

The Influence of Economic Factors on Media Content Bias Theories: Analysis of Media Coverage of Barack Obama's Inaugural Address

Francesc Pujol, Juan Carlos Molero

Department of Economics, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, Spain
Email: fpujol@unav.es

How to cite this paper: Pujol, F., & Molero, J. C. (2025). The Influence of Economic Factors on Media Content Bias Theories: Analysis of Media Coverage of Barack Obama's Inaugural Address. *Modern Economy*, 16, 860-883. <https://doi.org/10.4236/me.2025.166041>

Received: January 7, 2025

Accepted: June 21, 2025

Published: June 24, 2025

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This paper presents a method to make measurable how media coverage releases information. We consider two causes of bias regarding how the different newspapers manage and present government issues from Barack Obama's presidential inaugural address. In our empirical analysis, we find that there is a bias according to the political party that dominates in each state. Also, a second bias arises from some previous economic and social features among the different States. In this sense, media moves according to some selected characteristic of the States. The release of information is influenced, among others, by variables like Afro-American citizenship, unemployment or poverty. But, testing ideology and economic and social bias at the same time, we can conclude that only economic reasons really finally matter.

Keywords

Government, Political Economy, Media Cover, Bias

1. Introduction

It is a well-understood fact that the positioning of the media can significantly impact the policymaking process in modern democracies. This is not a particularly recent development and already in the late 1930's James A. Farley, then a prominent member of the Roosevelt administration, stated that: "in some sections of the country the entire press was hostile to the Roosevelt administration. We received constant complains from individuals in those areas who said it was impossible to get our side of the story" (Farley, 1938: p. 287). If anything, this feature has become much more apparent over the course of the last decades and it seems that modern media has an increasing tendency to align itself along the frontlines of partisan

politics. This is an increasingly topical topic. Within the vast amount of bibliography, we could highlight some more recent works. Lately, and with an original method, [Chen, W. F. et al. \(2020\)](#) detect media bias in news articles using gaussian bias distributions. Huang, H. et al. propose “a general media bias analysis framework that can uncover biased information in the semantic embedding space on a large scale and objectively quantify it on diverse topics” ([Huang et al., 2024: p. 1](#)) Finally, [Spinde, T. et al. \(2024\)](#) provide an insightful review of the media bias literature.

For instance, events like the US federal government shutdown in late 2013, during the Barack Obama Administration (In fact, President Obama’s 2009 inaugural address is the objective of our study), drastically highlight the importance of media coverage in the conflict over the size and scope of the US federal government. Here, relatively more conservative media would often refer to a “slimdown”, rather than a shutdown, as asserts Fox News¹. On the other hand, media coverage that favoured the Obama administration would paint a disastrous picture for the world economy as a consequence of the shutdown, saying that the strategy of the Republican Party, particularly in the context of the 2013 government shutdown, was the problem. Krugman declares that “in the face of Republican hysteria over health reform, we can avoid a government shutdown—and maybe the even more frightening prospect of a debt default—the time for euphemism is past” ([Krugman, 2013](#))². For outside bystanders, like much of the European public, it was almost impossible to find out what the reasons for the shutdown were or how the contrasting positions could possibly be reconciled in some way: “elsewhere in the world, such shutdowns are practically impossible” ([Zurcher, 2013](#))³ The episode demonstrates how media coverage can potentially impact a viewer’s perception on important domestic policy issues, depending on the particular medium that is being consumed, raising important questions on the causes of media bias in modern democracies.

Academic literature on the causes of media bias is nowadays quite large and there are multiple theories that analyse the topic from rather different standpoints. Several possible reasons are identified, why information media cover bias can occur in an open society: First, once reports are gathered, media can release them according to its most convenient ideological approach. [D’Alessio and Allen \(2000\)](#) examine this possibility within the framework of US Presidential elections. They find evidence that sometimes media is in fact biased and that this is usually for ideological reasons, simply because the reporting journalists tend to favour a certain ideological position⁴. Relatedly, [DellaVigna and](#)

¹For more information, see: [Terbush, J. \(2015\)](#). Government ‘slimdown’: How the conservative media is covering the shutdown (or not). *The Week*, January 9. Retrieved 19.2.2025, from:

²For more information, see: [Krugman \(2013\)](#). The Crazy Party. *The New York Times*, October 6. Retrieved 19.2.2025, from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/20/opinion/krugman-the-crazy-party.html>.

³For more information, see: [Zurcher \(2013\)](#): US shutdown has other nations confused and concerned. *BBC News*, October 1. Retrieved 19.2.2025, from:

Kaplan (2007) find a significant impact of Fox News consumption in the voting share for Republicans, while Groseclose and Milyo (2005) identify a strongly liberal or left-wing bias for several major media outlets⁵. In more recent research, and from a more general standpoint, Groeling, T. (2012) examines how political leaders handle communication and attempt to shape the media narrative, Goodarzi et al. (2021) evaluate how new media can act and serve ideological purposes, shaping the public sphere and participatory democracy, and, finally, Guerrero-Solé, F. (2022) underlines “the media’s ideological stability over time” Guerrero-Solé, F. (2022: p. 29).

