

Reducing Dimensions in a Large TVP-VAR

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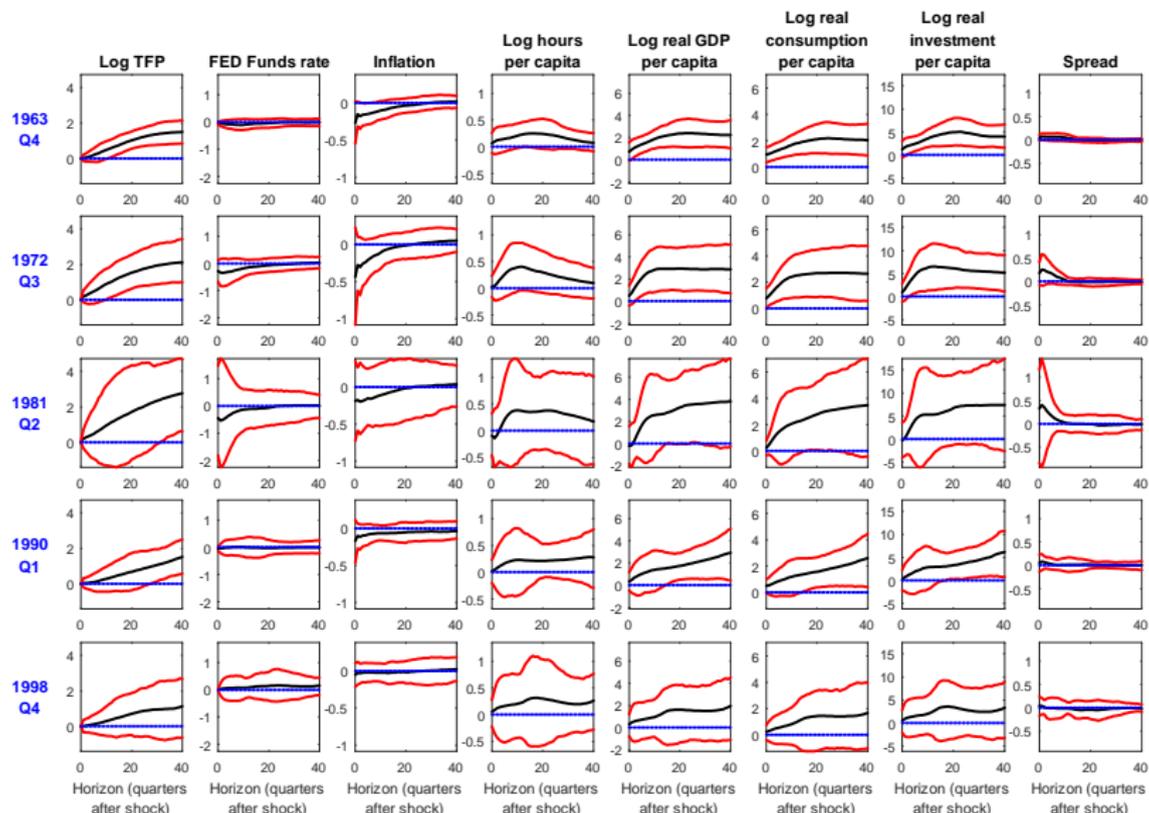
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WU 2018

- Bayesian VARs have been getting larger
 - Improved forecasts (see, e.g., Pirschel and Wolters (2018))
 - Avoid (mitigate) problems with interpreting impulse responses
 - Avoid (mitigate) omitted variable bias
 - Banbura, Giannone and Reichlin (2010), Carriero, Clark and Marcellino (2011), Carriero, Kapetanios and Marcellino (2009), Giannone, Lenza, Momferatou and Onorante (2010), Koop (2011)
- VARs have become more flexible (TVP-VAR)
 - Capture evolution of the economy
 - Cogley and Sargent (2005), Cogley, Morozov and Sargent, (2005), Primiceri (2005), Koop, Leon-Gonzalez and Strachan (2009), Canova and Forero (2012).

- Large TVP-VARs seem a natural next step
 - A significant impediment to employing larger TVP-VARs is dimension
 - With more variables (N), VAR model dimensions grow at $O(N^2)$
 - Depending upon the correlation structure of the states, with more variables (N), TVP – VAR model dimensions grow at between $O(N^2)$ and $O(N^4)$
 - Overparameterization leads to poor estimation and inference (e.g., wide error bands on impulse response functions)
 - Higher dimensions complicate (e.g., slow) computation

Large VARs and TVP-VARs



- Strategies to reduce the dimensions but maintain the full structure are an active area of research ... but progress has been slow:
 - Koop and Korobilis (2013) use forgetting factors ($N = 3, 7, 25$)
 - Imposes a tight structure on the autocorrelations of filtered estimates
 - They use the Kalman filter - subject to Sims' critique of Cogley and Sargent (2001)
 - Excellent forecasting performance
 - Does not provide a formal inferential framework
 - Koop and Korobilis (forthcoming) use compressed VARs ($N = 7, 19, 129$)

- Develop a TVP-VAR that uses a **reduced number of states** but preserves (potentially) the full TVP-VAR
- We impose **rank reduction** on the covariance matrix for the state equations, as suggested by the data
 - In doing so, we generalize the centering and parameter expansion approach of Frühwirth-Schnatter and Wagner (2010)
 - An interpretation of our model specification is that we use a factor structure for the states
- Demonstrate **increased precision** in estimating time varying parameters

- For an N vector

$$y_t = (y_{1,t}, y_{2,t}, \dots, y_{N,t})' \quad (N \times 1)$$

the standard TVP-VAR has the form

$$\begin{aligned} y_t &= \mu_t + \Pi_{1,t}y_{t-1} + \Pi_{2,t}y_{t-2} + v_t \\ E(v_t v_t') &= (A_{0,t})^{-1} \Sigma_t (A_{0,t})^{-1'} \end{aligned}$$

- The structural form (the TVP-SVAR) measurement equation can be written as

$$\begin{aligned} A_{0,t}y_t &= \mu_t + A_{1,t}y_{t-1} + A_{2,t}y_{t-2} + \varepsilon_t \\ \varepsilon_t &= A_{0,t}v_t \quad E(\varepsilon_t \varepsilon_t') = \Sigma_t \end{aligned}$$

Why change from the VAR to SVAR?

