

No News Is Good News? The Declining Information Value of Broadcast News in America

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Abstract

Despite the rise of digital media, Americans are five times more likely to consume news via television than through online platforms. However, due in large part to technical hurdles, it remains unclear what content appears on broadcast news and how the mixture of content has changed over time. We consider these questions by applying a novel LLM-based approach to an understudied corpus of expert-generated summaries of virtually all news segments aired on the “big three” broadcast networks—ABC, CBS, and NBC—between 1968 and 2019. Results based on nearly one million news segments show that “information density”—the amount of time dedicated to political issues—has declined substantially over the last 50 years. Today broadcast news spends twice as much time on commercials and “soft” news and half as much on issue-based political coverage compared to a few decades ago. Since the early 1990s, the news has also shifted inward, focusing more on domestic stories and less on international affairs. These changes suggest a transformation in the informative role of broadcast news, raising questions about its impact on voter knowledge and political engagement.

Introduction

Fifty years ago, the majority of Americans received their daily news from a single media platform: network television. The combined audience across the three networks exceeded 80 million, or roughly two-thirds of the voting-eligible electorate (Iyengar 2022). The dominance of network television as the primary news source began to wane with the entry of cable television in the 1980s and continued with the emergence of online news and the movement away from television to streaming. However, despite this enhanced media environment, network television news remains the single most utilized source of news for the American public, dominating online sources by a factor of 5:1 (Watts, Rothschild, and Mobius 2021; see also Muise et al. 2022).

Given the long reach of television, it is not surprising that media scholars have scrutinized the content and framing of broadcast news. Market pressures and increased competition for viewers have, unsurprisingly, led to an increase in the supply of “soft” news that focuses on celebrities, scandals, and entertainment (Scott and Gobetz 1992; Prior 2003). In the context of political campaigns, television news tends to pay more attention to the “horserace” than the policy platforms of the competing candidates (Patterson 2005,

2017; Rothschild et al. 2023). When networks do cover substantive issues, the framing is typically “episodic” (Iyengar 1994), focusing on isolated events or personal stories (for instance, an individual experiencing homelessness) rather than broader societal trends (for instance, the national poverty rate). More broadly, broadcast news is frequently criticized for its lack of substantive content, which undermines its contribution to the “marketplace of ideas” and informed public discourse.

In this paper, we systematically analyze the changing content of national broadcast news since its peak during the 1960s. To do so, we leverage a unique dataset containing virtually all evening news reports on the “big three” broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) from 1969 to the present day. While previous literature has examined declines in substantive reporting over shorter spans (Hosseinmardi et al. 2023) or in print media (Barnhurst and Mutz 1997), to our knowledge, this analysis represents the first such extensive longitudinal study of broadcast news content, spanning more than five decades.

Tracking the content of broadcast news over such an extended period—spanning the introduction of the draft in the Vietnam War to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic—poses considerable analytical challenges. To map changes in the content of broadcast news over this period, we develop a novel LLM-based hierarchical classification scheme, which constructs meaningful categories of different granularity from the news itself in an essentially unsupervised way.

Using this classification scheme, we comprehensively analyze the long-term trends in the topics covered by the major news networks over the last half century. We find that during this period, the content of typical news broadcasts shifts dramatically toward less substantive reports; together, human interest stories and commercials steadily account for greater and greater shares of nightly news content. In light of the continued centrality of broadcast news in American democracy, the gradual decline in the informative value of the evening news has important implications for voters’ ability to understand and participate in national political debates.

Background and Related Work

Background. Television news has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, reflecting broader

changes in technology, audience behavior, and media economics. The rise of cable news in the 1980s ushered in a 24-hour news cycle that prioritized sensationalism, immediacy, and conflict-driven narratives to maintain viewer engagement (Bennett 2016; Prior 2007). Concurrently, the proliferation of partisan outlets, such as Fox News and MSNBC, has deepened ideological polarization in news consumption, as audiences increasingly select sources that reinforce their political predispositions (Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Stroud 2011).

Technological advancements have accelerated these trends. The integration of digital platforms and social media into television news formats has shifted journalistic priorities toward real-time interaction and virality, often at the expense of depth and accuracy (Boczkowski and Mitchellstein 2010; Kaplan 2020). Moreover, the fragmentation of audiences has led to declining viewership for network news and a concentration of television news consumption among older demographics, while younger viewers gravitate toward digital-native platforms (Pew Research Center 2022).

The erosion of trust in television news has further compounded these challenges. Public confidence in media institutions has declined due to perceptions of bias, sensationalism, and a failure to distinguish credible reporting from misinformation (Ladd 2012; Jones 2021). Research suggests that the rise of partisan framing and the blurring of entertainment and news formats have exacerbated these dynamics, contributing to the public's skepticism toward traditional television journalism (Baum 2003; Barnidge 2019).

Changes in broadcast news. Several papers have looked at changes in broadcast and cable news, or other kinds of news—though typically via limited subsets of data. In a cross-platform report, Kavanagh et al. (2019) examined shifts in news presentation from 1989 to 2017, focusing on broadcast television, cable news, and online platforms. The study found that cable and online outlets increasingly emphasize opinion, commentary, and emotional appeals, in stark contrast to the more neutral and fact-based presentations historically dominant in broadcast news. This evolution reflects a fragmentation of information consumption, raising concerns about how these changes affect public understanding and discourse. This work, however, spans a relatively short time frame and does not engage with additional questions about story selection, leaving open critical inquiries about the broader dynamics of agenda-setting and gatekeeping in the evolving media landscape.

In another study, Muise et al. (2022) analyzed American news consumption from 2016 to 2019, revealing that approximately 17% of Americans are partisan-segregated through television, compared to about 4% online. Other work (Martin and McCrain 2019) has examined the impact of local television station acquisitions by conglomerate owners on news content and viewership. Analyzing data from 743 local news stations during 2017, the authors find that ownership changes led to increased national political coverage at the expense of local news, a significant rightward shift in ideological slant, and a slight decrease in viewership.

In summary, previous research investigating changes in

broadcast news has generally spanned abbreviated time periods and focused on a limited delineation of news content. Our work complements these past studies by tracking changes in broadcast news more fully and systematically over half a century.

News classification at scale. Techniques for categorizing the content of large news corpora have developed in an overlapping body of work in the computer science literature studying partisan bias, social media echo chambers, and related phenomena. While straightforward to scale and apply, few researchers have adopted traditional unsupervised classification methods—likely because the correspondence between categories produced by unsupervised topic modeling methods and concepts of substantive interest can be tenuous and difficult to validate (Ying, Montgomery, and Stewart 2022; Hoyle et al. 2021). Instead, researchers have largely relied on supervised approaches to ensure that resulting labels are relevant and conceptually coherent. In some cases, researchers have been able to leverage incidental expert classifications. For instance, Flaxman, Goel, and Rao (2016) study ideological segregation using a corpus of over 4 million online news articles. The authors leverage the structure of news websites with identifiable news and opinion URLs to train a supervised bag-of-words model with which they identify the descriptive, “front-page” articles from the larger corpus.

Informative metadata of this kind is frequently unavailable, however, and, to date, most large-scale studies have relied on classification by human experts, bootstrapped to the larger corpus using supervised learning methods. For instance, Budak, Goel, and Rao (2016) study media bias using a corpus of 803,146 online articles. To study the partisan balance of these articles, the authors first use Amazon Mechanical Turk workers to generate labels to train a supervised model identifying political news articles. To rate the partisan lean of the outlets using the approximately 100,000 identified articles, the authors recruited several hundred additional human annotators to assess the topic and ideological position of a representative subset of around 10,000 articles. Similarly, to classify the content of closed captions from news segments between 2012 and 2022 among 24 “polarizing” issues, Hosseinmardi et al. (2023) use a complex two-layer human-in-the-loop classification model requiring an initial weakly-supervised classifier as well as a second stage of human annotation and supervised classification to refine the results.

