

Public Abstract

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This dissertation examines the influence of media freedom on foreign policy. I begin by revisiting the libertarian ideals of the Founding Fathers and the libertarian arguments for a free press. I then flesh out the logic of the libertarian ideals in a model using game theory. The central argument of this study is that an open media industry — one where journalists are free to report the news and express a diverse range of opinions without fear of political and legal reprisal from government — engenders an environment wherein international disputes are settled through bargaining and negotiation, instead of military might. I examine conflict involvement and the level of media freedom of about 180 countries from 1980 to 2001, and I find that pairs of countries with free media environments are least likely to be involved in militarized interstate disputes.