Second, media can bias information for profit-maximising objectives, similarly try to accommodate the information to the previously existing socio-economic or political conditions of its audience, or just to retain viewers. For example, Page and Shapiro (1992) explain how the search for business makes media adapt to the economic and social features of a region, ultimately influencing its content coverage. For these authors, media operates in a competitive economic marketplace where it has to sell the information and gain audience by adaptation. Also, Gomery (1993) finds that mass media in the United States are fundamentally business institutions, where coverage is substantially influenced by financial considerations. Lee and Solomon (1998) contains substantial chapters on corporate structure and the extent to which media serves corporate and government interests. It analyzes news coverage of a wider range of issues, such as taxes, the Persian Gulf, social security, abortion, drugs, environmental pollution, U.S.-Soviet relations, terrorism, the Third World, etc., exposing key stories that were censored or glossed over by major media. In the same way, Doyle (2003) confirms that “most of the decisions taken by those who run media organization are, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by resource and financial issues” (Doyle, 2003: p. 1). In other cases, media aligns itself with the socio-economic or political conditions of its audience, prioritizing ideological appeal over profit by tailoring content to match their beliefs (Stroud, 2011), in the same way, Sunstein, C. R. (2017) argues that in the age of social media, individuals are at risk of becoming trapped in information bubbles and echo chambers, where they are exposed only to content that reaffirms their existing beliefs. Recently, and following Bakir, V. (2021), media organizations vie for audiences, sales, and other revenue sources, like advertising and data collection, to generate returns on investment and maximize profits for shareholders. Finally, Taher, N. M. (2025) says that “Business as usual content won’t cut it. For content to provide the ROI needed to encourage executive leadership to continue investment, each asset needs to be an “epic” piece of content. Epic, as used here, simply means original, creative, and designed to provoke emotion” (Taher, 2025: p. 10).

⁴These authors also offer a good outline of several types of media bias. Among them, the *gatekeeping bias* refers to how editors select stories according to their ideological preferences, while the *state-ment bias* refers to mass media members introducing their personal opinions into the coverage of a concrete issue.

⁵In a different contribution, Kellner (2004) discusses how “the corporate media helped forge a conservative hegemony, failed to address key social problems, and promoted the candidacy of George W. Bush in the 2000 US presidential election” (Kellner, 2004: p. 29).

So far, we have analyzed, in some way, the theoretical relationship between political discourses and the various forms of bias in mass media. Now we want to highlight how the topic of media bias is undoubtedly important in practice (and sometimes dangerous), because mass media can have very relevant consequences in particular areas of society and seriously affect the implementation of public policies and economic affairs. This is somewhat of a common logic, but nowadays there is also empirical evidence for the influence of media content on public policy issues. In a notable contribution, [Besley and Burgess \(2001\)](#) analyse the media's effect on government's responsiveness to droughts in India, finding that a more informed and politically active electorate strengthens incentives for governments to be responsive. As [Strömberg \(2001\)](#) indicates, "because of its unique role in transmitting information to mass audiences, mass media is likely to affect policies" (redistribution, the size of the government, political business cycles, etc.). Even more than twenty years ago, it was clear that "only very recently had media been incorporated into formal political economy models, and the empirical effects of media on policy remained largely unexplored" ([Strömberg, 2001: p. 653](#)). [Kuzyk and McCluskey \(2006\)](#), in their study on the political economy of the media, they state that, the newspapers space dedicated to a particular issue will also increase with the number of readers that are affected by a particular problem, theoretically reinforcing this effect of the media for public policy. More recently, and according to [Bou-Karroum, L. et al. \(2017\)](#), "media interventions can potentially play a major role in influencing health policies," ([Bou-Karroum et al., 2017: p. 1](#)). [Boumans, D. et al. \(2023\)](#) analyses how media content influences economic expectations. And [Jin, X. et al. \(2024\)](#) ascertains how "using a comprehensive sample of international news across 35 countries, we find that higher international news sentiment will lead to higher stock market returns. The effect of international news sentiment is mitigated in countries with a greater level of financial development and is amplified with the increase in access to international media news" ([Jin et al., 2024: p. 50](#)).

If media contents are systematically biased over a longer period of time, they might therefore affect the formulation and implementation of policy into very specific directions. It is almost needless to say that this influence is not necessarily desirable for society as a whole. The topic of lobbying and the adverse outcomes it produces for economic policy are just one prominent example studied in political economy (i.e. [Olson, 1965](#)) Here, [Bennett \(1990\)](#) concludes that media does in fact reinforce the power of special-interest lobbies and not necessarily those of readers, making it an especially relevant issue. If anything, the influence of lobbying groups on media has probably increased since then, raising the question of how it will influence an economic policy that ultimately has to balance among different competing interests⁶. In this sense, political conflict over the size and role of government in the USA is probably exemplary, due to the interests involved

⁶According to [Fico et al. \(2008\)](#): "In media economics, product differentiation often concerns content, which can be defined and evaluated in a variety of ways. At its basic level, media content is a collection of symbols from which people draw meaning; and meaning influences the behaviors, cognitions, and affective states of people using the content" ([Fico et al., 2008: p. 115](#)).

and the polarized interpretations made on both sides of the political spectrum. The book by Ladd, J.M. (2012) highlights the dangers of media bias, examining the decline in public trust toward institutional news media within the context of the American political system, and investigates how this erosion of trust has transformed the ways people obtain political information and form their voting preferences. Finally, Van der Meer, G. L. A. et al. (2022) discusses how biased media can even overshadow actual societal risks.

On the other hand, the relationship between the media and political discourses is a longstanding issue⁷. Among the first articles we could mention Knepprath, E. and Clevenger, T., Jr (1965), and Dieterich, H.R. and Willson, J.P. (1970) An interesting book was published in 1992 analyzing “discourse analysis as a method in social research” (Fairclough, 1992: p. 1) Many other studies have been published regarding the analysis of political discourses and we would to mention some of them. In this sense, Chilton, P. and Schäffner, (Eds., 2002) offer a solid introduction for those new to the area. According to Fetzer, A., and Lauerbach, G.E. (Eds., 2007), political discourse is inherently linked to media discourse. The book by KhosraviNik, M. (Ed., 2023) brings together a diverse group of scholars working at the intersection of discourse studies, digital media, and society. We have also to mention two handbooks on discourse analysis: Tannen, D. et al. (Eds. 2015) and Cap. P (2023) We consider also crucial the work by Chahal, V. (2023) who points out “...The function of the media in affecting political discourse and public opinion is a critical issue, encompassing the core of how information flows, ideas spread, and individuals interact with their governmental systems” (Chahal, 2023: p. 139) Finally, Gil de Zúñiga et al. (2025) examine the ways in which media influence political persuasion.