The costs and difficulty associated with involving human expert labelers consequently pose substantial obstacles to understanding the large-scale evolution of news media. The new classification framework we develop here, leveraging the broad contextual knowledge and expressive capacity of LLMs, shares many strengths with classification by human experts without the associated cost and scaling difficulties.

Data and Methods

Studying the long-term evolution of broadcast news content poses both methodological and data challenges. Not only the underlying technology—including transmission and record-

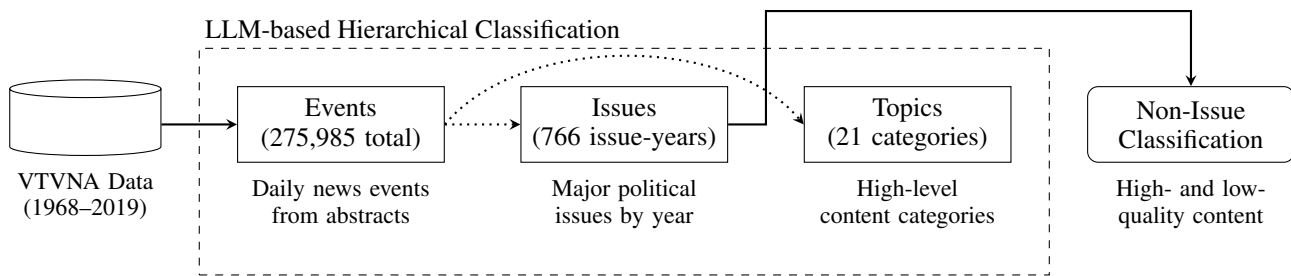


Figure 1: An illustration of the news classification pipeline. With LLMs, we use the VTVNA data to generate “events,” roughly corresponding to the level of granularity of a news segment. From the events we generate “issues” relevant to a year of broadcast news and “topics” covering all five decades of news broadcasts. We further classify segments not corresponding to an issue into a variety of subtopics; see Tables A1 through A4 for examples.

ing capabilities—but also the broader context of the news has shifted dramatically during this period, complicating the identification of coherent topics and themes applicable to five decades of social and political change. Traditional approaches like topic modeling often produce categories that, while statistically coherent, lack clear substantive interpretation or consistency across time periods. Moreover, the lack of sufficiently rich standard categories for classifying news introduces considerable researcher degrees of freedom into the creation of any idiosyncratic classification scheme, potentially undermining the validity of results. To address these challenges, we leverage an understudied corpus of news broadcast metadata covering almost the entire history of broadcast evening news,¹ and develop a novel, unsupervised hierarchical classification framework that leverages large language models to inductively identify meaningful categories while maintaining conceptual consistency across time.

Data. Our analysis is based on data from the Vanderbilt TV News Archive (VTVNA, <https://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu>), which has recorded all television national news broadcasts from ABC, CBS, and NBC since August 5, 1968. To facilitate search and retrieval of relevant news material for researchers, VTVNA generates expert abstracts summarizing the content of each segment when they enter the archive.

In particular, each nightly news broadcast is divided into segments, with each segment corresponding to a single news story, commercial, or other “discrete” news item. Typical segments last between ten seconds and several minutes. In addition to a brief abstract, VTVNA also annotates each segment with a variety of metadata, including the broadcaster that aired the segment and the program within which it appeared; the date and time the segment originally aired; and a brief title for the segment, indicating its contents (e.g., “US-USSR Relations / Arms Talks”).

For the majority of news segments, this abstract consists of a brief summary of the report and topics discussed written by an expert human annotator; see, e.g., Figure A1. Beginning on August 14th, 2014, segments aired by CBS and

¹The 30 minute evening news format dates to September 1963, when CBS news initially extended their broadcast from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.

NBC, however, transitioned to an abstract consisting of the closed captions transcribing the dialogue from the segment; see, e.g., Figure A2. Some extremely short news segments and segments for which the content is entirely contained in the title (e.g., “Introduction,” “Stock Market Report,” “Upcoming items,” “Goodnight”) do not have abstracts; neither do most commercials.

Classification. The news segments in our corpus amount to more than two-and-a-half years of video footage, while the abstracts summarizing these segments contain more than 37 million words. This sheer volume makes it difficult to manually review and label the entirety of the VTVNA dataset. To analyze and categorize such an extensive collection of news coverage, we use language models to develop and implement a hierarchical classification scheme, enabling systematic and scalable analysis of the corpus. The entire pipeline is shown in Figure 1.

Our classification scheme for news segments is structured into three hierarchical levels. At the most fine-grained level, we classify segments by “events”—discrete, time-bound occurrences that are the focus of individual news stories, such as a specific diplomatic meeting or an earthquake in a particular location. The number of events reported is roughly expected to match the number of news stories, acknowledging that the same event may be reported independently by different networks.

The second and more general content category associates news segments with “issues” of national importance relevant to the year the segment aired, such as healthcare reform or U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations. For ongoing issues, such as the Vietnam War, segments across multiple years can be associated with the same issue if it remained a major national concern. In any given year, we estimate that the news focuses on roughly a dozen political issues.

At the broadest level, segments are categorized into high-level “topics,” such as economics, politics, or national security. This level separates the content into broader thematic categories, allowing most news reports to be grouped under approximately two dozen overarching topics. This hierarchical three-fold classification scheme enables us to systematically analyze and compare the content of broadcast news across different levels of granularity.

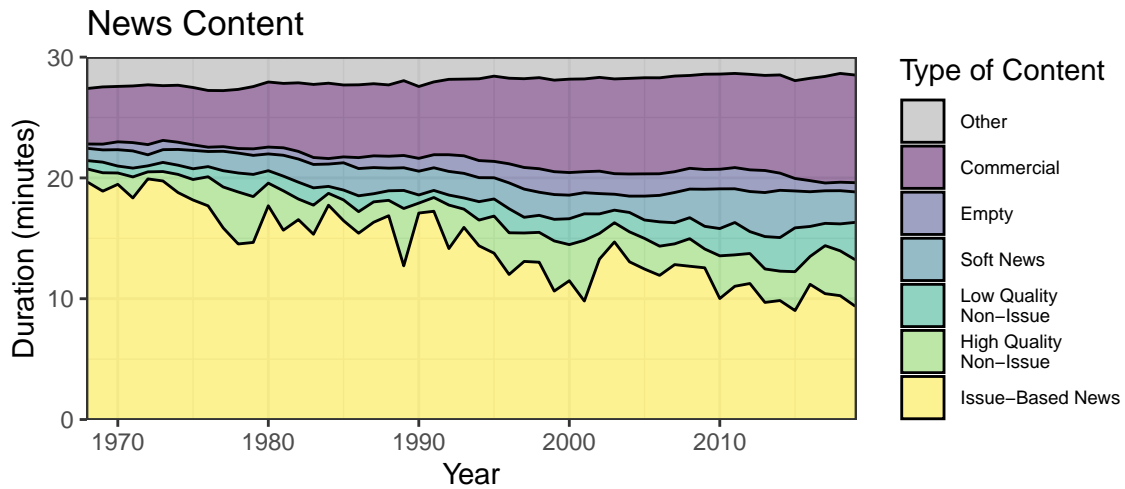


Figure 2: The composition of a typical thirty-minute evening news broadcast between 1968 and 2019. Broadcast year is shown on the x-axis, and the proportion of time allotted to each type of content in minutes out of a typical thirty-minute broadcast is shown on the y-axis. The content each band represents is indicated by the corresponding color: “other” programming not recorded in the broadcast in gray; commercials in dark purple; “empty” segments with no abstract in lavender; soft news in blue; low quality non-issue news (see Table A4) in turquoise; high quality non-issue news in light green; and issue-based news in yellow. Over this fifty year period, the duration of time allotted to different types of news content changes dramatically, with increasing time spent on less substantive types of programming.

To develop these hierarchical classifications in a data-driven manner, we construct them using large language models (LLMs), progressing from the most granular level of events to issues and topics. To generate our collection of “events,” we begin by presenting a language model with the titles and abstracts from all news segments for a single day, along with instructions to generate a list of events covered that day. For each event, the model produces a one-sentence description and identifies the segments associated with it. Additionally, the model is instructed to prioritize and list the most important event of the day first.