- For the TVP-VAR, estimation using a Gibbs sampler follows

$$\Pi_{i,t} | A_{o,t}, \Sigma_t$$

$$A_{o,t} | \Pi_{i,t}, \Sigma_t$$

$$\Sigma_t | \Pi_{i,t}, A_{o,t},$$

- However, the relationship between $\Pi_{i,t}$ and $A_{o,t}$ implies they are highly correlated - the Markov chain will be **less efficient** than it could be
- For the TVP-SVAR, estimation using a Gibbs sampler follows

$$A_{j,t} | \Sigma_t$$

$$\Sigma_t | A_{j,t}$$

- The $A_{j,t}$ are all drawn in one single block leading to a **more efficient** Markov chain

In structural form the TVP-SVAR measurement equation can be written as

$$y_t = (y_{1,t}, y_{2,t}, \dots, y_{N,t})' \quad (N \times 1)$$

$$A_{0,t}y_t = \mu_t + A_{1,t}y_{t-1} + A_{2,t}y_{t-2} + \varepsilon_t$$

$$A_{0,t} = I - A_{0,t}^*$$

$$y_t = \mu_t + A_{0,t}^*y_t + A_{1,t}y_{t-1} + A_{2,t}y_{t-2} + \varepsilon_t$$

$$\varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t) \quad \Sigma_t = \text{diag}(e^{h_{1,t}}, e^{h_{2,t}}, \dots, e^{h_{N,t}})$$

The TVP-SVAR can then be written in the more familiar regression form as

$$y_t = \mu_t + A_{0,t}^* y_t + A_{1,t} y_{t-1} + A_{2,t} y_{t-2} + \varepsilon_t$$

or

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$

$$\alpha_t = \alpha_{t-1} + \eta_t \quad \eta_t \sim N(0, Q)$$

- The $(k \times 1)$ vector α_t has error covariance matrix Q
- The matrix Q is often specified as full or diagonal
- Bubbling away in the background in the literature have been discussions around the form of Q

Consider how state space models produce estimates

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$
$$\alpha_t = \alpha_{t-1} + \eta_t \quad \eta_t \sim N(0, Q)$$

- With one observation per state, the correlation structure implied by the state equation allows us to estimate α_t
- To see this, stack observations and rewrite the state space model as

$$y = X\alpha + \varepsilon \text{ and } R\alpha = \gamma + \eta$$

such that

$$\alpha \sim N(R^{-1}\gamma, V_\alpha) \quad V_\alpha = R^{-1} (I_T \otimes Q) (R^{-1})'$$

- If $Q = I$, then $V_{\alpha,ij} = \min\{i, j\}$.

Consider how state space models produce estimates ...

$$\alpha \sim N(R^{-1}\gamma, V_\alpha) \quad V_\alpha = R^{-1}(I_T \otimes Q)(R^{-1})'$$

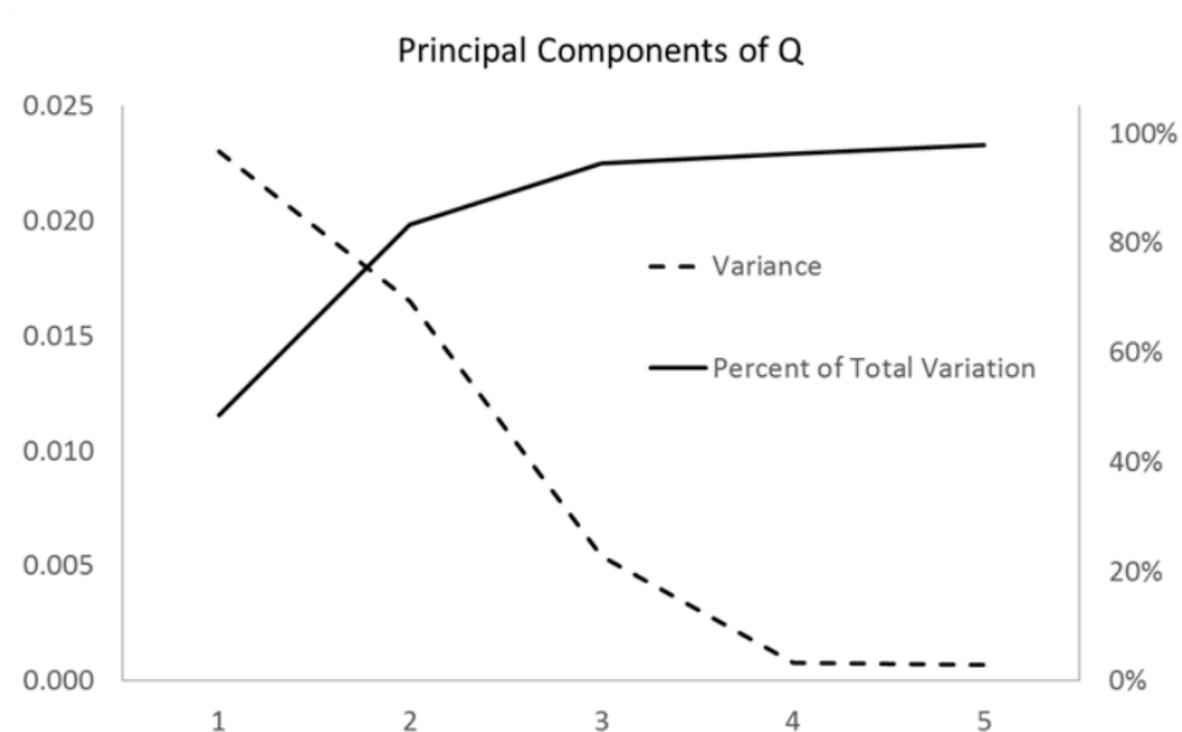
- If all states were independent, i.e., $R = I_T$ and $Q = I_k$ so $V_\alpha = I$, then the states are independent and estimation would be very poor
- Through R and Q , states are allowed to be correlated as V_α is a full psd matrix (as in Cogley and Sargent).
 - Information in the data is shared among all states: the **higher the correlation the better the transmission of information**
- If V_α has reduced rank because Q has reduced rank, there is **perfect correlation**, such that **information** in the data **is perfectly transmitted** among states

An observation by Cogley and Sargent

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$
$$\alpha_t = \alpha_{t-1} + \eta_t \quad \eta_t \sim N(0, Q)$$

- With $N = 3$ variables and 2 lags, α_t is $(k \times 1)$ where $k = 21$
- Cogley and Sargent use a full PSD matrix for the 21×21 matrix Q
- The states α_t are very highly correlated such that Q looks to have reduced rank

An observation by Cogley and Sargent (cont.)