As far as we know, there are no many studies that directly connect presidential political discourses with media coverage in the way we address it in our article. In this sense, Tan, C. et al. (2018) develops a media selection of highlights from Presidential Debates: “Political speeches and debates play an important role in shaping the images of politicians, and the public often relies on media outlets to select bits of political communication from a large pool of utterances” Tan, C. et al. (2018, page 23) and Bajri, I.A.A. and Othman, E. (2020) accomplishes a critical discourse analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech *I Have a Dream* and Malcom X’s speech *A Message to the Grassroots*.

The present paper focuses on the causes of media content bias, using newspaper coverage on the role of government in President Obama’s 2009 inaugural address as an empirical test for the theories highlighted above. In particular, we explore the concrete socioeconomic features that are associated with media content bias, employing content analysis of important newspapers across the 50 US states.

In this sense, the 2009 inaugural address of President Obama offers a unique opportunity to analyse media content bias, as it was a text that most newspaper readers had seen on TV and was consequently difficult to manipulate in any

⁷In our research, we explore the connection between media bias and political discourse; therefore, understanding this relationship is important.

substantial manner by an in-depth analysis article, except by reciting certain parts more than others. We focus on selected phrases of the inaugural address that were repeated more than others and thereby create a *bias indicator on the role of government* for all 50 US states. The resulting differences across states are empirically related to a set of important explanatory variables, all of which have been associated with media content bias in the relevant literature. Interestingly, we find that ideological positioning is not an important determinant of media content bias across the US states. The major share of content bias encountered can rather be explained by differences in socio-economic variables across states, which clearly links it to profit-maximising objectives of local newspapers.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section two explains how our work challenges media bias theories in analysing President Barack Obama's 2009 inaugural address. Section three explains the methodology applied, while section four offers the main empirical results. Section five concludes and offers some considerations for future research.

2. President Obama's 2009 Inaugural Address as a Test for Media Bias Theories

In this paper, we use the 2009 US presidential inaugural address to empirically test different theories on the causes of media bias, and more specifically, media content bias. We think that media coverage of the inaugural address is a perfect tool for doing so, because the first official public address of a new US president corresponds to a text that generally receives massive public attention and media coverage, not only inside the United States, but also worldwide. Due to the fact that this discourse contains some of the programmatic choices of the new elected President, the content itself is fully scrutinized by the media. In some cases, the whole discourse is reproduced by newspapers, and many in-depth analyses use selected parts of the discourse. The combination of both, massive press coverage of the discourse due to its highly political relevance, plus the fact that selected fragments of the discourse are directly reproduced in the news, makes it especially suitable for the analysis of media coverage in our analysis.

Of course, each inaugural address is one of a kind, but, in addition to the causes already explained above, we can consider the 2009 discourse as especially relevant. This is due to the fact that it corresponds to an important change in government, moving from a Republican to a Democratic President, and that is raised considerable expectations on the economic policy intentions of an incoming government that would have to manage the onset of a massive financial and economic crisis. This crisis had also been omnipresent in the political agenda of the recent electoral campaign.

Regarding Obama's discourse, several additional facts likely heightened public attention and influenced media perceptions across much of the U.S. Barack Obama was the first Black Democratic presidential nominee on June 3, 2008⁸,

becoming the 44th President of the USA on January 20, 2009⁹ and the first African American President ever to take office. Since Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, he was the fourth American president to receive the Nobel Peace Prize on October 9, 2009¹⁰. Obama implemented the first major healthcare reform in the USA through the well-known Obamacare¹¹. And finally, he leaves office with strong support¹².

In the following, we therefore analyse media treatment of Barack Obama's Inaugural Address on January 20, 2009. Our strategy to check for the presence of media content bias is as follows: we have a source of information, Obama's discourse, which corresponds to a relatively short document that was easily available to any interested bystander, and was known in its full content to many newspapers readers by having followed it live on TV or radio broadcasting. This type of news is not easy to manipulate freely by a paper, as readers will expect to find an information content already known to them. Opinion articles that comment on the address therefore need to ground their statements in something tangible, for example, by using direct quotations of Barack Obama's discourse phrases. As a consequence, the only possible way that any media could possibly introduce content bias at this point, was through the selection of different discourse sections. By insisting in some parts of the discourse more than others, supporting or disagreeing with the President's views, a journalist or newspaper can present a biased picture of the relevant political issues, even if they all refer to Obama's same discourse. For our purposes, it means that we can check whether different newspapers follow the same pattern of covering the presidential discourse and its individual parts, or whether they deviate substantially.

With respect to media industry itself, digital news coverage has reached a sufficient level of maturity, and it is nowadays a primary source of news information for many people. Local or state-wide newspapers can be easily accessed by a much more extended audience than some years ago, when printed newspapers were the main reference point of information. This evolution could theoretically have an influence on the way that media will transmit the information of such an objective piece of information as a 20-minute discourse. In this sense, we could further argue that the 2009 inaugural address is somehow more protected against media content bias than other documents.

⁸For more information, see: "Obama Becomes First Black Democratic Presidential Nominee," *ABC News*, June 3, 2008. Retrieved 19.2.2025, from: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Vote2008/story?id=4979853&page=1>.

⁹For more information, see: "Obama Is Sworn In as the 44th President", *The New York Times*, January 20, 2009. Retrieved 19.2.2025, from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/21/us/politics/20web-inaug2.html>.

¹⁰For more information, retrieved 19.2.2025, see: <https://www.nobelprize.org/search/?s=Theodore+Roosevelt+&nonce=1738236060000>. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2009/obama/facts/>.

