

Cross-national Trends in Consensus on National Security*

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Abstract

Since the attacks of 9/11, numerous states have moved toward national security policies that are costlier, more interventionary, and more intrusive than in the past. To a considerable degree, these changes have been relatively uncontroversial among political elites. However, since previous threats to national security, while also met with strong responses, were somewhat less consensual, one can ask whether recent threats evoke more of an elite consensus than past ones. To answer this question, which recalls Harold Lasswell's work on the "garrison state," we examine parliamentary debates on national security issues in four countries over 50 years. Specifically, we look not at vote totals, since those often fail to reflect substantial agreement on the nature of international threats and the appropriate national responses; instead, we code speeches for policy reasoning (e.g., "because of situation X we must take action Y") and look for overlaps in reasoning even among legislators who vote in opposite ways. Preliminary analysis suggests that there has been a general move toward consensus: in each country, more recent national security legislation is notably less controversial than analogous legislation was some decades past.

Introduction

In the three years since Edward Snowden’s revelations about the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA), it has become clear in one country after another that such surveillance is carried out by each country’s own agencies, that the surveillance has been going on for some time, and that it is on a wider scale than had previously been suspected. In spite of this realization, the majority reaction among political elites has been that although some correctives may be needed, the world is simply too dangerous to forgo these tools. Thus, two years after Snowden thrust the NSA into the news, a mild reform of the agency—which nonetheless continued, directly or indirectly, its data collection programs—passed the Congress overwhelmingly and was signed immediately into law.¹ In France, a bill expanding surveillance powers was approved a good 4 months before the Bataclan attacks in Paris; after the attacks, a state of emergency, which involved further expansion of surveillance powers, was declared, then extended several times. Similar legislation has either already been enacted or is in the process of being approved by the parliaments of other countries, with even the Swiss doing the same.² In sum, while Snowden’s documents may well

¹The reaction by the former head of the NSA to the congressional vote was “If somebody would come up to me and say ‘Look, Hayden, here’s the thing: This Snowden thing is going to be a nightmare for you guys for about two years. And when we get all done with it, what you’re going to be required to do is that little 215 program about American telephony metadata—and by the way, you can still have access to it, but you got to go to the court and get access to it from the companies, rather than keep it to yourself’—I go: ‘And this is it after two years? Cool!’” <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/06/17/hayden-mocks-extent-post-snowden-surveillance-reform-2-years-cool/>

²For example, the UK parliament expanded surveillance in 2014 (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/14/uk-emergency-surveillance-law-blow-privacy>) and was described as “likely to be satisfied” if future legislation were to embody the recommendations of a new watchdog report: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/11/uk-intelligence-agencies-should-keep-mass-surveillance-powers-report-gchq>. In fact, a bill passed by Parliament in 2016 was revised to give the police even greater powers: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/01/snoopers-charter-to-extend-police-access-to-phone-and-internet-data>. On its third and final reading in the House of Commons, the bill was passed 444-69, with the Labour Party spokesman, Keir Starmer, notably praising the bill in terms identical to the government (“Safety and security matter. The current threat level for terrorism is severe, which as we all know, means that an attack is highly likely. We all remember and are deeply conscious of the attacks in Paris and Brussels in the not too distant past, as well as other attacks”: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-06-06/debates/16060613000001/InvestigatoryPowersBill>. In France, both houses of parliament passed versions of a new law expanding surveillance: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/05/france-passes-new-surveillance-law-in-wake-of-charlie-hebdo-attack> and <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/05/france-passes-new-surveillance-law-in-wake-of-charlie-hebdo-attack>

have sparked a focus on surveillance, they have not led to significant restrictions on the agencies engaging in those activities more broadly but have instead provoked explicit approval of them by national legislatures.

Moreover, in spite of the numerous controversies raised about the NSA's activities in other countries, cooperation between the agency and its foreign counterparts has ended up being either resumed or strengthened. That cooperation was extensive, covering some 38 states with whom the NSA had ongoing relationships. Although comparable data for the present day are of course unavailable, country-specific news stories suggest that the political fracas did not seriously interrupt either bilateral or multilateral forms of signals intelligence cooperation.³ Of course, this persistence of cooperation in the face of condemnation—to be specific, the apparent surprise at the extent of surveillance, the carefully worded condemnations, the eventual return to the status quo ante, and the legislative thumbs-up to even more extensive and intrusive actions—extends well beyond surveillance to myriad forms of security-related activities. Take for example the issue of drone strikes by the U.S. against targets in Pakistan and Yemen. These strikes, which be-

