from Bivens: "Some other journalists have also argued that civilian casualties simply 'aren't news.' On Fox television's 'Special Report with Brit Hume' in November 2001, for example, Hume wondered if the deaths of women and children should be 'big news,' because 'civilian casualties are historically, by definition, a part of war', according to the channel".⁸⁷

Also widely adopted by many news channels in US (such as CNN and the Fox News) were nationalistic symbols such as the US flag and the mottos such as 'US at War' and the 'War on Terror' used on screen for dramatic effect to influence the public. A recent study, which surveyed the impact of mass media on public support for civil liberties restrictions, discovered that national television news viewing and hours spent watching television in the US after September 11 events have positively affected the public support for these restrictions.⁸⁸ The words of William Safire of the New York

Times are notable in this regard when he stated: “The nation is on a kind of war footing. Even in peacetime, news credibility does not flow from splitting the moral difference between good and evil. In the climate of today's undeclared war, private media in democracies are free to take either side, but U.S. taxpayer-supported broadcasting is supposed to be on our side”.⁸⁹

With regards this self-censorship of media to the events directly concerning and surrounding the ‘War on Terror’, plus the pressures and threats from state official, the press actually sought to bury hard stories with the soft ones, or delivering them with a soft tone. For example, with regards the refugee crisis in Afghanistan, Edward and Cromwell reported that ITN and the BBC repeatedly showed dramatic footage of thousands of refugees fleeing the fighting and bombing in Kosovo in 1999. However, from October 2001 to January 2002, the Guardian mentioned Maslakh refugee camp⁹⁰ twice - an average of once every two months. By contrast, between April and June 1999 the Guardian mentioned the plight of 65,000 Kosovan refugees stranded at Brace on Macedonia's border with Kosovo 48 times - an average of once every two days.⁹¹ In another case, around Christmas 2001, the people who has spent some summer nights outside their homes because of a bushfire in the suburbs of Sydney, attracted more attention and coverage from Western news agencies, including the BBC and ITN, than the thousands of Afghan refugees living in freezing conditions in poor tents on freezing Afghan mountainsides due to the war on terror.⁹² Even worse is that, while the press was removed from its classical role as a voice of the truth, it has on the other hand been used by the American-led coalition as a propaganda tool to show the world their generosity and humanitarian face. Numerous pictures were broadcast of scared, hungry, weak Afghans (including children) searching for kosher food packages dropped from American aircraft. They did so with their eyes searching skyward, but their feet down in the heavily land-mined fields of the Afghan countryside.⁹³

The ‘War on Terror’ and the Press: The Case of Al-Jazeera TV Network

Out of this overall atmosphere, the case of Qatar’s Al-Jazeera was a particular one⁹⁴ as it was once regarded as a sign of democracy in the Middle East. Al-Jazeera was born in late 1996 as the result of the cancellation of a contract between the Saudi-owned and Rome-based Orbit Radio and BBC World Service’s Arabic Language TV Station. After two years of operation the Saudi government has ended the agreement with BBC over a censorship issue. Al Jazeera, which was in the process of establishment at the time, has used this opportunity to employ about 20 media and TV professionals left jobless by BBC World Service’s demised Arabic TV Station. In this deal, according to El-Newawy and Iskandar, Al-Jazeera has not only transferred BBC World Service’s staff members, but also imported the content, style and spirit of BBC World Service. With its mission and spirit, Al-Jazeera is seen the supporter of democracy, free market and civil society in general and in the Middle East.⁹⁵ For example, Robert Fisk of *the Independent* underscored right after September 11 that: “Tom Friedman from the New York Times had visited the Middle East and wrote few months before the September 2001 terror attacks that Qatar's Al-Jazeera satellite channel was a welcome sign for democracy’s development in the Middle East. Friedman thought that the challenge that Al-Jazeera had posed for the Arab dictators of the Middle East was a good idea”.⁹⁶ Indeed in his February 2001 article in the New York Times Friedman notably wrote that Al-Jazeera was "not only the biggest media phenomenon to hit the Arab world since the advent of television, it also is the biggest political phenomenon" in the region.⁹⁷ Friedman obviously did not know what was going to happen soon to support both his claims about the channel, though Fisk appears to have grasped a modicum of what would, as he continues: “The Al-Jazeera story is being rewritten at very recent times. On the first days of October 2001, US Secretary of State Colin Powell rapped the Emir of Qatar over the knuckles because - so he claimed - Al-Jazeera was "inciting anti-Americanism".⁹⁸ When