¹¹For more information, see: "Top court upholds healthcare law in Obama triumph", *Reuters*, June 28, 2012. Retrieved 19.2.2025, from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/uk/us-top-court-upholds-healthcare-law-in-obama-triumph-idUSBRE85R0PP/>

¹²For more information, see: BBC News, January 18, 2017: "Obama leaving with high approval rating." Retrieved February 19, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38667115>

Our first methodological task was to classify newspapers into different groups, in order to check for the existence of differences in media coverage. This is an extremely tricky task, as the assignment of a given newspaper into a specific group implies a prior judgment of the researcher concerning the expected behaviour of this media provider. In some sense, the bias can thus be generated by the selection of journals itself, ultimately invalidating the eventual presence of content bias. In order to avoid this important problem, we chose a neutral procedure for newspaper grouping by employing the basic political division of the US into its 50 states. The paper therefore analyses the treatment given by selected newspapers inside each state to Barack Obama's inaugural address, looking for a possible state-oriented media content bias of the discourse. In case differences in coverage exist across states, we can then check if these are empirically explained by variables that are related to media content bias theories.

In order to empirically evaluate media bias in this way, our dataset had to satisfy two important conditions: First, we needed to create a representative sample of newspapers from each state, trying to avoid the selection bias mentioned above. To say it in a simple way, several representative news sources from each state are necessary, so as to avoid the possible caveats associated with selecting only a few sources.

This was achieved by processing the published content of a wide array of different US newspapers, much like clipping agencies do. Our content searcher is not a commercial product, because we use an own methodology through Google. We have available a software which allows us to search each unit of the discourse in 900 national, state, and local newspapers, making an average of 18 analyzed newspapers per state. These include 84 of the top 100 US newspapers in circulation, all of which are state based. Some of the latter are widely known, reaching a national and an international audience, such as the New York Times, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, or the Washington Post¹³.

Second, we had to establish a way to quantify the media coverage content to detect any possible media bias. If the only way that a newspaper can bias its reports on the inaugural address is by citing certain parts more than others, we need a reliable way to measure the amount that the individual parts of the discourse are mentioned in our entire set of selected newspapers.

To accomplish this, the entire inaugural address was divided into different units, corresponding to sentences and segments of sentences. Each of these was judged to have an own significance. In total, this gives us 500 different units¹⁴ reproducing altogether the whole inaugural address.

The next step was to count the number of journal articles, where one of the 500 units of the discourse was exactly reproduced by the journal as direct quotation. Each unit was long enough to avoid the possibility that the same sentence was attributable to a source completely unrelated with Barack Obama intervention.

¹³The list of all the newspapers used is available as a request.

¹⁴The list of the 500 units is available as a request.

Using the methodology described already above, we therefore counted the number of times that each fragment of the discourse was exactly reproduced in all newspapers. Aggregating this number by states, allows us to come up with an indicator of media content selection for each state. To be exact, we calculate the weight that each one of the 500 discourse units has per state, dividing the number of newspaper articles quoting unit i of the discourse in state s over the total number of direct quotations for all 500 units of the discourse in state s . This gives us the share that each discourse unit occupies for each of the 50 US states, being a direct measure of how many times a certain part of the inaugural address is quoted, relative to all the others.

3. States Media Coverage of Government in Obama's Inaugural Address

Employing this indicator of media content selection, it is possible to directly identify the extent to which newspapers reported homogeneously across states on the 2009 inaugural address. If the reporting shares of a given unit i are similar across all 50 US states, the presence of media content bias could be rejected for specific issues. By contrast, the existence of some states significantly reporting more on some issues than others, wouldn't be considered yet a directly proof of the existence of media bias, as the origin of this difference can be totally random and not explained by variables related to media content bias theory.

Although the selection may seem subjective, among all 500 discourse units, we chose to directly consider those parts that are related to the economic intervention of government, as this issue is highly partisan and sensitive in US domestic politics. Following the electoral campaign of 2008, this issue attracted even more public attention than usual, due to the upcoming ideological change in the executive and the presence of a severe financial and economic crisis, making more state interventionism desirable for some key observers. Moreover, these phrases are particularly relevant for assessing the ideological leanings of the media in each state.

The following government-related discourse units were selected to directly compare their reporting shares across all states:

1. "The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act"
2. "not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth"
3. "We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together"
4. "The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works"
5. "Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward"
6. "Where the answer is no, programs will end"
7. "those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account"
8. "spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day"
9. "restore the vital trust between a people and their government"
10. "a nation cannot prosper long when it favours only the prosperous"

These 10 units include 146 words, which corresponds to a total share of 6.08% over the whole 2400-word discourse. For reasons of transparency, the location of corresponding sentences is visually highlighted in President Obama's complete inaugural address, which is reproduced in the annex.

They are two units that, although not related to the economic intervention of government, we use to probe to which extent our sample of newspapers is representative enough. These units (visually highlighted and underlined in the Annex) are: "remaking America" and "new era of responsibility". We can point out that we find more than 1.500 different articles inside USA referring quotations (units) like "remaking America", and more than 3.000 articles mentioning the "new era of responsibility". This "new era of responsibility" is reproduced in 352 articles from California; more than 100 times in Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, North Carolina, and New York; and more than 50 times in Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Washington and Wisconsin.

Regarding the 10 selected units, there some more widely covered: we find that quotation # 4 ("The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works") was directly reproduced in more than 1.000 different articles across the US, while quotation # 1 ("The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act") was reproduced more than 400 times.

Using the 10 selected phrases, we calculated the relative weight that each is covered by state media. Since all phrases refer to a common topic, the relative mentioning shares are added to create a *bias indicator on the role of government* for each state. This indicator captures media content selection for phrases on the size and scope of government for all 50 states, showing where this topic is mentioned more frequently by local newspapers.