By applying this process to each of the 18,014 “news days” in our dataset, the model identifies 275,985 distinct events. A representative sample of these events is shown in Table A3, providing a snapshot of the granular level of detail captured by our classification scheme.

Next, we use the set of news events to generate the collection of issues. We do so sequentially, leveraging the issues generated in previous years to maintain continuity across time for events that remain salient for more than a year. In particular, we present a language model with the most important event that occurred on each “news day” in the database, together with the set of issues that have been generated in previous years. We then instruct the model to list the ten to fifteen specific issues (i.e., “inflation” rather than “the economy”) that, based on the news, viewers would think were important in a given year. (To maintain continuity across years, we also allow the model—subject to an independent correctness check—to merge issues from previous years which are substantively the same but which were given different names.) This results in 500 distinct issues—and 766 issue-year pairs—across the fifty years of data. The full table of issues in each year is given in Table A2.

Finally, we also leverage the collection of events to generate a list of high-level topics, again in a sequential manner. We begin with a collection of manually constructed plausible “seed” topics. We then present a language model with a random sample of 500 events from the full dataset, pairing them with the previously generated collection of topics, or the seed topics, on the first iteration. The list of topics is then iteratively modified to better align with the sampled events, ensuring improved coverage of the dataset’s contents and achieving a balanced level of generality across all topics. Through this process, 45 candidate topic collections were generated. From the final ten collections, the model was prompted to select the optimal set, based on criteria including abstraction, distinctness, naturalness, and comprehensive coverage. The resulting 21 topics are presented in Table A1.

We then use a language model to classify each news segment into the issues generated for the corresponding year and the topics generated for the entire corpus. At the same time, we elicit from the model whether the segment concerns “soft” (e.g., sports, entertainment, human interest) or “hard” news (e.g., politics, economics, crime). We allow the model to leave unclassified those news segments that do not fit any of the issues or topics.

Reclassification of non-issue-based news. While almost all segments are assigned a corresponding topic (see Figure A3), some news items do not correspond to political issues from the corresponding year, but are nevertheless labeled “hard news” by the model. To better understand the contents of these segments, we embedded the corresponding segments and clustered them into twenty clusters using k -means clustering. We also manually reviewed large numbers of random samples of segments from each of the

Changes in Coverage of Selected News Topics

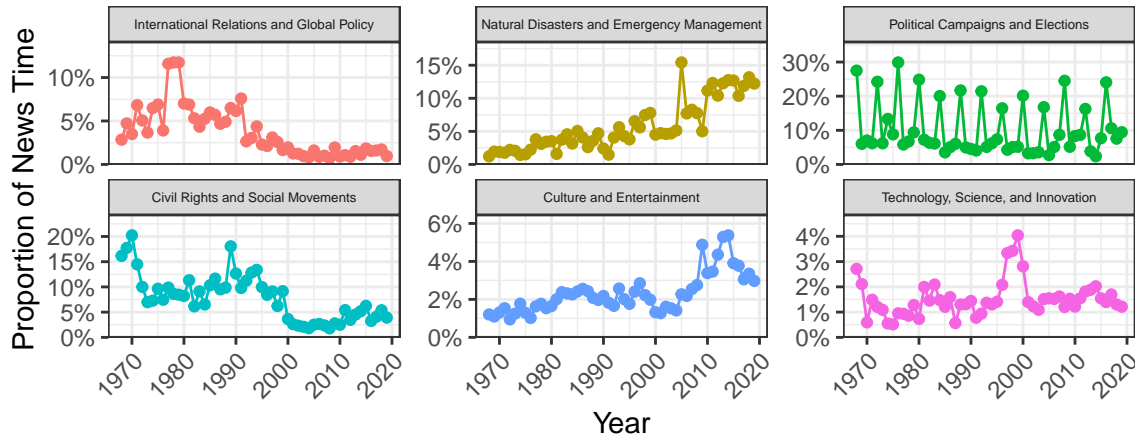


Figure 3: An illustration of the changing content of the evening news, using six of the twenty “topic” classifications. Broadcast year is shown on the x-axis, and the proportion of total news time (among non-commercial segments with abstracts) spent on these topics is shown on the y-axis. The first column highlights the declining importance of international news and news about civil rights and social movements. The second column shows the increasing salience of sensational and “soft” news topics. The third column provides evidence that topic assignments are meaningful and match expectations about changes in news content: campaign reporting increases dramatically presidential election years, and technology reporting spikes in the late 1990s, largely covering the “electronic revolution” and concerns about the “Y2K problem.”

clusters, which we further split and merged, resulting in the list of sub-topics given in Table A4, some of which overlap to varying degrees with topics. We then further reclassified each of these segments according to this schema, categorizing them as either “high-quality” or “low-quality” depending on which category their content fell under. To ensure our reclassification is appropriately conservative, we include a number of sub-topics (including “foreign turmoil,” “crime,” “trials,” and “manmade disasters”) where some reporting is likely to be very substantive—even if the modal segment is relatively sensational—under the “high-quality” label.

Results

We find that the content and priorities of broadcast news have shifted dramatically over the last five decades. This trend is illustrated at the highest level in Figure 2, which depicts the allocation of airtime within a typical 30-minute newscast between 1969 and 2019. The vertical axis represents the total runtime, while colored bands delineate the proportion dedicated to distinct categories of content: (1) issue-based news addressing key national political topics of the day; (2) high-quality non-issue news, covering topics like the economy, government proceedings, foreign politics, and corruption (see Table A4); (3) low-quality non-issue news, such as reports on natural disasters, memorials, obituaries, and anniversaries; (4) soft news, including sports, entertainment, and human-interest stories; (5) empty segments lacking abstracts, such as introductions, stock reports, farewells, and other routine elements; (6) commercials; and (7) other content, encompassing station identification, local commercials, and non-news programming omitted by VTVNA.

Over the 50 years depicted in Figure 2, airtime devoted to

national political issues declines steadily, decreasing by approximately two minutes per decade—from around 20 minutes in 1969 to about 10 minutes in 2019. Concurrently, the time allocated to commercials nearly doubles, increasing from roughly 4.5 minutes in the early 1970s to almost 9 minutes in the 2010s, equaling the airtime dedicated to national political issues by the end of the period.

This decline in political coverage is partially offset by growth in other content categories. Both low-quality and high-quality non-issue news expand significantly, with the former increasing from about 30 seconds to 2 minutes and the latter from 1 minute to 3.5 minutes. Similarly, airtime devoted to soft news surges from 1.5 minutes to 3.5 minutes per broadcast.

Taken together, these changes mark a profound shift in the composition of the evening news broadcasts. During the Johnson and Nixon administrations, the overwhelming majority of the 30-minute broadcast was devoted to hard news focused on national political issues. During the first Trump administration, this preponderance of hard news had transformed into an almost equal division between hard news, commercials, and lower-priority or structural content.

Changing topics of discussion. These dramatic changes in the evening news are also visible at the level of the topics news broadcasts cover. Each panel of Figure 3 shows the proportion of news programming devoted to one of six of the twenty-one news topics identified in our corpus: the first column shows examples of topics which have undergone declines, the second topics that have increased their share of programming, and the third topics whose time series corroborate the coherence of our classification scheme. (See Figure A3 for the full set of topics.) Our hierarchical classification scheme charts a variety of important changes

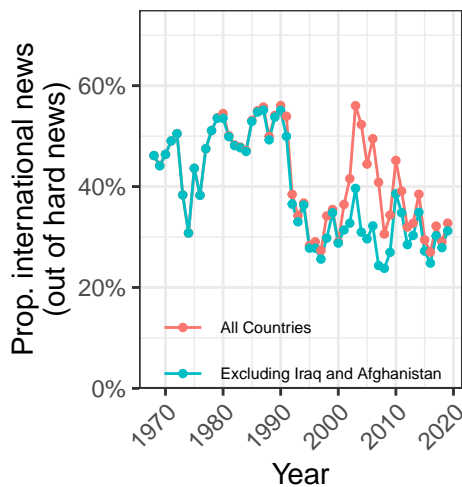


Figure 4: *The proportion of hard news segments mentioning a foreign country, weighted by duration. The red line indicates all foreign countries, and the blue line excludes mentions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Without these two countries, there is a roughly twenty percentage point durable drop in the proportion of hard news mentioning a foreign country beginning in the early 1990s.*

in the content of the evening news over the last half century.