accompanied by what appears to have become the motto of the authoritarian post-September 11 world, 'the world will hardly be the same again', the disappointment that Fisk points out may be enough to elucidate the difficulties of this new era that the free press and freedom of expression were entering into. However, besides Fisk's own observation of a changing world for free media and civil liberties, the early developments that took place aftermath of the September 11 attacks indicated, with the special case of Al-Jazeera, that there was going to be a U-turn for press freedom and for press rationale in a course from West to the rest of the world.

In the case of Al-Jazeera, from the channel's viewpoint, it was broadcasting all the news it received from around the world including the battlefields in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. At the beginning of the war on terror, it was regarded as the CNN of the war in Afghanistan, referring to the role that CNN had played in 1991 Gulf War.⁹⁹ In effect, it was feeding the world media and public with footage of the US bombardments as well as with footage of televised statements by Osama Bin Laden, while, on the other hand, interviewing top American officials, such as Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell and others as a sign of being open to all voices. Nevertheless, the Americans while continuously and resolutely using the channel to give their messages to the Arab world via Al-Jazeera¹⁰⁰ were not at all happy with Al-Jazeera. As claimed by Ibrahim Hilal, chief editor of the Arabic language network, America's dislike of Al-Jazeera resulted in the deliberate bombing of its offices in Kabul around 3 am on November 13, 2001.¹⁰¹ According to the network's managing director, Mohammed Jassim al-Ali, speaking to the Associated Press, "the strike could have been deliberate, because the office was located in a residential area of Kabul".¹⁰² The work of the Afghan office of Al-Jazeera was the grounds of US pressures on the Emir of Qatar to shut this news channel down and kill any news that lacked American accreditation. Eventually, as Flanders highlights, when the Northern Alliance forces entered Kabul, Al-Jazeera was forced to broadcast CNN's footage of the events.¹⁰³ In another such serious insult, the channel's cameraman Sami Al

Hajj was detained while on duty to Afghanistan as an “enemy combatant” in December 2001, and has been held without charge at Guantanamo Base for approximately seven years.¹⁰⁴ According to Joel Simon of the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, Al-Hajj’s detention for so many years without a trial is a grave injustice and also represents a threat to all journalists working in conflict areas.¹⁰⁵

The US’ highly distasteful campaign against the channel and journalists has gone beyond the borders of Afghanistan. During the early months of the Iraq War, Al-Jazeera’s Baghdad office was also bombed on April 8, 2003, killing the journalist Tarek Ayoub.¹⁰⁶ Colin Powell, who had used Al-Jazeera to deliver his messages to the Arab world at the start of the war on terror, complained about the channel to the foreign minister of Qatar, Shaykh Hamad Jasim ibn Jabir Al Thani, during his visit to Washington in 2004 claiming: “Al Jazeera's broadcasts had intruded on relations between the US and Qatar”.¹⁰⁷ Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also gave his tragic verdict on the channel and other Arab news networks before the Council on Foreign Relations in Chicago on August 6, 2004. According to Rumsfeld, “the reporting by Arab media such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya has damaged US initiatives in the Middle East. They have persuaded an enormous fraction of people (in Iraq and the Middle East) that the United States is in Iraq as an occupying force, ‘which is a lie’”.¹⁰⁸ In March 2004 the deputy Head of US Military Operations in Iraq, Mark Kimmitt’s opinion of the channel with regards American military action in Iraq, was also clearly stated when he claimed: “My solution is to change the channel to a legitimate, authoritative, honest news station. The stations that are showing Americans intentionally killing women and children are not legitimate news sources”.¹⁰⁹ During the siege and bombardment of Fallujah in April 2004, General Kimmitt again accused the Arab media, particularly Al-Jazeera, of biased reporting and inciting further violence.¹¹⁰ The condemnation of the channel’s reporting in Fallujah by the American forces during the siege was only one instance of the American dislike of the true reporting in the war on terror, particularly war in Iraq. According to