Take the singular value decomposition of Q :

$$Q = U\Lambda U' \quad U'U = I_k \text{ and } \Lambda = \text{diag}(\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_k)$$

$$U \in O(k) \equiv \{U : U'U = I_k\}$$

$$\lambda_1 \geq \lambda_2 \geq \dots \geq \lambda_k \geq 0$$

- If $\text{rank}(Q) = r < k$ then $\lambda_{r+1} = \lambda_{r+2} = \dots = \lambda_k = 0$
- Partition U and Λ conformably as $U = [U_1 \quad U_2]$ and

$$\Lambda = \begin{bmatrix} \Lambda_1 & 0 \\ 0 & \Lambda_2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \Lambda_1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

then

$$Q = U\Lambda U' = \underset{k \times r}{U_1} \underset{r \times r}{\Lambda_1} \underset{r \times k}{U_1'}$$

The specification

Begin with

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t^* + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$
$$\alpha_t^* = \alpha_{t-1}^* + \eta_t \quad \eta_t \sim N(0, Q)$$

- We will assume perfectly correlated states and so Q has reduced rank $r_\alpha < k$
 - For the application in the paper, $k = 570$ and $r_\alpha = 4$
- We will use [recentering](#) and [parameter expansions](#) to obtain a readily computable form

Frühwirth-Schnatter and Wagner (2010) use a scalar state α_t^*

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t^* + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$

$$\alpha_t^* = \alpha_{t-1}^* + \eta_t \quad \eta_t \sim N(0, \sigma)$$

- Recenter by

$$\alpha_t^* = \alpha + \sqrt{\sigma} \tilde{\alpha}_t$$

such that

$$y_t = x_t \alpha + x_t \sqrt{\sigma} \tilde{\alpha}_t + \varepsilon_t$$

$$\tilde{\alpha}_t = \tilde{\alpha}_{t-1} + \tilde{z}_t \quad \tilde{z}_t \sim N(0, 1)$$

$$\tilde{\alpha}_0 = 0$$

Begin with

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t^* + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$
$$\alpha_t^* = \alpha_{t-1}^* + \eta_t \quad \eta_t \sim N(0, Q)$$

- Recenter by (generalising Frühwirth-Schnatter and Wagner (2010))

$$\alpha_t^* = \alpha + Q^{1/2} \tilde{\alpha}_t$$

such that

$$y_t = x_t \alpha + x_t Q^{1/2} \tilde{\alpha}_t + \varepsilon_t$$
$$\tilde{\alpha}_t = \tilde{\alpha}_{t-1} + \tilde{z}_t \quad \tilde{z}_t \sim N(0, I_k)$$
$$\tilde{\alpha}_0 = 0$$

- If $Q = U_1 \Lambda_1 U_1'$ then we can write $Q^{1/2} = U_1 \Lambda_1^{1/2} U_1'$
- Using $Q^{1/2} = U_1 \Lambda_1^{1/2} U_1'$ rewrite the model as

$$\begin{aligned} y_t &= x_t \alpha + x_t U_1 \Lambda_1^{1/2} U_1' \tilde{\alpha}_t + \varepsilon_t \\ &= x_t \alpha + x_t U_1 \Lambda_1^{1/2} \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} U_1' \tilde{\alpha}_t &= U_1' \tilde{\alpha}_{t-1} + U_1' \tilde{z}_t \quad U_1' \tilde{z}_t \sim N(0, I_{r_\alpha}) \\ \alpha_t &= U_1' \tilde{\alpha}_t \text{ and } z_t = U_1' \tilde{z}_t \end{aligned}$$

- Then we have

$$\begin{aligned} y_t &= x_t \alpha + x_t U_1 \Lambda_1^{1/2} \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \\ \alpha_t &= \alpha_{t-1} + z_t \quad z_t \sim N(0, I_{r_\alpha}) \end{aligned}$$

Removing the sign in recentering

Frühwirth-Schnatter and Wagner (2010) use a scalar state α_t^*

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t^* + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$

$$\alpha_t^* = \alpha_{t-1}^* + \eta_t \quad \eta_t \sim N(0, \sigma)$$

- Recenter by

$$\alpha_t^* = \alpha + \sqrt{\sigma} \tilde{\alpha}_t$$

- Let $\iota \in \{-1, 1\}$, $\alpha_t = \iota \tilde{\alpha}_t$ and $a = \iota \sqrt{\sigma}$
- The measurement and state equations become

$$y_t = x_t \alpha + x_t a \tilde{\alpha}_t + \varepsilon_t$$

$$\alpha_t = \alpha_{t-1} + z_t \quad z_t \sim N(0, 1)$$

$$\alpha_0 = 0$$

Where Frühwirth-Schnatter and Wagner introduce ι , we introduce C

- Let $C \in O(r_\alpha)$ such that $C' C = I_{r_\alpha}$ as

$$\begin{aligned}y_t &= x_t \alpha + x_t U_1 \Lambda_1^{1/2} \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \\ &= x_t \alpha + x_t U_1 \Lambda_1^{1/2} C' C \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \\ &= x_t \alpha + x_t A \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \\ C \alpha_t &= C \alpha_{t-1} + C z_t \quad C z_t \sim N(0, I_{r_\alpha}) \\ \alpha_t &= \alpha_{t-1} + z_t \quad z_t \sim N(0, I_{r_\alpha})\end{aligned}$$

where

$$A = U_1 \Lambda_1^{1/2} C' \text{ and } \alpha_t = C \alpha_t$$

A specification for reduced sources of errors model

The final model has a dynamic factor structure

$$\begin{aligned}y_t &= x_t\alpha + x_tA\alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t) \\ \alpha_t &= \alpha_{t-1} + z_t \quad z_t \sim N(0, I_{r_\alpha}) \quad \alpha_0 = 0 \\ \alpha_t^* &= \alpha + A\alpha_t\end{aligned}$$