Our findings show a marked decline in the coverage of international news, replaced by a growing emphasis on soft news, such as entertainment-oriented and human-interest stories. This shift reflects a significant reorientation in the priorities of news organizations. The decline in international reporting corresponds with the closure of foreign bureaus and reduced budgets for overseas coverage (Gans 2004; Epstein 1973), making it increasingly difficult for broadcasters to cover overseas events in depth.

Roughly a fifth of reporting in the late 1960s and early 1970s related to the civil rights movements, as well as international social movements, such as the anti-apartheid protests in South Africa. By the mid-1970s, this declined to only about 10% of reporting, before falling precipitously again in 2000 to 5% or less of evening news content. Similarly, reporting on international relations fell dramatically since its peak of around 10% during the Carter Administration, to virtually zero in the contemporary evening news. Since the 1990s, evening news viewers were still exposed to discussion of foreign affairs, particularly beginning in 2001, following the September 11th attacks and the subsequent U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. This coverage of foreign affairs, however, occurred primarily through the lens of military affairs and terrorism; see Figure A3. The “domestication” of the evening news is visible in other ways. Between 1969 and 1991, around half of all segments mention a foreign country; that drops to just over a quarter beginning in the early 1990s, after excluding mentions of Iraq and Afghanistan; see Figure 4

The trend toward soft and domestic news is also driven by economic pressures that compel news organizations to oper-

ate as profit centers. Soft news attracts larger audiences and generates more advertising revenue than in-depth reporting on foreign affairs (Baum 2002). As competition for viewer attention intensifies, news content has increasingly prioritized stories that align with audience preferences, often at the expense of more substantive reporting (Postman 2005).

Coverage of natural disasters—shown in the top central panel—rose from a few percentage points of coverage to almost a sixth of a typical newscast by 2019. Similarly, coverage of light topics in culture and entertainment—shown in the bottom central panel—which comprised between 1% and 2% of news coverage through the mid-1990s, began to rise, roughly tripling their share of time on a typical newscast in the early 2010s.

Shrinking coverage of political issues. While the shift toward “softer” and more sensational news topics is significant in its own right, changes in evening news coverage of national political issues carry even greater consequences for democratic discourse. Unlike crime or human-interest stories—events that individuals might experience directly or access through local news—most voters rely on national media coverage to learn about and form opinions on critical political topics such as international trade agreements or healthcare policy (Iyengar and Kinder 2010). The framing and prioritization of these issues in national media play a pivotal role in shaping public understanding and engagement.

As shown in Figure 3, these shifts in topical focus coincide with a stark decline in coverage of the most pressing national political issues. This reduction raises concerns about the media’s ability to inform citizens on policies and decisions central to public life and governance. The implications of this trend are far-reaching, potentially diminishing the quality of democratic deliberation and weakening the electorate’s capacity to hold leaders accountable on substantive policy matters.

The total airtime dedicated to national political issues declined sharply, from roughly nineteen minutes per broadcast in 1969 to less than half that in 2019, the first and last full years of data in our analysis. This dramatic change is highlighted in Figure 5. The left panel illustrates the amount of time devoted to the ten most-covered national political issues in 1969, while the right panel shows the same for 2019. In 1969, the Vietnam War dominated coverage, receiving just over five minutes of airtime during a typical evening news broadcast. By contrast, in 2019, the most-covered political issue was the impeachment of President Trump, which accounted for around four minutes of coverage in a typical broadcast.

The disparity becomes even more pronounced for issues receiving less coverage. In 2019, the second-most-covered issue, mass shootings, reflected the historically high number of active shooter incidents that year (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2021) and received just over a minute of airtime per broadcast. This is comparable to the time devoted in 1969 to high-profile assassinations and their aftermath, including the trial of Sirhan Sirhan and the repercussions of the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther

Coverage of Top Ten Issues in 1969 and 2019

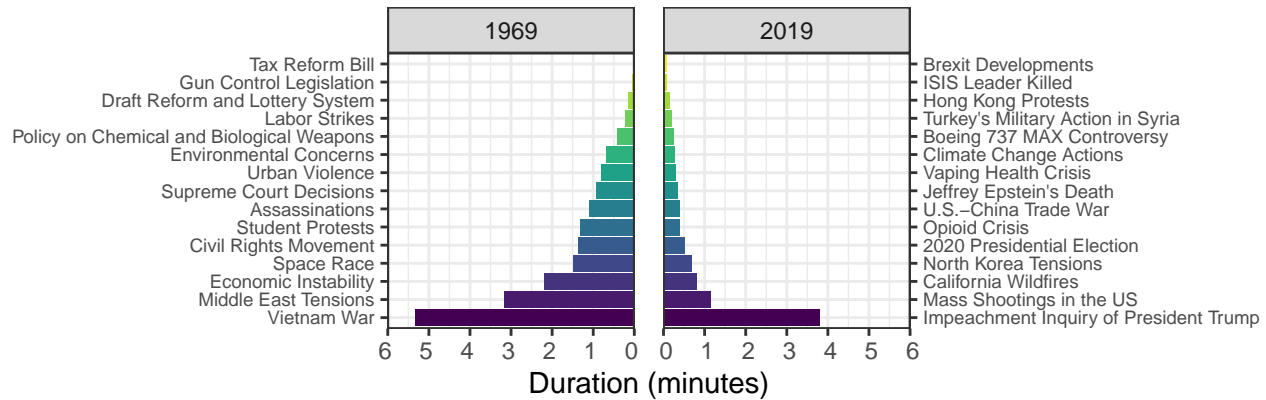


Figure 5: Time devoted to coverage of the top ten political issues during a typical newscast in 1969 vs. 2019. While the top issue in 2019 (President Trump's impeachment) received only slightly less coverage than the top issue in 1969 (the Vietnam War), coverage of the remaining issues is significantly lower in 2019, ranging from around 15 seconds to a minute per newscast, compared to a range of 30 seconds to more than three minutes in 1969. In aggregate, significantly more time was spent covering top political issues in 1969 (19 minutes) than in 2019 (9.5 minutes).

King Jr.—the seventh most-covered political issue that year. This reduction underscores a significant narrowing of the scope of political coverage in the evening news over the past five decades.

Discussion

By developing and applying a novel LLM-based hierarchical classification scheme, we document a dramatic decline in the substantive content of American evening news over the past five decades, with airtime devoted to national political issues falling from 20 minutes in 1969 to less than 10 minutes in 2019. Concurrently, airtime for commercials has doubled, and coverage of soft news and low-quality non-issue reporting has expanded significantly. These changes reflect a broader shift in the priorities of network news, driven by economic pressures and competition from cable and digital media. The result is a media landscape where the primary source of news for Americans is less focused on informing the public and more oriented toward entertainment.

This increasingly non-substantive content of television news is particularly concerning in the context of rising political polarization and the proliferation of misinformation. The decrease of hard news content on broadcast news may make for a citizenry that is less informed about the policies and debates that shape their lives. Historically, television news has played a critical role in fostering political engagement and enabling voters to hold leaders accountable (Iyengar 1994; Patterson 2017), but its shift toward more entertainment-oriented content undermines classical theories of news media as key contributors to the “public sphere” (Schudson 2014; Zelizer 1991)

The implications extend well beyond domestic political issues. Since the 1990s, international reporting has sharply declined, narrowing the scope of the public's view of the world. Foreign coverage now focuses primarily on military

conflicts and terrorism, with mentions of foreign countries outside these contexts dropping precipitously. This contraction reflects broader economic trends, such as the closure of foreign bureaus and reduced budgets for overseas reporting (Gans 2004).