//www.csmonitor.com/World/Passcode/2015/0609/France-moves-closer-to-adopting-expansive-surveillance-law; the bill was then approved two months later by the Constitutional Council: <http://www.theverge.com/2015/7/24/9030851/france-surveillance-law-charlie-hebdo-constitutional-court>. The state of emergency extended further the state's powers to search computer data: <https://www.justsecurity.org/27812/emergency-powers-accumulate/>, powers which were maintained in the extension. Following the July 2016 act of terrorism in Nice, the fourth extension of the state of emergency, which gave the police additional powers, passed the National Assembly by 489-26, with even the Communist opponents of the bill conceding the “intensity of the threat” (André Chassaigne, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/cr/2015-2016-extra/20161015.asp>). In Switzerland, a bill expanding surveillance was approved by the lower house of parliament in the spring of 2015 (http://www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/37d03a12-cc8f-11e4-ab43-77e6948b78b0/Loi_sur_le_Renseignement_la_gauche_ne_parvient_pas_%C3%A0_la_corriger) and, with language somewhat more favorable still to the intelligence services, by the upper house: <http://www.tdg.ch/suisse/autorite-independante-doit-surveiller-services-secrets/story/12889918>; the bill was passed in September 2015, and a subsequent referendum endorsed it by a 2/3 margin: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37465853>; advocates of the bill, proclaiming their concern to protect civil liberties, defended the bill on the grounds that “the frontier between military or civilian, domestic or foreign threat, no longer is meaningful” and that to ignore this is to “blind” the state: <https://www.letemps.ch/opinions/2016/08/26/craignez-letat-fouineur-crains-letat-aveugle>. In Germany, notwithstanding politicians' condemnation of data retention laws, a bill permitting law enforcement agencies to access metadata for phone calls and internet connections was passed in October 2015: <https://lawfareblog.com/german-bundestag-passes-new-data-retention-law>. Following additional attacks, a new bill was introduced in August 2016, with the Social Democrats supporting many of its provisions on the grounds that terrorism had become a reality for much of the public: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/12/world/europe/germany-antiterrorism-measures.html>. Even in Japan, a country neither involved militarily in the Middle East nor seen as having a potentially suspect domestic minority, legislation was passed reinforcing surveillance regulations: <https://giswatch.org/en/country-report/communications-surveillance/japan>.

³A good summary of the situation as of 2013 is a March 2015 roundup piece by a surveillance blog: <http://electrospace.blogspot.ch/2014/09/nsas-foreign-partnerships.html>; examples of continuing or renewed signals intelligence cooperation include Germany: <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-restarts-joint-intelligence-surveillance-with-us/a-18968519>; the UK: <https://www.justsecurity.org/29203/british-searches-america-tremendous-opportunity/>; France: <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630024/us-france-to-strengthen-intelligence-sharing>; and, in spite of its own NSA spying scandal (<http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/nsa-spying-on-japan-the-fallout/>), Japan: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/12/national/japan-u-s-enhance-maritime-surveillance-space/#.Vtr2fpMrKys>.

came far more frequent under the Obama Administration than its predecessor, have been widely condemned, so much so that two years ago, only France and the UK stood with the U.S. on the issue, while Germany, the host to an airbase from which almost every strike is coordinated, said it was unaware that the base was being used for that purpose. But Germany did nothing to end the strikes, with a high-ranking prosecutor concluding that they were not in fact illegal; and another U.S. ally, Italy, in spite of concern over the death of one of its own nationals in a strike, refused to condemn the operation. Some months later, Italy ended up agreeing to the use of its own territory for drone strikes in Libya.⁴ Indeed, in spite of the strong European antipathy to Donald Trump, his administration's continuation of drone strikes has received no pushback (and even the more widely condemned missile strike in Syria was supported by European leaders⁵).

The short-lived controversies over surveillance and drone strikes suggest two things: that security-related activities of this sort are becoming increasingly ubiquitous by states acting both unilaterally and multilaterally; and that those activities are strongly backed by the majority of legislative elites in the countries carrying them out. Indeed, there is a close tie between these two points since it is the support of those elites which makes it possible for legislation to be passed, budgets to grow, and controversies to be avoided or short-circuited. Thus, counterterrorism budgets in Western countries have increased massively over the past 15 years (Sgueo 2015) with very little political opposition, and even earlier domestic security agency scandals such as the discovery of COINTELPRO (the FBI), the Finucane affair (MI5), and the *Canard Enchaîné* bugging (DST) failed to stop the upward trajectory in funding and activity. Arguably, there is a long-term trend toward larger and more active national security apparatuses in a number of democratic countries, with this trend being enabled and strengthened by a growing consensus among legislative elites. This claim is the starting point for this paper and the research project on which it serves as a progress report.