- This model is fully identified up to orthogonal rotations of A and α_t
- The usual identifying restrictions are not imposed (or required) ensuring order invariance
- Computation is fast and efficient

A fuller specification with stochastic volatility

We allow for stochastic volatility in a standard way

$$\begin{aligned}y_t &= x_t \alpha_t^* + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t) \\ \Sigma_t &= \text{diag} \left(e^{h_{1,t}^*}, e^{h_{2,t}^*}, \dots, e^{h_{N,t}^*} \right) \\ h_t^* &= (h_{1,t}^*, h_{2,t}^*, \dots, h_{n,t}^*)'\end{aligned}$$

- The state equations:

$$\begin{aligned}\alpha_t^* &= \alpha_{t-1}^* + \eta_t^* \quad \eta_t^* \sim N(0, Q) \\ h_t^* &= h_{t-1}^* + v_t \quad v_t \sim N(0, Q_h)\end{aligned}$$

- We consider three specifications that reduce dimensions

Specification 1:

- We allow for a small range of correlation structures

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t^* + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$

$$\alpha_t^* = \alpha_{t-1}^* + \eta_t \quad \eta_t \sim N(0, Q)$$

$$h_t^* = h_{t-1}^* + v_t \quad v_t \sim N(0, Q_h)$$

- Reduce errors only in the mean equation

$$y_t = x_t \alpha + x_t A \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$

$$\alpha_t = \alpha_{t-1} + z_t \quad z_t \sim N(0, I_{r_\alpha}) \quad \alpha_0 = 0$$

$$h_t^* = h_{t-1}^* + v_t \quad v_t \sim N(0, Q_h)$$

- A is $(k \times r_\alpha)$

Specification 2:

- Reduce errors only in the mean and log variance equation

$$\begin{aligned}y_t &= x_t \alpha + x_t A_\alpha \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t) \\ \alpha_t &= \alpha_{t-1} + z_t \quad z_t \sim N(0, I_{r_\alpha}) \quad \alpha_0 = 0 \\ h_t^* &= h + Q_h^{1/2} \tilde{h}_t = h + A_h h_t \\ h_t &= h_{t-1} + z_t^h \quad z_t^h \sim N(0, I_{r_h})\end{aligned}$$

- A_α is $(k \times r_\alpha)$ and A_h is $(N \times r_h)$

Specification 3:

- Let $\theta_t^* = (\alpha_t^*, h_t^*)'$ have a full covariance matrix

$$y_t = x_t \alpha_t^* + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$

$$\theta_t^* = \theta_{t-1}^* + \eta_{\theta,t} \quad \eta_{\theta,t} \sim N(0, Q_\theta)$$

- Recentering and reducing the rank of Q_θ

$$y_t = x_t \alpha + x_t A_\alpha \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t)$$

$$\theta_t^* = \theta + Q_\theta^{1/2} \tilde{\theta}_t = \theta + A_\theta \theta_t$$

$$\theta_t = \theta_{t-1} + z_t^\theta \quad z_t^\theta \sim N(0, I_{r_\theta})$$

$$A_\theta = \begin{bmatrix} A_\alpha \\ A_h \end{bmatrix}$$

- A_θ is $(k + N) \times r_\theta$

- In specification one, the mean equation coefficients $[\alpha \quad A]$ require priors

$$\begin{aligned}y_t &= x_t \alpha + x_t A \alpha_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \Sigma_t) \\ \alpha_t &= \alpha_{t-1} + z_t \quad z_t \sim N(0, I_{r_\alpha}) \quad \alpha_0 = 0\end{aligned}$$

- $a = \text{vec}(A) \sim N(0, cI_{(n+k)r})$ which equates to using a Wishart prior for Q for the full rank ($r = k$) case (generalizing Frühwirth-Schnatter and Wagner (2010))
- For elements of $\alpha = \{\alpha_j\}$ we combine SSVS with Minnesota priors as suggested in Korobilis (2013)

- Draws of α , $a_\alpha = \text{vec}(A_\alpha)$, h , $a_h = \text{vec}(A_h)$, α_t and h_t (with states for the mixture approximation) are drawn in the established approach for Specifications 1 and 2. All are (conditionally) Gaussian
- For Specification 3, an accept-reject Metropolis-Hastings (ARMH) algorithm (Chan and Strachan (2012)) is used for θ_t

The effect of reducing dimension

Some simple accounting shows the extent of dimension reduction
The figures below are all states and all mean parameters in Specification 1

N	0	1	2	4	<i>TVP – VAR</i>
3	27	460	587	841	2730
5	70	755	925	1265	8725
10	265	1685	2050	2780	58450
15	585	2890	3575	4945	220425
20	1030	4370	5500	7760	612775

Based upon a $VAR(2)$ with an intercept and $T = 100$

% reduction in dimension

N	0	1	2	4	<i>TVP – VAR</i>
3	99.0%	83.2%	78.5%	69.2%	0%
5	99.2%	91.3%	89.4%	85.5%	0%
10	99.5%	97.1%	96.5%	95.2%	0%
15	99.7%	98.7%	98.4%	97.8%	0%
20	99.8%	99.3%	99.1%	98.7%	0%

Based upon a *VAR* (2) with an intercept and $T = 100$

Application: the effect of reducing dimension

- Estimate a $TVP - VAR$ with two lags for $N = 2$ variables
 - $k = 11$ states in α_t and $N = 2$ states in h_t
 - $r_\alpha = 0, \dots, 11$, $r_h = 1, 2$ and $r_\theta = 1, \dots, 13$
- We estimate the standard $TVP - VAR$ and compare to the model with $r_\alpha = 11$ (should be the same) and $r_\alpha = 3$
 - This implies a (mild) reduction in dimension from 2,937 to 1,144 (61% reduction)