We note that our work has important limitations. In particular, our reliance on large language models (LLMs) introduces some degree of error, especially in cases where the text is difficult to evaluate due to minimal available information and ambiguity. LLMs performed well overall, but as these models evolve rapidly, our approach may need to be revised for future research. This raises questions about consistency and reproducibility, particularly for longitudinal studies. Even with these limitations, our method highlights the promise of using LLMs to analyze large-scale datasets and tackle complex social science questions in a scalable way.

The demise of substantive news programming, as documented here on the network television platform, presents a fundamental challenge to democracy at a time when it is under increasing threat from polarization and disinformation (Mueller et al. 2019). Addressing this challenge requires renewed attention to the role of network news in fostering an informed electorate. Although digital platforms provide alternative sources of information, they still lack the reach, and often the credibility, of traditional television news. The continuing substantive diminishment of broadcast news suggests that the public's capacity to hold leaders accountable may fall, potentially weakening the resilience of democratic institutions.

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Ethics Checklist

1. For most authors...

- (a) Would answering this research question advance science without violating social contracts, such as violating privacy norms, perpetuating unfair profiling, exacerbating the socio-economic divide, or implying disrespect to societies or cultures? **Yes.**
- (b) Do your main claims in the abstract and introduction accurately reflect the paper's contributions and scope? **Yes.**
- (c) Do you clarify how the proposed methodological approach is appropriate for the claims made? **Yes.**
- (d) Do you clarify what are possible artifacts in the data used, given population-specific distributions? Our dataset is essentially the entire universe of relevant news segments.
- (e) Did you describe the limitations of your work? **Yes, see the Discussion.**
- (f) Did you discuss any potential negative societal impacts of your work? **No, we are not aware of any.**
- (g) Did you discuss any potential misuse of your work? **No, we are not aware of any such potential.**
- (h) Did you describe steps taken to prevent or mitigate potential negative outcomes of the research, such as data and model documentation, data anonymization, responsible release, access control, and the reproducibility of findings? **The data used are all already public.**
- (i) Have you read the ethics review guidelines and ensured that your paper conforms to them? **Yes.**

2. Additionally, if your study involves hypotheses testing...

- (a) Did you clearly state the assumptions underlying all theoretical results? This study does not involve formal hypothesis testing.
- (b) Have you provided justifications for all theoretical results? This study does not involve formal hypothesis testing.
- (c) Did you discuss competing hypotheses or theories that might challenge or complement your theoretical results? This study does not involve formal hypothesis testing.
- (d) Have you considered alternative mechanisms or explanations that might account for the same outcomes observed in your study? This study does not involve formal hypothesis testing.
- (e) Did you address potential biases or limitations in your theoretical framework? This study does not involve formal hypothesis testing.
- (f) Have you related your theoretical results to the existing literature in social science? This study does not involve formal hypothesis testing.
- (g) Did you discuss the implications of your theoretical results for policy, practice, or further research in the social science domain? This study does not involve formal hypothesis testing.

3. Additionally, if you are including theoretical proofs...

- (a) Did you state the full set of assumptions of all theoretical results? This study does not involve mathematical proofs.
- (b) Did you include complete proofs of all theoretical results? This study does not involve mathematical proofs.

4. Additionally, if you ran machine learning experiments...

- (a) Did you include the code, data, and instructions needed to reproduce the main experimental results (either in the supplemental material or as a URL)? **We will publicly release our code, but we cannot re-release the data used in this study.**
- (b) Did you specify all the training details (e.g., data splits, hyperparameters, how they were chosen)? **Yes.**
- (c) Did you report error bars (e.g., with respect to the random seed after running experiments multiple times)? This study does not involve sample estimates.
- (d) Did you include the total amount of compute and the type of resources used (e.g., type of GPUs, internal cluster, or cloud provider)? **No significant compute was used.**
- (e) Do you justify how the proposed evaluation is sufficient and appropriate to the claims made? **Yes, See our discussion of methods and results.**
- (f) Do you discuss what is "the cost" of misclassification and fault (in)tolerance? **See the discussion.**

5. Additionally, if you are using existing assets (e.g., code, data, models) or curating/releasing new assets, **without compromising anonymity**...

- (a) If your work uses existing assets, did you cite the creators? **Yes.**
- (b) Did you mention the license of the assets? **There is no license associated with the assets that we are aware of, beyond the Terms of Service of the VTVNA.**
- (c) Did you include any new assets in the supplemental material or as a URL? **Yes.**
- (d) Did you discuss whether and how consent was obtained from people whose data you're using/curating? **Yes.**
- (e) Did you discuss whether the data you are using/curating contains personally identifiable information or offensive content? **This dataset is already public and does not contain offensive content we are aware of.**
- (f) If you are curating or releasing new datasets, did you discuss how you intend to make your datasets FAIR (see FORCE11 (2020))? **We are not releasing new data.**
- (g) If you are curating or releasing new datasets, did you create a Datasheet for the Dataset (see Gebru et al. (2021))? **We are not releasing new data.**

6. Additionally, if you used crowdsourcing or conducted research with human subjects, **without compromising anonymity**...

- (a) Did you include the full text of instructions given to participants and screenshots? **We did not conduct human subjects research.**

- (b) Did you describe any potential participant risks, with mentions of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals? We did not conduct human subjects research.
- (c) Did you include the estimated hourly wage paid to participants and the total amount spent on participant compensation? We did not conduct human subjects research.
- (d) Did you discuss how data is stored, shared, and deidentified? We did not conduct human subjects research.

Additional Data and Methodological Details

Our dataset was scraped from the VTVNA website with permission. In addition to the news segments from ABC, CBS, and NBC considered in our analysis, more limited data are available for MSNBC, Fox, and CNN over shorter periods; we limit our analysis to ABC, CBS, and NBC from 1968 to the end of 2019.

In addition to segments from regular news broadcasts, many programs also consist of or include longer special reports on a single topic aired outside of the standard 6:30–7:00pm ET slot. We exclude these special segments from our analysis. The durations for segments are calculated based on manually entered timestamps which, in some cases, contain errors, leading to erroneous—and typically extremely long—durations. To avoid distorting our estimates, we exclude any segment lasting longer than 30 minutes. Together, these two exclusion criteria cover approximately 0.4% of segments in our data.

We use a variety of LLMs as part of our data processing pipeline. We use OpenAI’s `gpt-3.5-turbo-0125` fine-tuned on approximately 1,000 `gpt-4-turbo-2024-04-09` responses to our prompt, using default training parameters. To generate our collections of issues and topics, we use OpenAI’s `gpt-4-turbo-2024-04-09`. Finally, to classify the segments according to this taxonomy, we use Anthropic’s `claude-3-haiku-20240307`, served through Amazon’s Bedrock API. To embed the segments classified as hard, non-issue-based news, we use OpenAI’s `text-embedding-large` in 256 dimensions.

US-USSR Relations / Arms Talks

(Studio) USSR noted refusing to resume arms talks with United States until Pershing 11 and Cruise missiles are removed from West Germany.

REPORTER: John Palmer (DC) President Reagan's instructions to aides designed to obtain USSR agreement to resume arms talks outlined on screen, discussed; his perception of USSR proposal for Vienna talks on space weapons noted. Reagan's meeting last week with USSR ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and letter to President Konstantin Chernenko recalled.

REPORTER: Emery King

Figure A1: An example news segment abstract. This segment (VTVNA segment #538515) originally aired July 8th, 1984 as part of the NBC Evening News.

Tehran / Congress / James Stavridis / Trump

Now to the other major move by the president announcing in a fiery speech he is refusing to certify the Iran nuclear deal brokered during the Obama era, saying it will lead to more violence, chaos and Iran's nuclear breakout. But he is stopping short of withdrawing from the deal for now. NBC News chief foreign affairs correspondent Andrea Mitchell has more. In a blistering indictment of Iran's terrorism, starting with the hostage taking at the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979, the president tonight...

