

GAMES OF INFORMATION: INFORMATIONAL AND NORMATIVE
INFLUENCES OF MEDIA STRUCTURES ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF
MILITARIZED INTERSTATE DISPUTES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the influence of media freedom on foreign policy, specifically, the decision of leaders to use militarized force in resolving international disputes. It begins by revisiting the libertarian ideals of the Founding Fathers and creating a game-theoretic model of the libertarian arguments for a free press. 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. An examination of conflict involvement and level of media freedom of about 180 countries from 1980 to 2001 shows that pairs of countries with free media environments are least likely to be involved in militarized interstate disputes. A total of 50,278 dyad-years were analyzed using logistic regression models. This dissertation proposes that a free press plays a crucial role in overcoming information asymmetries and activating the structural constraints preventing leaders from engaging in costly militarized disputes.