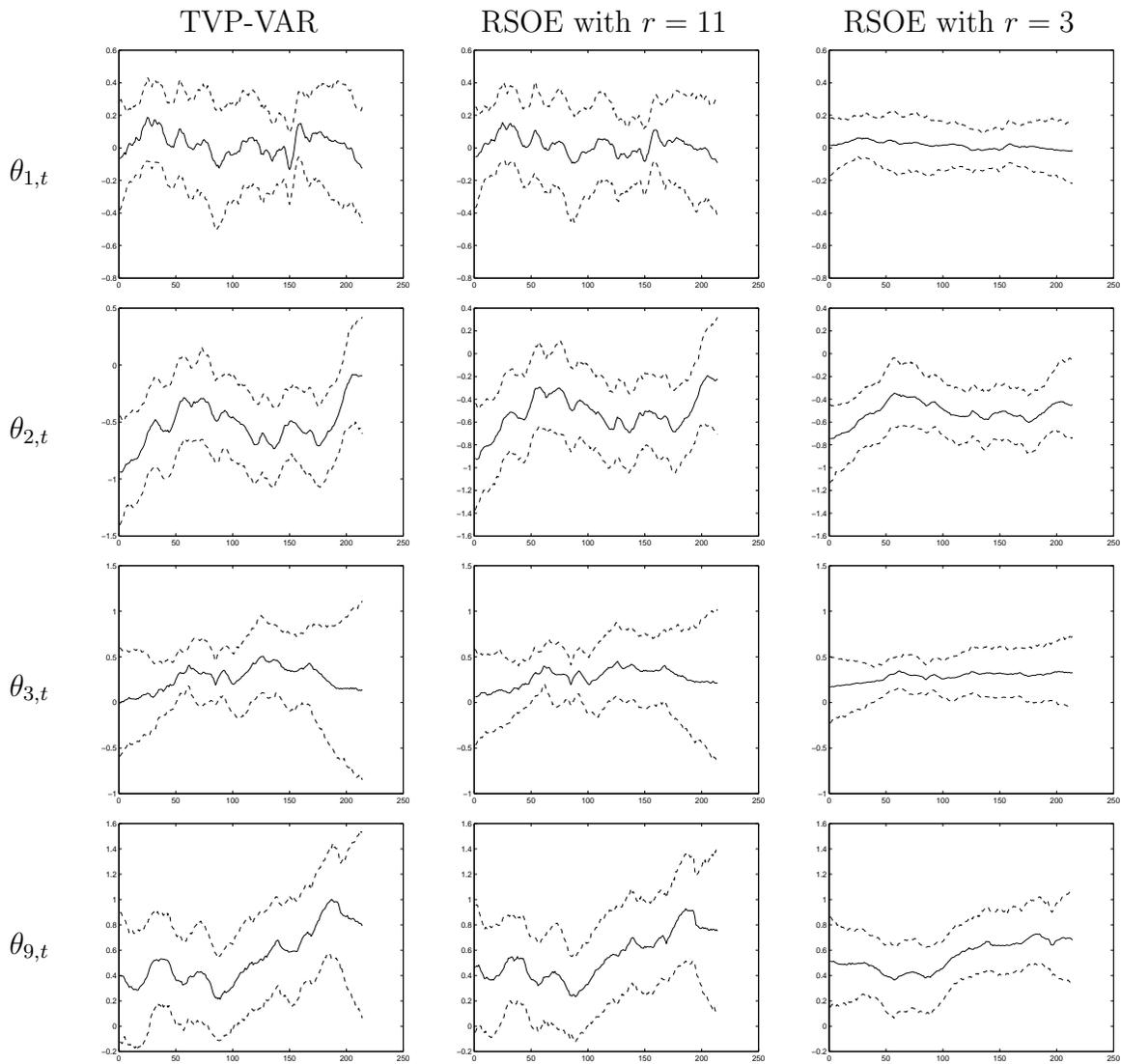


Figure 1: Test example: bivariate (inflation and interest rates) with stationary and demeaned series TVP-VAR ($p = 2$, so $k = 11$).

Application: News and non-news shocks

- Estimate the time-varying effects of surprise productivity and news shocks
- *TVP – SVAR* with two lags for $N = 15$ variables
 - $k = 570$ parameters in α_t and $N = 15$ parameters in h_t
 - states: $r_\alpha = 0, \dots, 570$, $r_h = 0, \dots, 15$ and $r_\theta = 0, \dots, 585$
- We use Deviance Information Criteria (DIC) to select among the specifications
 - DIC have been shown to perform well for latent variable models, e.g., state space models
- The identification strategy is the same as in Barsky and Sims (2011), with minor modifications for the time-varying parameter context

DICs for models specified with $n = 15$ and various combinations of r_α and r_h . All values are relative to the DIC of the constant coefficient model (i.e. $r_\alpha = r_h = 0$).

3 states			5 states			7 states			10 states		
r_α	r_h	DIC	r_α	r_h	DIC	r_α	r_h	DIC	r_α	r_h	DIC
3	0	-764	5	0	-766	7	0	-742	10	0	-366
2	1	-771	4	1	-816	6	1	-688	8	2	-486
1	2	-711	3	2	-887	4	3	-892	6	4	-697
0	3	-562	2	3	-851	3	4	-888	5	5	-854
			1	4	-756	1	6	-698	4	6	-876
			0	5	-583	0	7	-565	2	8	-800
									0	10	-545
shared		-770	shared		-835	shared		-719	shared		-418

- The preferred model with $N = 15$ is Specification 2 has $DIC = -892$ with
 - $r_\alpha = 4$ states driving the mean equation coefficients and
 - $r_h = 3$ states driving the volatilities
 - this implies a dimension reduction from 309,690 to 4,660 (98.5%)
- The best Specification 3 (shared states) has $DIC = -835$ with $r_\theta = 5$
 - a dimension reduction of 98.5%.
- Specification 1 is not competitive