Figure A2: An example abstract for a segment generated using closed captions. This segment (VTVNA segment #1203952) originally aired October 13, 2017 as part of the NBC Evening News.

News Topics

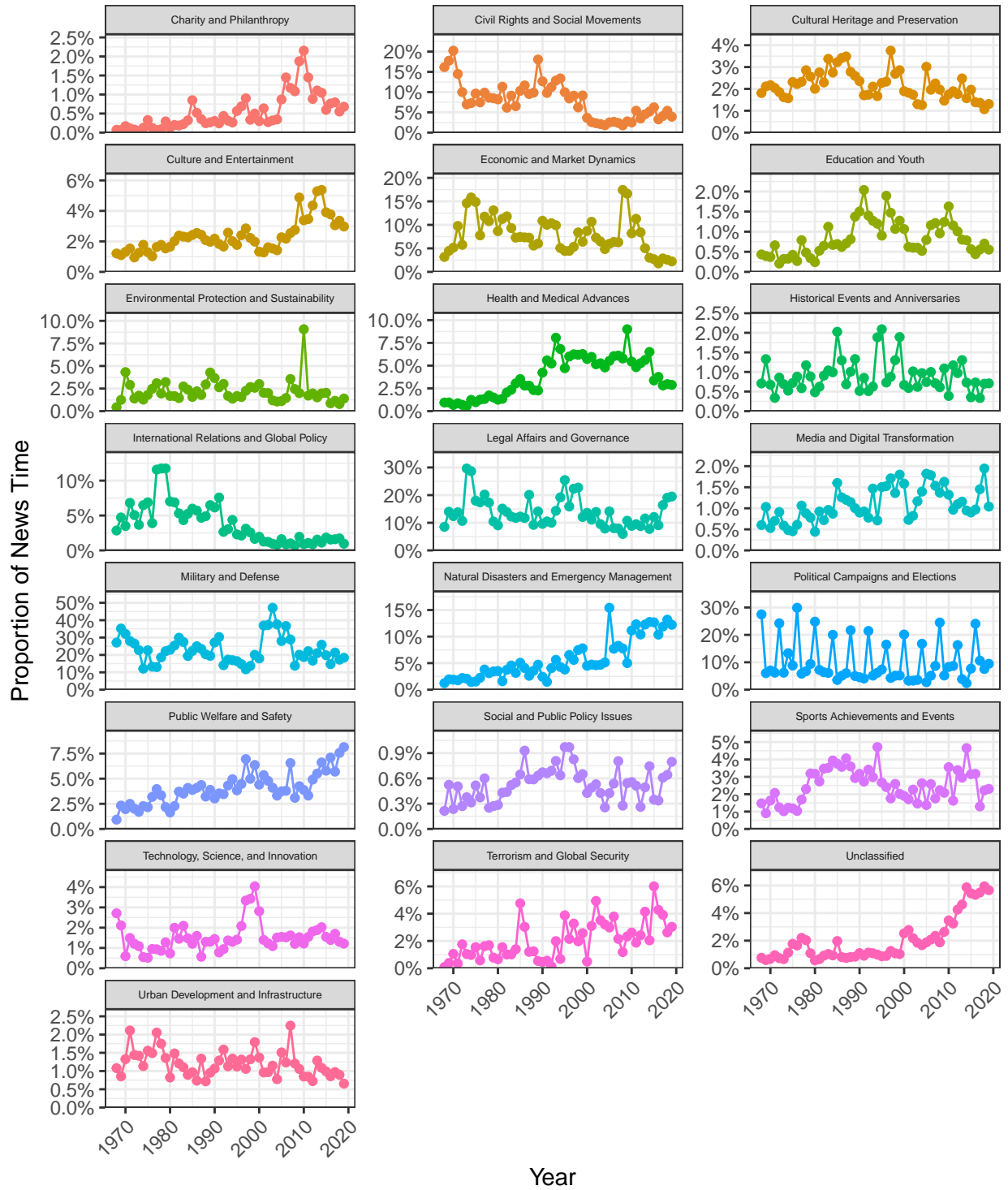


Figure A3: An illustration of the changing contents of the evening news across all 21 of the topic classifications. Broadcast year is shown on the x-axis, and the proportion of total news time (among non-commercial segments with abstracts) spent on these topics is shown on the y-axis. Segments which were not classifiable as one of the 21 topics are shown in the “unclassified” facet.

Table A1: Model-generated topics.

| Topic | Description |
|---|---|
| Civil Rights and Social Movements | Covers issues and events related to civil rights campaigns, social justice movements, advocacy for marginalized groups, and significant protests aiming to change societal structures. |
| Military and Defense | Focuses on the activities and policies of military and defense sectors globally. This includes arms deals, military conflicts, strategic deployments, and national security concerns. |
| Legal Affairs and Governance | Focuses on significant legal battles, court cases, judicial outcomes, governance, policy making, and ethics disputes across various sectors. Includes high-profile trials, legal controversies, judicial rulings, governance issues, policy reactions, and ethical considerations in public and private sectors. |
| Media and Digital Transformation | Explores significant changes and milestones in the field of journalism and media, including the transition from print to digital, the ethical issues in journalism, the role of media in shaping public opinion, and the impact of digital transformation on news dissemination and public engagement. |
| Cultural Heritage and Preservation | Focuses on events and policies contributing to the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage and historical artifacts. This includes restoration efforts, debates over repatriation, and impacts of modernization on traditional cultures. |
| Urban Development and Infrastructure | Focuses on urban planning, development projects, infrastructure enhancements, and issues in city management, such as public transportation systems, housing, and urban policy initiatives. |
| Economic and Market Dynamics | Focuses on economic trends, financial markets, international trade laws, and economic policies. It includes market behaviors, financial challenges, international trade adjustments, and their impact on local and global economies. |
| Environmental Protection and Sustainability | Combines aspects of ecology, conservation projects, human impacts on ecosystems, pollution control, climate change, and societal responses to ongoing environmental challenges, emphasizing both local and global scales. |
| Charity and Philanthropy | Focuses on initiatives, both global and local, driven by philanthropic efforts, charitable organizations, and individuals aimed at improving societal conditions in various sectors like healthcare, education, disaster relief, and more. |
| Terrorism and Global Security | This topic covers acts of terrorism, global security threats, counter-terrorism measures, and international cooperation in security efforts. It includes news related to security breaches, terrorism-related trials, and the societal impact of terrorism. |
| Public Welfare and Safety | Combines issues concerning public health, consumer rights, product safety, and large-scale recalls due to safety concerns, providing a comprehensive view on matters affecting public well-being. |
| Culture and Entertainment | Covers news related to arts, entertainment, media, and cultural events, focusing on significant cultural festivals, achievements in cinema, music, literature, visual arts, and how media influences popular culture. |
| Technology, Science, and Innovation | Covers significant developments, disruptions, and breakthroughs in technology and science that transform industries, enhance consumer behaviors, and advance societal interactions. Includes discussions on digital technologies, product launches, technological infrastructures, scientific discoveries, and their implications for the future. |
| Education and Youth | Reports on educational reforms, school events, policies impacting youth, and stories addressing the broader societal impact on young populations. |
| Health and Medical Advances | Covers significant developments, policies, and controversies in the fields of medicine and health, including breakthroughs in treatment, public health crises, and debates over healthcare policies. |
| Natural Disasters and Emergency Management | Covers significant natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and human-made disasters, including emergency response, disaster preparedness, resource management, and the socio-economic repercussions of these events. |
| International Relations and Global Policy | Focuses on international diplomatic relations, treaties, global policy decisions, and interactions between nations. This includes peace negotiations, international conflicts, and significant global agreements. |
| Social and Public Policy Issues | Examines a range of societal concerns including public health, housing, immigration, and social justice efforts, with a focus on policy reactions and public impact. |
| Sports Achievements and Events | Covers significant sports events, achievements, and developments within the sports industry, including major game outcomes, Olympics and international sports, shifts in sports management, and long-term impacts of sports on societies. |

