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Abstract

The impact of socio-political variables on journalism is an ongoing concern of comparative research on media systems and professional cultures. However, they have rarely been studied systematically across diverse cases, particularly outside Western democracies, and existing studies that compare western and non-western contexts have mainly focused on journalistic role conceptions rather than actual journalistic practice. Using journalistic role performance as a theoretical and methodological framework, this paper overcomes these shortcomings through a content analysis of 148,474 news stories from 365 print, online, TV, and radio outlets in 37 countries. We consider two fundamental system-level variables—liberal democracy and market orientation—testing a series of hypotheses concerning their influence on the interventionist, watchdog, loyal-facilitator, service, infotainment, and civic roles in the news globally. Findings confirm the widely asserted hypothesis that liberal democracy is associated with the performance of public-service oriented roles. Claims that market orientation reinforces critical and civic-oriented journalism show more mixed results and give some support to the argument that there are forms of “market authoritarianism” associated with loyalist journalism. The findings also show that the interventionist and infotainment roles are not significantly associated with the standard measures of political and economic structure, suggesting the need for more research on their varying forms across societies and the kinds of system-level factors that might explain them.



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Supplementary Material

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Table A-1. News stories and outlets by country

COUNTRY	CASES	NUMBER OF OUTLETS
Argentina	5368	10
Australia	1965	8
Austria	4821	10
Belgium	2411	7
Brazil	3679	9
Canada	3727	12
Chile	7512	11
Colombia	5138	8
Ecuador	2892	8
Egypt	3484	11
United Kingdom	4185	15
Estonia	2409	11
Ethiopia	1400	10
France	4661	9
Germany	4777	6
Hungary	3358	13
Ireland	2421	8
Israel	2448	8
Italy	4494	11
Japan	3757	9
Kuwait	1868	9
Lebanon	3665	14
Mexico	7905	12
Poland	6230	14



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