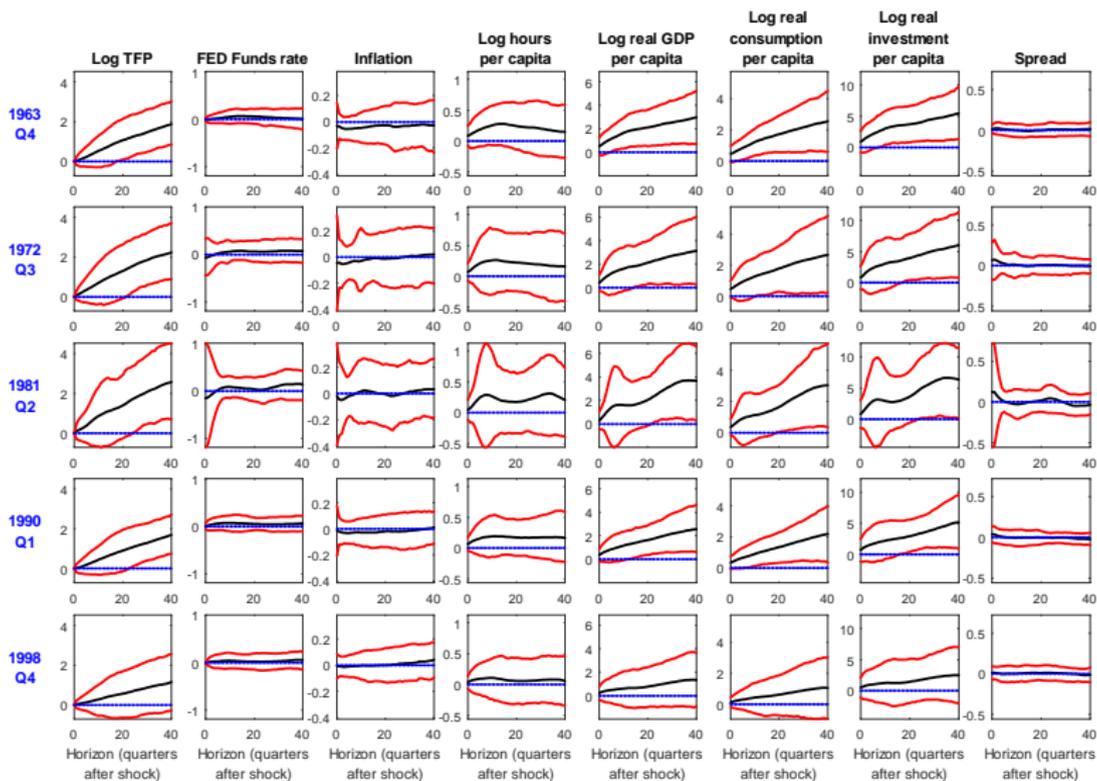


Figure: Impulse-response functions to news shocks in 1963Q4, 1972Q3, 1981Q2, 1990Q1 and 1998Q4 (mean, and 16-84 percentiles of the posterior distribution) for the $n = 15$ variables model.

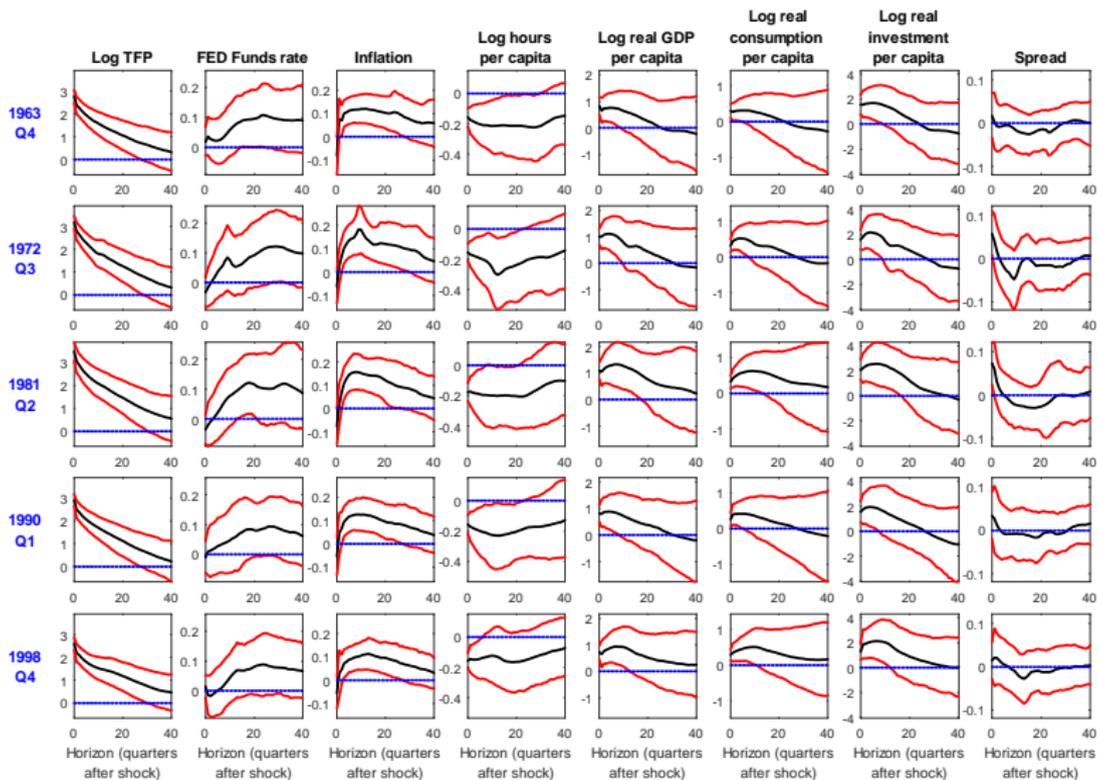


Figure: Impulse-response functions to non-news shocks in 1963Q4, 1972Q3, 1981Q2, 1990Q1 and 1998Q4 (mean, and 16-84 percentiles of the posterior distribution) for the $n = 15$ variables model.