Figure 1 graphically represents the resulting indicator, demonstrating that there exists substantial variation across all US states. At the top end of the mentioning scale is North Carolina, with some 3.1% of total quotations dedicated to government interventionism, followed by Illinois with 1.9%. At the bottom end, there are quite a number of states where no local newspapers quoted one of these ten phrases, for example Delaware, Idaho, Utah, and Vermont. Generally, the average score for all 50 states is 0.9%, meaning that less than 1 percent of all discourse quotes was ultimately dedicated to this topic.

From this intuitive analysis we can conclude that media across the US did not follow a homogeneous path in relatively quoting sentences on government interventionism from the 2009 inaugural address, when aggregated by states. Still, this is no proof of a state-wide media bias hypothesis, as it might be completely coincidental. At this point, we can start searching for an explanation of why there was such a large variation in media attention though. For instance, does the state variability follow a systematic behaviour or is it just purely random? This gives us a possibility to empirically verify the main competing media content bias theories

with our government bias indicator.

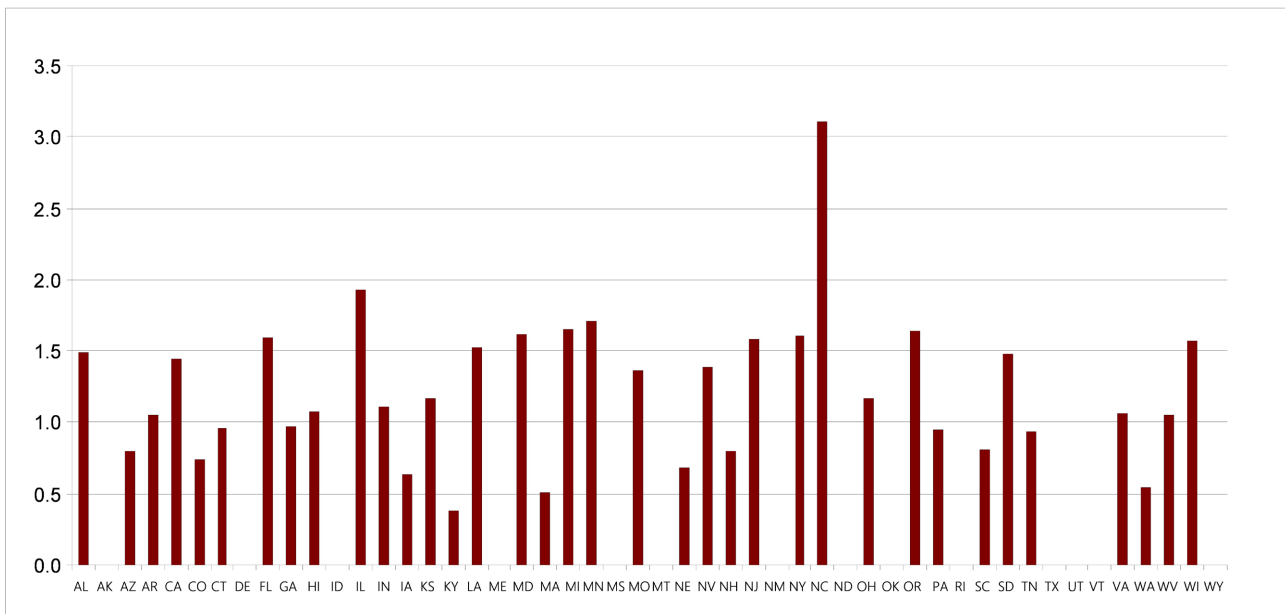


Figure 1. Share of government related quotes by State.

4. Testing Ideology and Business Efficiency Theories to Explain Media Content Bias

Even though we find that a set of newspapers insist more in some presidential statements than others, this is not necessarily an ideologically motivated media content bias. According to the theoretical literature reviewed above, differences in media coverage can also be explained by the different socioeconomic characteristics of newspapers’ primary readers. In the latter sense, media adapts to the characteristics of its primary audience, as an economic strategy to survive in the market.

To empirically sort out whether ideological motivations or socioeconomic characteristics are responsible for a government intervention bias in newspaper reports on the 2009 inaugural address, we follow the following strategy: Since we have a representative number of newspapers for each state, we also assume to have media in each that reflect both majoritarian ideological positions in the US political system, Democrat and Republican. Still, we can reasonably expect a more left-wing oriented state to present a higher density of left-wing oriented newspaper, in order to meet the demands and beliefs of the majority reader. Therefore, states with an electorate that traditionally is in majority Democrat, should also present a higher proportion of Democrat oriented newspapers. In turn, states with a majoritarian Republican electorate should present a higher proportion of newspapers oriented towards Republican views.

If ideology is really a driver of content bias, our indicator on the role of government should empirically be linked to voting behaviour across states. The under-

lying phrases for the indicator all refer to the role of the government in the economy and the unequal income distribution in the US. These are all some of the more partisan issues in President Obama's discourse. Media in Democratic oriented states should therefore insist on the pro-government intervention issues in the discourse, while media in Republican oriented states should largely try to ignore it and focus on other topics.

Table 1 tests this proposition by empirically relating the bias indicator for government intervention to the share of Democrat party voting in the November 2008 Presidential elections. The bias indicator by state functions as dependent variable in our model, which is explained by the voting share for the Democratic Party in that same state. Alternatively, a dummy variable is used that takes the value one for states with a Democrat majority of votes. In order to solve any possible problems of heteroskedasticity in our cross-sectional analysis, we run a weighted least square (WLS) regression, using White's heteroskedasticity consistent standard errors.

