

## American Government and Politics

Causal Hypotheses in the Press

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The press is free to write just about anything it so desires (slander is illegal). To some, this is both a blessing and a curse. This results in both a free, investigative press and a hodgepodge of misinformation based on the flimsiest of logical threads. This assignment will give you the opportunity to parse through (online) newspaper stories and really think about their causal statements.

Recall that a causal statement is of the form:

As X increases (or decreases), Y will increase (or decrease).

Or of the form:

Increasing (or Decreasing) X causes Y to increase (or decrease).

Here, X and Y are two variables that are causally connected. This statement is a good causal hypothesis because it is both a hypothesis (empirical, falsifiable, and general) and it makes a causal statement (A causes B). Of course you will use only one direction for each variable.

Showing causality requires three things: high correlation, theoretic feasibility, and temporal precedence. In this assignment, you are not required to show causality; you are only required to write causal hypotheses.

Read five different foreign newspapers. From each of the five, write a causal statement that you find in a story. Do not expect to find one written in the correct form by a journalist. You will have to rewrite it in the correct form (see above). For example, the following came verbatim from a BBC article:

The administration's clear hope is that the promise of some reductions will be enough to ease pressure for deeper cuts, correspondents say.

The resulting causal hypothesis would be:

Increasing promises of some troop reductions reduces pressure for deeper troop cuts.

For this assignment, you just need to provide the URL for the news story source. Thus, you would write the following in this example:

1. Increasing promises of some troop reductions reduces pressure for deeper troop cuts.

URL: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6983140.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6983140.stm)

Do five of these. Because this is a make-up assignment, the highest grade you will be able to get is 15/20.