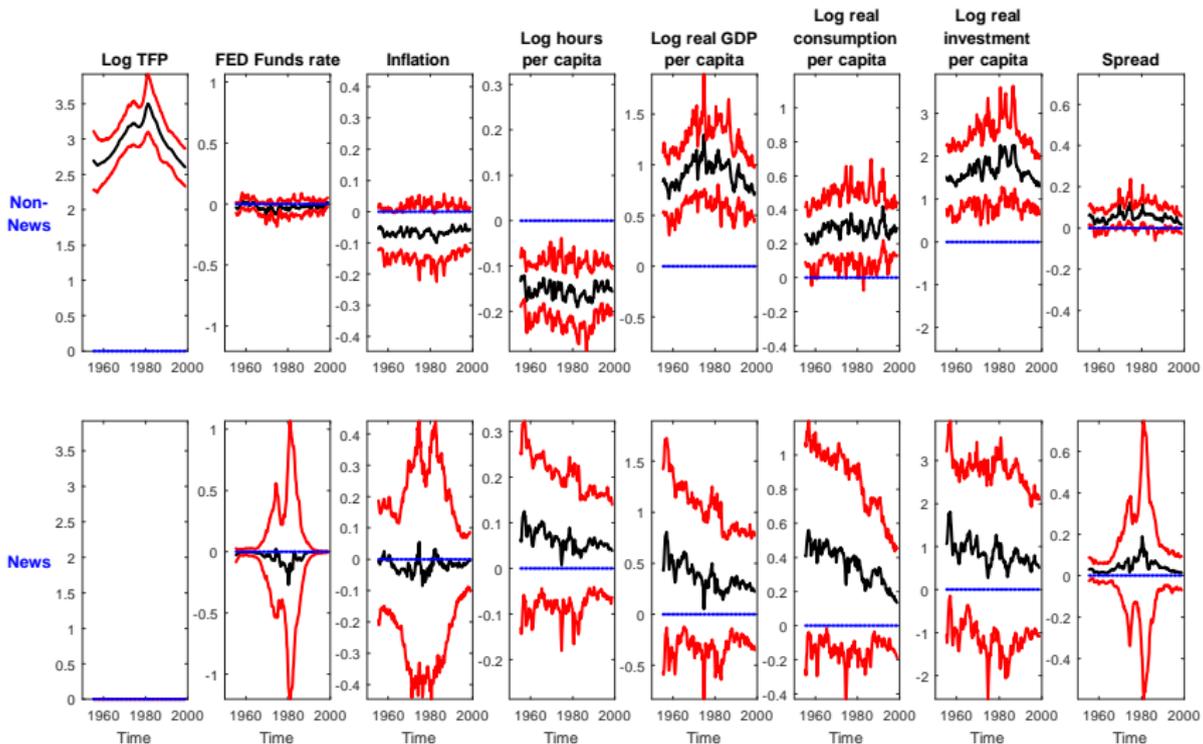


Figure: Time-varying responses to non-news and news shocks on impact (mean, and 16-84 percentiles of the posterior distribution) for the $n = 15$ variables model.

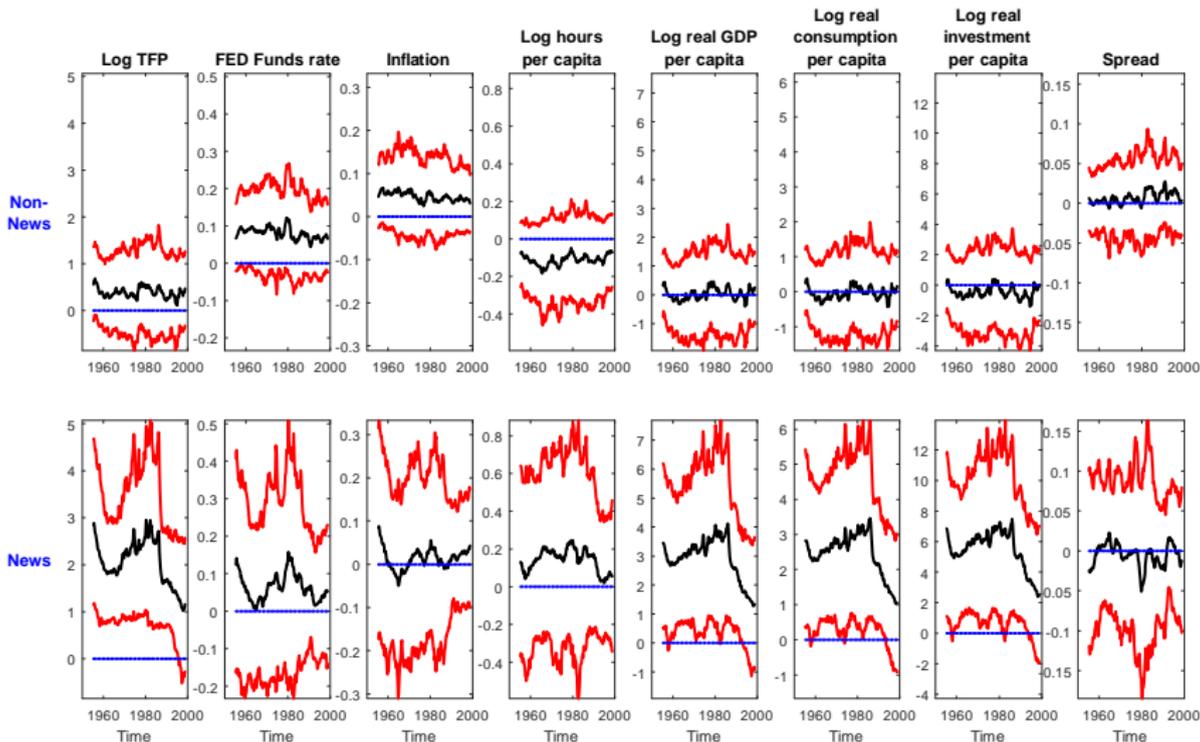


Figure: Time-varying responses to non-news and news shocks at 40 quarters after impact (mean, and 16-84 percentiles of the posterior distribution) for the $n = 15$ variables model.