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| Political Campaigns and Elections | Covers news related to electoral processes, political campaigns, debate coverage, election results, and political endorsements. This includes both national and international election news, highlighting pivotal moments in political careers and shifts in political landscapes. |
| Historical Events and Anniversaries | Covers commemoration of significant historical events, anniversaries, and the ongoing impact of past events on contemporary society, reflecting on how history is interpreted and remembered. |

Table A2: A representative selection of 50 out of 766 model-generated issues in given years.

| Year | Issue | Description |
|------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1968 | Middle East Tensions | Growing tensions in the Middle East, including Israeli military actions and conflicts with Arab states, remained a focal point. |
| 1971 | Labor Strikes | Multiple significant strikes including those by postal workers and dock workers, impacting various sectors of the economy. |
| 1972 | International Relations and Diplomacy | The U.S. faced various diplomatic challenges and adjustments in relations with countries like China and nations involved in conflicts like the Vietnam War. |
| 1973 | Vietnam War | While U.S. direct military involvement dwindled, the focus shifted to peace negotiations, prisoner exchanges, and the aftermath implications of the conflict. |
| 1974 | Economic Instability | The U.S. experienced a severe economic downturn, with rising unemployment rates, a struggling auto industry, and significant impacts on other sectors. |
| 1975 | Terrorism Concerns | Terrorist activities increase domestically and internationally, including bombings and high-profile kidnappings, raising security concerns. |
| 1976 | Ford's Economic Policies | President Ford faced challenges with inflation and unemployment, continuing his focus on economic stability. |
| 1976 | Steel Price Increases | Major steel companies announced price increases, causing concern over economic impacts and prompting discussions about price control. |
| 1980 | Iran-Iraq War | The conflict between Iran and Iraq escalated with significant battles over territorial disputes, affecting global oil markets and regional stability. |
| 1982 | Polish Crisis of 1981 | Continued unrest in Poland following the imposition and eventual suspension of martial law, with ongoing tensions surrounding the Solidarity movement. |
| 1983 | Energy Crisis | Ongoing discussions and fears about energy sufficiency, pricing, and the transition to alternative sources continued to affect policy and market dynamics. |
| 1983 | Unemployment | While unemployment rates generally showed improvement, economic recovery remained uneven across different sectors and regions in the country. |
| 1984 | Nicaraguan Crisis | Political instability and conflicts involving the Sandinistas and the Contras highlighted Nicaragua's national crisis. |
| 1985 | Cold War Tensions and Arms Control | Ongoing negotiations and conflicts between the US and USSR including discussions on Star Wars defense system. |
| 1986 | Nicaraguan Crisis | Escalation of U.S. involvement in Nicaragua, including support for Contra rebels and rising international controversy. |
| 1987 | Supreme Court Nomination Battles | Controversy surrounded President Reagan's nominations to the Supreme Court, particularly the failed confirmation of Robert Bork and the subsequent nomination of Anthony Kennedy. |
| 1990 | Civil Rights and Legislation | Debates and legislative actions on civil rights were prominent, focusing on employment discrimination and minority protections. |
| 1990 | AIDS Epidemic | Continued efforts to combat AIDS included advancements in treatment and public health campaigns to raise awareness and reduce transmission. |
| 1991 | USA and Iraq Tensions | Continued conflict with Iraq over its noncompliance with UN resolutions and nuclear inspections, leading to continued economic sanctions and military threats. |
| 1991 | Yugoslav Wars | Violence escalated in Yugoslavia as the nation dissolved into separate entities, leading to international intervention and severe humanitarian crises. |
| 1991 | Haitian Political Instability | A military coup in Haiti ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, prompting international condemnation and a refugee crisis. |
| 1994 | Haitian Political Instability | The political crisis in Haiti continued, featuring a US-led military intervention to restore President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power. |

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| 1995 | O.J. Simpson Murder Case | The O.J. Simpson trial captured national attention with its dramatic proceedings and controversial not guilty verdict, marking a pivotal moment in public discussions about race and the legal system. |
| 1996 | Chechnya Conflict | The conflict in Chechnya intensified with Russian troops battling Chechen separatists, resulting in significant casualties and geopolitical ramifications. |
| 1997 | Princess Diana's Death | The sudden and tragic death of Princess Diana in a car crash, leading to worldwide mourning and media scrutiny. |
| 1997 | Iraq and Weapons Inspections | Continued tensions between Iraq and the United Nations over weapons inspections, leading to military buildups and diplomatic standoffs. |
| 1997 | Healthcare and Drug Approval | FDA actions on approving new drugs and treatments, including significant approvals impacting public health. |
| 1997 | Economic Instability | Global financial instability affecting major markets, including a significant impact from Asian financial crises. |
| 1998 | Clinton Impeachment | President Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives related to his affair with Monica Lewinsky and alleged obstruction of justice. |
| 1999 | EgyptAir Flight 990 Crash | The mysterious crash of EgyptAir Flight 990 into the Atlantic Ocean led to extensive investigations suspecting possible deliberate actions by the co-pilot. |
| 2000 | Energy Crisis and California Blackouts | Utility deregulation led to a significant energy crisis in California, characterized by rolling blackouts and one of the state's largest utility companies facing bankruptcy. |
| 2001 | September 11 Attacks | Terrorist attacks involving the hijacking of four planes resulted in devastating crashes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania, leading to significant loss of life and a global reevaluation of security measures. |
| 2002 | Homeland Security Department Creation | Following the September 11 attacks, a new Department of Homeland Security was created to consolidate various agencies and bolster domestic security. |
| 2003 | Environment and Climate Policy | Environmental issues were highlighted by policy changes, including the government's handling of forest management and discussions on emissions standards. |
| 2006 | Global Warming and Environmental Policy | Continued discussions and policies addressing global warming, including potential impacts on polar bear habitats. |
| 2007 | Product Recalls | Significant recalls of children's toys, pet food, and other products sparked concerns about safety standards, particularly for goods manufactured in China. |
| 2008 | 2008 Presidential Election | The 2008 presidential election marked a historic victory as Barack Obama became the first African American president of the United States. |
| 2010 | Health Care Reform | The implementation and legal battles over the health care reform law, signed by President Obama, continued to influence national debates. |
| 2011 | Japanese Earthquake and Fukushima Nuclear Disaster | A massive earthquake and tsunami struck Japan, leading to severe nuclear accidents at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. |
| 2012 | Eurozone Crisis | Ongoing financial instability in European countries such as Greece and Spain, requiring extensive bailouts and economic reforms. |
| 2013 | Climate Change Initiatives | Increased national and international efforts to address climate change, including debates over policy approaches and the impact of new environmental regulations. |
| 2014 | US-Cuba Relations | The US and Cuba agreed to normalize diplomatic relations after more than fifty years, marking a significant shift in international relations. |
| 2014 | Iraq and Syria Conflict | Rising violence and territorial expansion by ISIS led to international military interventions, including US airstrikes, and efforts to form a coalition to fight the jihadist group. |
| 2016 | Syrian Civil War | The Syrian Civil War escalated with continued international involvement and significant humanitarian crises, including the battle for Aleppo. |
| 2016 | Cybersecurity and Data Breaches | Significant concerns about cybersecurity were highlighted by multiple data breaches, including a substantial attack on Yahoo accounts. |
| 2016 | ISIS and Global Terrorism | Global terrorism, particularly acts committed by ISIS, continued to influence international security policies and interventions. |
| 2017 | Las Vegas Mass Shooting | A gunman killed 58 people in Las Vegas in the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history. |
| 2018 | Government Shutdown | A partial government shutdown was triggered by disagreements between President Trump and Congress over funding for a border wall. |
| 2018 | North Korea Diplomacy | Efforts by President Trump to engage with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un marked significant diplomatic activities aimed at denuclearization. |

Table A3: A representative selection of 50 out of 275,985 model-generated events.