Al-Jazeera's Editor in Chief, Ahmed Al-Sheik, the channel was only reporting and showing pictures from hospitals, schools and graveyards in Fallujah, where 700 Iraqis were killed in a week to April 2004.¹¹¹ However, later in that year, although Al-Jazeera's Editor in Chief, Ahmed Al-Sheik, claimed that as news organization Al-Jazeera goes where the news is and there is nothing untoward in that regard further action followed. Al-Jazeera's offices and facilities in Iraq were banned and shut down by a decision imposed by the Iraqi PM following months of accusations by US authorities and the US pressures on the Iraqi authorities.¹¹²

As another response towards Al-Jazeera from a wider coalition front, in a leaked November 2005 document published in UK's Daily Mirror, it was claimed that the US President Bush asked British Prime Minister about bombing Al-Jazeera's headquarters in Doha, Qatar during Blair's visit to the White House on April 16, 2004.¹¹³ Interestingly, it took Downing Street, PM Blair's Office, nearly two months to deny the claim, and however, two officials were immediately accused and charged under the UK Official Secrets Act.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

It is widely accepted that the world has hardly been the same as after the September 11. There have been strict and harsh restrictions placed upon every aspect of human and social life. This paper attempted to elaborate on the restrictions placed on the press during the new era. By providing a brief summary of recent developments, the paper considered the incidents of domestic and international importance. It was necessary to present them together as the overall issue for the press is not separable between domestic and international domains. The analysis of those developments within the press freedom perspective helps us to conclude that a structural shift has been taking place in the relationship between the press and governments. In recent years, the press and the media face significant challenges in defining their role, responsibilities and duties.¹¹⁵ That

mainly stemmed from the state's changing attitudes towards civil liberties in general and press freedom in particular. We are in a position to claim that a new theoretical conceptualization is needed to distinguish and to define the present situation for the media and the press. In other words, the explanation of the new situation created by the War on Terror and its implications on the press freedom at least necessitates the modification of the earlier theories in order to explain the present issues. Regarding the theoretical framework in which the press operates, the libertarian theory and the social responsibility theory can no longer be applied alone to the relations between the media (press) and the state in the post September 11 world. It can be argued that a theoretical sea change can be observed for the press-state relations under the light of the events that have been taking place globally since the 9/11.

It may be argued that the rationale for the mass media has shifted to some extent from a mixture of libertarian and social responsibility systems to a new sphere in the post-September 11 world. It may not be an exaggeration to say that a modicum of the authoritarian press system or understanding has been added to that mixture recently. Regardless of how permanent, fundamental and definitive it is, that shift is required to be highlighted, defined and explained according to the unique environment of mass communication imposed by the developments in the post September 11 world, and particularly by the War on Terror. For that purpose only a concise account of background developments have been provided. These developments indicate the emergence of a new situation upon which a new dimension to the mass media systems or theories can be added. In doing so it can be pointed out that mass media ethics and press rationale are perceived differently since the September 11, 2001. This article attempted to elucidate that state-media relations seem to be a mixture of libertarian, social responsibility and authoritarian systems today, especially given the interaction between the press and international political developments. However, for an established theory, such as introducing a neo-authoritarian theory of press, there should be more and in depth

analysis in the field. The need for further studies of this kind has only been implied, and this job remains for the academics working in media studies.

As the final words, it is not a fantastic claim that the US President Bush, British PM Blair and Italian PM Berlusconi have attempted to make the war on Iraq and the war on Afghanistan (the War on Terror in general) another the Boer War, during which almost all of the respected papers presented the views of the ruling Conservative Party in Britain and have contributed to the distortion of the truth about the war,¹¹⁶ to give the public only the truth (or the opinion) they believe. In order to get the press and the news media out of this troubling situation which moves towards a dead-end in terms of their relations with the state and of their responsibility for the general public, a substantial theoretical account explaining and justifying the freedom of expression can be found within the early nineteenth century writings. John Stuart Mill alone provided a powerful justification for it as he argued that ‘free expression of diverse opinions was necessary in order to ensure that the truth could gain prominence’.¹¹⁷

NOTES

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¹ By "press", Siebert means all the media of mass communication, including television, radio, and newspaper. Siebert, Frederick Seaton, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956. The internet media may also fit as appropriate into this terminology. The press and the media are used in an exchangeable meaning throughout the paper.

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¹⁹ Ibid.

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