Results in **Table 1** show that there is indeed a positive and statistically significant relationship between media content bias on government intervention and a state's political ideology. The relationship is especially clear, if the dummy variable for majoritarian Democratic states in the November 2008 elections is employed, but it is also significant when using the voting share. These findings tentatively support the existence of an ideology driven media bias. In states that are politically oriented to the left, media also tends to insist more on the intervention of government in the economy, when reporting on the 2009 inaugural address.

Table 1. Government bias and ideology.

Dependent Variable: Government 10 units						
Weighted Least Squares, with White Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Standard Errors & Covariance						
Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	Prob.	Coefficient	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.65219	(5.092)	***	0.12066	(0.228)	
DUMMY DEMOCRAT STATE	0.43306	(2.300)	**			
SHARE DEMOCRAT VOTING				0.01507	(1.468)	*
R-squared		0.0957			0.0426	
Adjusted R-squared		0.0764			0.0764	
F-statistic		4.975	**		2.092	

In the following, we also test the validity of the competing business efficiency theory, which affirms that newspapers adapt their content to the demands of their readers. Here, newspapers that are not able to satisfy readers' interests incentivize

competitors to cover the mismatch and increase their market shares in detriment of those not flexible enough. Under this theoretical framework, journalists do not produce an exogenous and systematic content bias but, if anything, just reflects the ideology preferences and socioeconomic characteristics of the newspaper's readers.

In order to test this hypothesis, we need to select those control variables that sufficiently capture the socioeconomic characteristics of each US state, which will eventually influence the way media chooses to report on certain issues. This is likely best approximated by a standard set of economic and demographic variables, where we have chosen the following:

- Unemployment rate;
- Poverty rate;
- GDP per capita;
- Population;
- Violent crime rate;
- Share of African-American population.

Table 2 employs these standard measures as explanatory variables for our government bias indicator, which functions again as dependent variable. The model is estimated using the same specifications that were applied in the previous table.

Empirical results in **Table 2** show that media content selection can also be explained by a business-driven approach. We find a number of economic and demographic variables to be significantly associated with the amount of space that local media dedicates to government intervention on the coverage of President Obama's inaugural discourse.

Findings show that the higher poverty rates in a state, the smaller the local media attention to government intervention. At first sight, this is somewhat of a counterintuitive result. It could be nevertheless be explained by the own dynamics of poverty management. Poverty leads to social marginality and exclusion, and we can thus expect a lower media consumption rate among impoverished people. As these individuals are consequently not the primary clients of local media, newspapers don't need to adapt their contents this part of the local population.

We could nevertheless expect that *poverty* is also treated as a local political issue, where poverty prevalence affects citizens through certain by-products. For instance, via an increased risk to become victim of a violent crime. Our model controls for this possibility by introducing a specific measure of violent crimes per state, but **Table 2** finds it to be statistically insignificant.

Findings in **Table 2** further shows that that media in more populated states are more sensitive to government intervention topics in President Obama's discourse. Both variables present a statistically significant and positive association. This result is perfectly in line with our expectations, as the consequences of federal government policies are probably easier to observe in more populated

states.

Finally, **Table 2** finds the share of African-Americans to be a positive and statistically significant factor that explains more media attention concerning government intervention. This is not a very surprising result, since Barack Obama is an African-American himself and also a Democrat, which is traditionally the political representation for most ethnic minorities in the US. His campaign was also massively supported by the African-American community, whose members still live in much less favourable economic conditions than those of other ethnic groups.

Table 2. Government bias and socioeconomic characteristics.

Dependent Variable: Government 10 units			
Weighted Least Squares, with White Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Standard Errors & Covariance			
Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	1.3583	(1.242)	
POVERTY	-9.0514	(-2.380)	**
UNEMPLOYMENT	0.0838	(1.072)	
GDP CAPITA	-0.012	(-0.570)	
POPULATION	0.0269	(1.621)	*
VIOLENT CRIME	0.00046	(0.743)	
AFRICAN-AMERICAN	0.0225	(1.854)	*
R-squared	0.303		
Adjusted R-squared	0.204		
F-statistic	3.054		**

In a final step, we directly compare both theories of media bias by running a comprehensive explanatory model that includes ideology and business-oriented variables at the same time. This is feasible, because we judge the risk of multicollinearity between ideology and our socioeconomic variables to be rather low and in fact correlation coefficients between all of our control variables are not high. Again, we use the same econometric technique as in the forgoing tables.

Results shown in **Table 3** are quite revealing. When introducing all control variables jointly, the ideology approach of media content bias does not hold anymore. Neither voting shares nor the dummy variable are significantly associated with local media attention for government intervention. On the contrary, nothing changes concerning the impact of our socioeconomic determinants. Therefore, we do not find any reason to oppose business efficiency as a driver of media coverage and in our case the overall results tend to be compatible with this theory. It seems that media tends to adapt its published content to local needs and preferences, instead of selecting it according to ideology preferences.

Table 3. Government bias, ideology, and socioeconomic characteristics.

Dependent Variable: Government 10 units						
Weighted Least Squares, with White Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Standard Errors & Covariance						
Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	Prob.	Coefficient	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	1.5147	(1.419)		1.2783	(1.152)	
DUMMY DEMOCRAT STATE	0.2983	(1.290)				
SHARE DEMOCRAT VOTING				0.0036	(0.313)	
POVERTY	-7.4942	(-1.819)	*	-8.8324	(-2.259)	**
UNEMPLOYMENT	0.0456	(0.630)		0.0747	(0.914)	
GDPCAPITA	-0.0206	(-0.932)		-0.0146	(-0.626)	
POPULATION	0.0250	(1.579)	*	0.0268	(1.604)	*
VIOLENT CRIME	0.00049	(0.735)		0.0004	(0.754)	
AFROAMERICAN	0.02440	(1.843)	*	0.0229	(1.834)	*
R-squared	0.325			0.305		
Adjusted R-squared	0.210			0.186		
F-statistic	(2.828)	**		(2.567)	**	

5. Additional Controls and Conclusions

It is worth to run separate regressions for each one of the 10 units of discourse against State share of Democrat voting. The reason is that each unit of discourse refers to different functions and dimensions of Public Sector intervention. It is not sure whether ideology always relates in the same way for each one of the 10 units, or whether it is a partisanship issue for all the units. We have run two different econometric specifications. The first one is just an individual WLS regression of each unit against voting results. The second one is a combined regression using the Seemingly Unrelated Regression (SUR) technique, as we expect some co-movement of errors among regressions as we are trying to explain units of discourse that probably follow a similar path of behaviour in some cases at least.