| Date | Description |
|------------|---|
| 1968-09-02 | American Independent candidate George Wallace speaks at a stock car race in Darlington, SC, highlighting the Democratic Convention and Chicago violence as advantageous to his candidacy. |
| 1969-02-18 | The Nixon administration indicated that the 10% surcharge will be submitted for renewal for another year. |
| 1972-03-27 | Evel Knievel, motorcycle stunt rider, jumps over cars. |
| 1972-12-17 | The Department of Health, Education and Welfare is drawing up safety regulations for tricycles. |
| 1973-03-12 | Former dictator Juan Peron's candidate Hector Campora close to victory in Argentine elections. |
| 1975-02-12 | The Senate Finance Committee votes to delay President Ford's oil import tax. |
| 1976-10-01 | AFL-CIO and UAW pledge financial aid to the NAACP in its lawsuit involving damages to Mississippi merchants from an organization boycott in the 1960s. |
| 1981-09-26 | "Chicago Tribune" reported on an upcoming article in "Chicago Lawyer" regarding Reverend Andrew Greeley's alleged role in investigating John Cardinal Cody for misuse of church funds. |
| 1982-11-14 | Exploitation of Beverly Hills' reputation in product advertising examined. |
| 1983-08-03 | The "New England Journal of Medicine" issued a warning against the regular use of steroids. |
| 1984-01-03 | The United States demanded the Salvadoran government to eliminate right-wing death squads. |
| 1984-01-23 | Apple Computer introduced the new Macintosh model amidst competition in the computer industry. |
| 1984-06-11 | The Supreme Court ruled on the admissibility of illegally obtained evidence, the use of alcohol breath test results in drunk driving cases, and a case related to equal pay laws. |
| 1985-02-20 | American Heart Association's analysis of relationship between heart disease rate among the poor as opposed to affluent. |
| 1985-07-06 | Laos, Japan, commemorates the United States air raids during World War II. |
| 1986-11-08 | The 'New York Times' reported that President Reagan and top aides made arms deals with Iran, via Israel, for the release of some US hostages in Lebanon, revealing a secret operation opposed by several officials. |
| 1987-06-15 | The contents of a US plane accompanying Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos to exile in Hawaii are revealed, highlighting allegations of corruption and racketeering against Marcos. |
| 1990-05-18 | Pan Am airlines announced plans to sell its profitable East Coast shuttle to focus on other aspects of the business. |
| 1990-10-10 | Economic intrigue on issues of taxes and capital gains persisted in the new budget agreement, with Congress and the President at odds. |
| 1993-01-03 | The luxury liner Queen Elizabeth 2 returned to the high seas after being damaged. |
| 1993-03-26 | Plea by Denny's Restaurants to settle charges of racial discrimination out-of-court. |
| 1995-03-04 | The creation of the Nicole Brown Simpson Charitable Foundation to help abused women was featured, with Denise Brown making an impassioned speech at a conference in Missouri. |
| 1995-05-27 | The annual observance by the survivors' group No Greater Love was held at the Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia. |
| 1996-03-11 | General Motors plants across the country shut down because of the strike at two General Motors Corporation parts plants in Dayton, Ohio. |
| 1996-05-20 | Iraq reached a deal with the international community to allow limited oil sales with funds earmarked for food and medicine. |
| 1996-08-10 | Race horse Cigar was defeated in an attempt to break Citation's record for consecutive victories. |
| 1996-09-13 | Hurricanes Fausto and Hortense were tracked to update their locations. |
| 1997-06-01 | Demonstrations in Hong Kong commemorated the pro-democracy movement on the eve of China's takeover of the island. |
| 1997-08-01 | Unemployment figures in the United States reached record lows, indicating a strong job market and increased demand for workers. |
| 2000-01-04 | Wild Oats and Whole Foods natural food stores decided not to carry gene-altered foods. |
| 2001-03-29 | Actress Suzanne Somers sparked controversy with statements about her breast cancer treatment, advocating for 'alternative' treatment over chemotherapy. |
| 2001-05-25 | An appeals court decision threw out an injunction against the publishing of the book 'The Wind Done Gone' by Alice Randall. |
| 2002-04-23 | Eleven Palestinians were arrested in Germany, accused of plotting terror attacks. |

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| 2002-11-24 | The problem with abandoned coal mines in Utah and elsewhere, highlighted by a recent death in a mine shaft in Tooele, Utah. |
| 2004-03-09 | President Bush promoted trade as central to economic growth and job creation amidst concerns over job outsourcing. |
| 2004-04-11 | Pope John Paul II celebrated Easter Mass at the Vatican with high security due to terrorism concerns. |
| 2005-11-17 | The funeral for Ethel Freeman, who became a symbol of the government's slow response to Hurricane Katrina, was held. |
| 2006-04-22 | The training of US Marines for combat in Iraq was featured, showing the realistic training environment at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. |
| 2006-06-14 | An investigation into the safety of the antibiotic drug Ketek revealed that safety tests were forged, raising concerns about the drug's approval. |
| 2006-11-11 | A deer in the woods in western Michigan, previously reported with its face stuck in a plastic pumpkin, was shown to have freed itself in an Internet story follow-up. |
| 2007-02-21 | Iran's Prime Minister Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated that Iran will not retreat on its nuclear program despite the U.N. deadline on uranium enrichment. |
| 2011-05-19 | The high resale value for used cars was examined, highlighting the impact of shrinking supplies due to the Japan earthquake/tsunami. |
| 2011-06-10 | The 90th birthday of Britain's Prince Philip was celebrated, highlighting his tendency for gaffes and his colorful personality. |
| 2012-05-24 | Pro quarterback Tom Brady's father announces he would hesitate to let his son play football due to the risk of hits and concussions. |
| 2012-06-22 | Mt. Rainier National Park ranger Nick Hall died after falling while trying to save stranded climbers. |
| 2014-03-29 | A report on the danger of flooding along the East coast due to spring weather is discussed. |
| 2014-06-26 | US Special Forces troops arrived in Baghdad to advise the Iraqi government on the battle against ISIS. |
| 2014-11-10 | Comedian Joan Rivers' death at a New York City clinic was linked to medical mistakes according to a report. |
| 2017-02-03 | The January jobs report was released, showing 227,000 jobs created and the unemployment rate at 4.8%. |
| 2018-04-15 | Britain's Buckingham Palace was lit in green to raise awareness for the Commonwealth Canopy Project, aiming to preserve rainforest areas. |

Table A4: Scheme for reclassifying non-issue-based hard news.

| Subtopic | Description |
|------------------------------------|--|
| High-Quality Non-Issue News | |
| Business news | Stock market reports, mergers and acquisitions, SEC investigations, stock buybacks, strikes and labor issues, etc. |
| Government procedure | Presidential, congressional, and judicial appointments, recesses, vacations, resump-tions, etc. |
| Foreign politics | Foreign elections, diplomatic events, and other "peaceful" political news from for-eign countries. |
| Corruption | Reports of government and private corruption, financial scams and racketeering, and bribery. |
| Foreign turmoil | Riots, terror attacks, crises, and disorder in foreign countries. |
| Trials | High profile criminal and occasionally civil trials. |
| Crime | Reports of murders and other violent crimes, shootouts, prison breaks, kidnappings, whereabouts of serial killers, etc. |
| Manmade Disasters | Oil spills, toxic dumping, industrial accidents, fires. |
| Low-Quality Non-Issue News | |
| Natural Disasters | Extreme weather (hurricanes, floods, tornados, typhoons, blizzards, etc.), earth-quake, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, landslides and avalanches, etc. |
| Notices | Memorials, anniversaries, dedications, especially military; deaths, health status, and retirements of elder statesmen, celebrities, etc. |
| Weather | Conventional weather reports for different parts of the US. |
| Transportation Disasters | Plane crashes, train derailments, barges crashing, ferries sinking, etc. |
| Animal attacks | Shark attacks, sting ray attacks, bear attacks, etc. |

The Pope

The Queen / British Royal Family

Space Program

Papal visits, encyclicals, etc.

Royal weddings, births, deaths, scandals, etc.

Shuttle launches, new space technology, reports on probes, landers, etc.