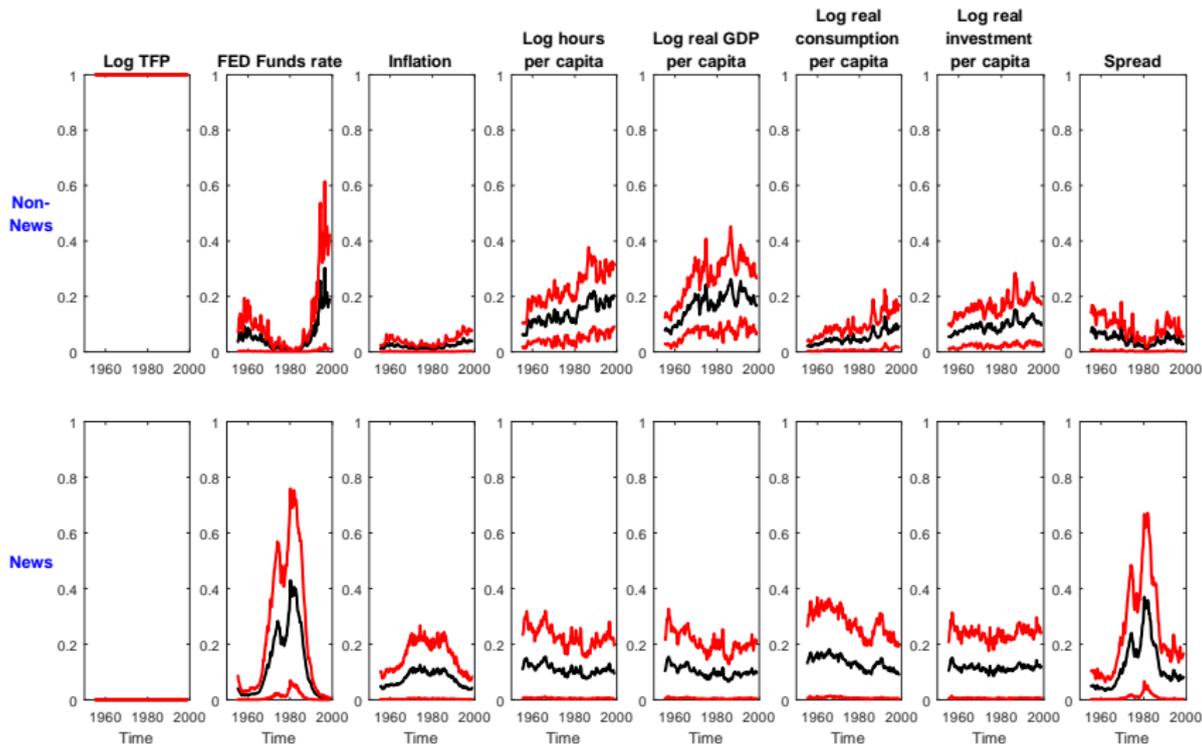


Figure: Time-varying fractions of forecast error variance explained by non-news and news shocks on impact (mean, and 16-84 percentiles of the posterior distribution) for the $n = 15$ variables model.

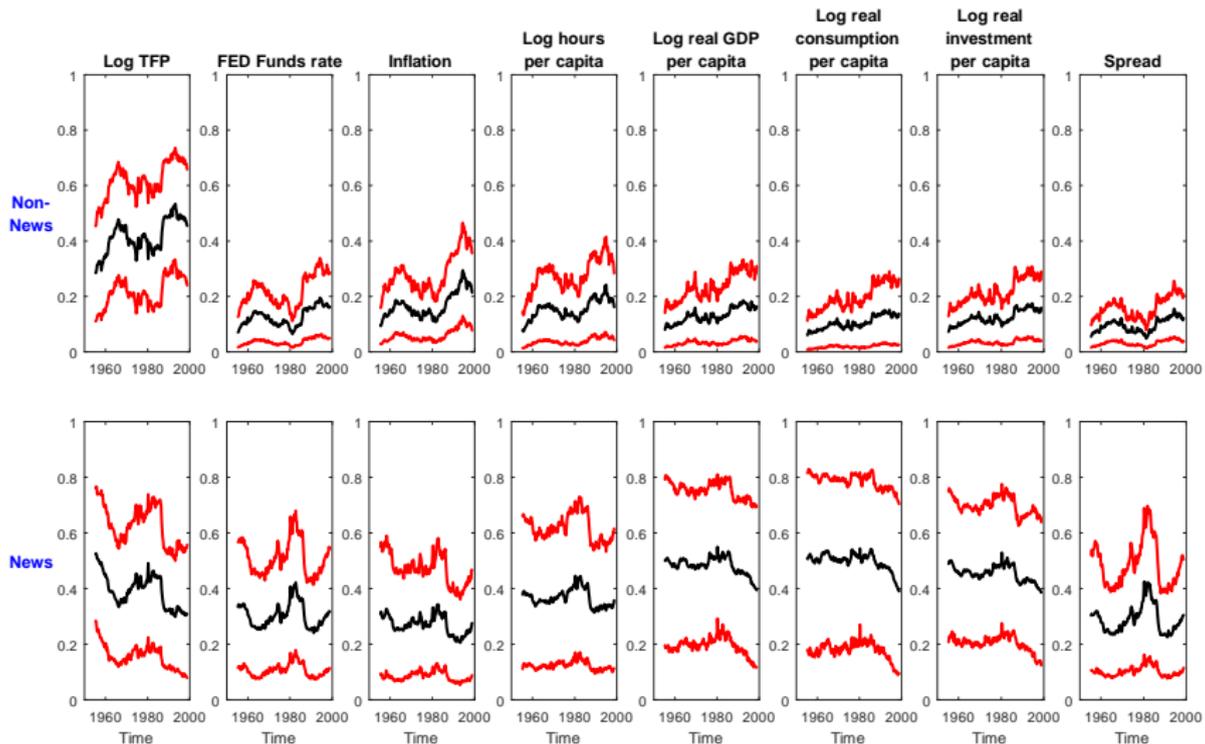


Figure: Time-varying fractions of forecast error variance explained by non-news and news shocks at 40 quarters after impact (mean, and 16-84 percentiles of the posterior distribution) for the $n = 15$ variables model.

- We find evidence of time variation to both news and non-news shocks
- The long-run impact of news shocks upon real variables (Y , C , I) is declining over time
- The change in the response of the variables to news shocks is less evident than the variation in the level of uncertainty around the response to news shocks

- We have provided a means for estimating large $TVP - VAR$ models
- We achieve this by imposing a restriction suggested by the data
- Implementation uses recentering and parameter expansion
- The result is an efficiently computable form