We have then rerun the strategy of analysis made in the previous section. The decomposition allows us to show a more detailed and sensitive picture of the influence of ideology and economic and social variables in media content bias. But nothing changes concerning the main findings: when a unit of discourse appears to react according to ideology in the State, this relationship vanishes if we put together ideology and economic variables. Only economic and social variables remain statistically significant.

Our conclusion is that the rather exceptional framework created by the Inaugural Address and our capability to identify direct quotes in a huge number of US newspapers helps us decisively in the task of challenging the main theories con-

cerning media content bias.

We found first results that were apparently contradictory, as they justified both the ideology approach and the business efficiency approach. We are in this sense in line with previous literature, discussed in the introduction, as different studies founded support for one or the other theory. But we present here probably one of the first analysis being able to contrast both at the same time and under the same dimension.

Our empirical results force us to prefer the business efficiency approach for explaining actual media content bias.

Although these conclusions are very specific to the US, given its global importance, we believe they may be relevant to other countries. Furthermore, our method could be easily applied to any other country.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Bajri, I. A. A., & Othman, E. (2020). Critical Discourse Analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Speech I Have a Dream and Malcom X's Speech A Message to the Grassroots. *Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 4, 1-14.
- Bakir, V. (2021). The Business of Media. In P. Long, *et al.* (Eds.), *Media Studies* (3rd ed., pp. 200-248). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315690834-8>
- Bennett, W. L. (1990). Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States. *Journal of Communication*, 40, 103-127. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1990.tb02265.x>
- Besley, T., & Burgess, R. (2001). Political Agency, Government Responsiveness and the Role of the Media. *European Economic Review*, 45, 629-640. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0014-2921\(01\)00133-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0014-2921(01)00133-7)
- Bou-Karroum, L., El-Jardali, F., Hemadi, N., Faraj, Y., Ojha, U., Shahrour, M. et al. (2017). Using Media to Impact Health Policy-Making: An Integrative Systematic Review. *Implementation Science*, 12, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-017-0581-0>
- Boumans, D. et al. (2023). How Media Content Influences Economic Expectations. Evidence from a Global Expert Survey. *Journal of Forecasting*, 42, 1295-1308.
- Cap, P. (2023). *Handbook of Political Discourse*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Chahal, V. (2023). The Media's Impact on Political Discourse and Public Opinion. *Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 8, 138-152.
- Chen, W., Al Khatib, K., Stein, B., & Wachsmuth, H. (2020). Detecting Media Bias in News Articles Using Gaussian Bias Distributions. In *Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics: EMNLP 2020* (pp. 4290-4300). Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2020.findings-emnlp.383>
- Chilton, P., & Schäffner, C. (2002). *Politics as Text and Talk: Analytic Approaches to Political Discourse*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- D'Alessio, D., & Allen, M. (2000). Media Bias in Presidential Elections: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Communication*, 50, 133-156. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02866.x>
- DellaVigna, S., & Kaplan, E. (2007). The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting. *Quar-*

- terly Journal of Economics*, 122, 1187-1234.
- Dieterich, H. R., & Willson, J. P. (1970). The Dimensions of Political Discourse: Some Observations on the Free Silver Controversy of the 1890's. *The Social Studies*, 61, 13-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1942.11019018>
- Doyle, G. (2003). *Understanding Media Economics*. Sage.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press.
- Farley, J. A. (1938). *Behind the Ballots: The Personal History of a Politician*. Harcourt, Brace.
- Fetzer, A., & Lauerbach, G. E. (2007). *Political Discourse in the Media*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Fico, F. G., Lacy, S., & Riffle, D. (2008). A Content Analysis Guide for Media Economics Scholars. *Journal of Media Economics*, 21, 114-130.
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., González-González, P., & Goyanes, M. (2025). Pathways to Political Persuasion: Linking Online, Social Media, and Fake News with Political Attitude Change through Political Discussion. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 69, 240-261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642221118272>
- Gomery, D. (1993). The Centrality of Media Economics. *Journal of Communication*, 43, 190-198. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01292.x>
- Goodarzi et al. (2021). New Media and Ideology: A Critical Perspective. *Journal of Cyber-space Studies*, 5, 137-162.
- Groeling, T. (2012). *When Politicians Attack: Party Cohesion in the Media*. Cambridge University Press.
- Groseclose, T., & Milyo, J. (2005). A Measure of Media Bias. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 120, 1191-1237. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355305775097542>
- Guerrero-Solé, F. (2022). The Ideology of Media. Measuring the Political Leaning of Spanish News Media through Twitter Users' Interactions. *Communication & Society*, 35, 29-43. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.35.1.29-43>
- Huang, H., Zhu, H., Liu, W., Gao, H., Jin, H., & Liu, B. (2024). Uncovering the Essence of Diverse Media Biases from the Semantic Embedding Space. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03143-w>
- Jin, X., Chen, C., & Yang, X. (2024). The Effect of International Media News on the Global Stock Market. *International Review of Economics & Finance*, 89, 50-69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iref.2023.07.096>
- Kellner, D. (2004). The Media and the Crisis of Democracy in the Age of Bush-2. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 1, 29-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1479142042000180917>
- KhosraviNik, M. (2023). *Social Media and Society*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Knepprath, E., & Clevenger, T. (1965). Reasoned Discourse and Motive Appeals in Selected Political Speeches. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 51, 152-156.
- Krugman (2013). The Crazy Party. *The New York Times*, October, 6. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/20/opinion/krugman-the-crazy-party.html>
- Kuzyk, P., & McCluskey, J. J. (2006). The Political Economy of the Media: Coverage of the Lumber Tariff Dispute. *The World Economy*, 29, 655-667. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9701.2006.00805.x>
- Ladd, J. M. (2012). *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400840359>

- Lee, M. A., & Solomon, N. (1998). *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media*. Kensington Publishing Corp.
- Olson, M. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Harvard University Press.
- Page, B. I., & Shapiro, R. Y. (1992). *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. University of Chicago Press.
<https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226644806.001.0001>
- Spinde, T. et al. (2024). *The Media Bias Taxonomy: A Systematic Literature Review on the Forms and Automated Detection of Media Bias*. The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). <https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.16148>
- Strömberg, D. (2001). Mass Media and Public Policy. *European Economic Review*, 45, 652-663. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0014-2921\(01\)00106-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0014-2921(01)00106-4)
- Stroud, N. J. (2011). *Niche News: The Politics of News Choice*. Oxford University Press.
- Sunstein, C. R. (2017). *Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400884711>
- Taher, L. N. M. (2025). Review: Epic Content Marketing: How to Tell a Different Story, Break through the Clutter, and Win More Customers by Marketing Less by Joe Pulizzi. *Frontline Social Sciences and History Journal*, 5, 9-14.
<https://doi.org/10.37547/social-fsshj-05-03-02>
- Tan, C., Peng, H., & Smith, N. A. (2018). "You Are No Jack Kennedy": On Media Selection of Highlights from Presidential Debaters. In *Proceedings of the 2018 World Wide Web Conference on World Wide Web* (pp. 945-954). ACM Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3178876.3186142>
- Tannen, D. et al. (2015). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Terbush, J. (2015). Government "Slimdown": How the Conservative Media Is Covering the Shutdown (or Not). *The Week*, January, 9.
<https://theweek.com/articles/459395/government-slimdown-how-conservative-media-covering-shutdown-not>
- van der Meer, T. G. L. A., Kroon, A. C., & Vliegthart, R. (2022). Do News Media Kill? How a Biased News Reality Can Overshadow Real Societal Risks, the Case of Aviation and Road Traffic Accidents. *Social Forces*, 101, 506-530.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soab114>
- Zurcher (2013). *US Shutdown Has Other Nations Confused and Concerned*. BBC, October 1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-24342521>

Appendix

The Washington Post Inaugural Address of Barack Obama January 20, 2009
--

SPEAKER: PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

[*] OBAMA: Thank you. Thank you.

CROWD: Obama! Obama! Obama! Obama!

My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors.

I thank President Bush for his service to our nation...

(APPLAUSE)

... as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath.

OBAMA: The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbearers, and true to our founding documents.

OBAMA: So it has been. So it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age.

Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly, our schools fail too many, and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

OBAMA: These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable, but no less profound, is a sapping of confidence across our land; a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights.

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real, they are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this America: They will be met.

(APPLAUSE)

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord.

OBAMA: On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and

false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas that for far too long have strangled our politics.

We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

(APPLAUSE)

In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less.

OBAMA: It has not been the path for the faint-hearted, for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame.

Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things—some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor—who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and travelled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth.

OBAMA: For us, they fought and died in places Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sahn.

Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions—that time has surely passed.

OBAMA: Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.

(APPLAUSE)

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done.

The state of our economy calls for action: bold and swift. And we will act not only to create new jobs but to lay a new foundation for growth.

We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together.

We will restore science to its rightful place and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality...

(APPLAUSE)

... and lower its costs.

OBAMA: We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age.

All this we can do. All this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short, for they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose and necessity to courage.

What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long, no longer apply.

OBAMA: The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works, whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified.

Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end.

And those of us who manage the public's knowledge will be held to account, to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day, because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched.

OBAMA: But this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control. The nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous.

The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity; on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart—not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good.

(APPLAUSE)

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals.

Our founding fathers faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations.

OBAMA: Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake.

And so, to all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born: know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and we are ready to lead once more.

(APPLAUSE)

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with the sturdy alliances and enduring convictions.

OBAMA: They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use. Our security emanates from the justness of our cause; the force of our example; the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy, guided by these principles once more, we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort, even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. We'll begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan.

OBAMA: With old friends and former foes, we'll work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming planet.

We will not apologize for our way of life nor will we waver in its defense.

And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that, "Our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken. You cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

(APPLAUSE)

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness.

We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth.

And because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

OBAMA: To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.

To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy.

To those...

(APPLAUSE)

To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

(APPLAUSE)

OBAMA: To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds.

And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

As we consider the road that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and dis-

tant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages.

We honor them not only because they are guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service: a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves.

OBAMA: And yet, at this moment, a moment that will define a generation, it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all.

For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies.

It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break; the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours.

It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new, the instruments with which we meet them may be new, but those values upon which our success depends, honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism—these things are old.

OBAMA: These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history.

What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility—a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship.

OBAMA: This is the source of our confidence: the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny.

This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed, why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall. And why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.

(APPLAUSE)

So let us mark this day in remembrance of who we are and how far we have traveled.

In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by nine campfires on the shores of an icy river.

OBAMA: The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood.

At a moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words be read to the people:

“Let it be told to the future world that in the depth of winter, when nothing but

hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet it.”

America, in the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words; with hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come; let it be said by our children’s children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God’s grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you.

(APPLAUSE)

And God bless the United States of America.

(APPLAUSE)