It might be argued that there is nothing new here, and that elite consensus waxes and wanes with the level of perceived threat. Thus, the United States might be seen as having gone through

⁴See: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/only-us-uk-and-france-vote-against-the-unhcr-resolution-to-probe-legality-of-drone-strikes/5377753>; <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/ramstein-base-in-germany-a-key-center-in-us-drone-war-a-1029279.html>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-us-drones-idUSBRE94U0WV20130531>; <https://www.justsecurity.org/24440/germans-highest-ranking-prosecutor-legality-drone-strikes/>; <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/04/24/italians-grieve-over-hostage-killed-in-drone-strike.html>; <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/feb/22/italy-us-military-drones-isis-libya-sicily-base>.

⁵See: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/789211/Syria-bombing-US-airstrikes-how-world-reacted-Russia-reaction-Iran-UK-EU-Iran-France>.

waves of fear about various threats: anarchism and Bolshevism from mid-World War I to the early 1920s, communism in the 1940s and 1950s, and Islamic radicalism in the 2000s, to cite the most standard examples. We address this argument at some length below and indeed, assess it directly in the design of the research project; to anticipate, there are both theoretical reasons and empirical evidence to reject the point: the growth in consensus is not cyclical but secular.

The structure of the paper is as follows. We begin with a discussion of the central claim, situating the part of that claim about a long-term trend within the scholarly literature, articulating mechanisms which conduce to the trend, and elaborating its theoretical and substantive significance. We then turn to the second half of the claim (about growing legislative elite consensus in democratic countries), discussing not only its theoretical import but the way in which it points to a concrete research design through which the trend part of the claim can be assessed. The remaining sections of the paper concern a specific methodological issue: how to use speeches in parliamentary debates as indicators of elite consensus. Speeches are arguments of various sorts, and so we address how speeches can be coded in order to abduce those arguments. We then briefly discuss the issue of analyzing arguments in order to determine consensus, and conclude with some preliminary results from earlier debates. As the process of coding speeches is a lengthy one, the research project we are carrying out is currently at an intermediate stage.⁶ For this reason, we do not yet have systematic over-time results to present and so the results reported in this paper should be seen as primarily heuristic.

1 National security and the garrison state

There are several scholarly literatures arguing that there is likely to be a long-term trend toward significant expansion of state capabilities connected with national security.⁷ The oldest of these literatures—although there has been a revival of work in just the last few years (e.g., [Engel 2011](#);

⁶To be specific, the project involves coding two parliamentary debates (one on national security-related issues and one on foreign policy issues not connected with national security; debates are chosen for large numbers of speakers and high degrees of contestation) per time period (with between 20 and 60 speeches per debate), for three time periods, for seven countries. At the date of writing, we have elaborated a methodology and are about forty percent of the way done with the coding for the national security debates; as the process was done by hand and therefore quite slow (see the discussion in [Sylvan and Thornton 2016a,b](#)), we are currently investigating the possibility of using machine learning techniques as a way to handle several debates.

⁷See below for a discussion about the distinction between debates over “national security” issues and over other issue domains. There is not a hard and fast dividing line, which is why we refer to “state capabilities connected with national security”; we have in mind at least the military; intelligence and counterintelligence agencies, including covert operations capabilities; and bureaucracies charged with preventing or defending against terrorism.

Morgan 2004; Friedberg 2000)—stems from the evocative argument by the political scientist Harold Lasswell about the “garrison state” (Lasswell 1937, 1941, 1950, 1962; earlier revivals are, e.g., Aron 1979; Fitch 1985). Lasswell’s original focus, and that of most scholars who used his ideas, was on a structural tendency in democratic countries for “specialists on violence” to play an ever greater political role. That “developmental construct,” as Lasswell termed the tendency, goes along with a second strand of literature, this on institutional political development (Katznelson and Shefter 2002: pt. 4, Sparrow 2011; Thorpe 2014). The argument here is that, at least for the USA, state building dynamics in the mid-20th century were particularly concentrated in agencies having to do with issues of national security. These political science arguments are buttressed by additional work by legal scholars and diplomatic historians (Hogan 1998; Stuart 2008; Ackerman 2010) on the emergence and development of the “national security state,” with a focus on standard political economy phenomena of lobbying and interest aggregation in the executive and the legislature, spurred by current and past state officials who interact closely with the private sector. Complementary arguments can be found in a final body of literature, this one in the field of international relations, on “securitization” (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998; Balzacq 2005; Vuori 2008; Donnelly 2013), the process whereby, because of mobilization motives and media reflexes, phenomena get reconstituted as security-related and, by implication, fall within the purview of state capabilities connected with national security.

Strictly speaking, none of these literatures makes the exact claim as the first part of the one articulated above, namely that there is a *long-term* tendency toward larger and more active national security apparatuses in democracies. In part, this is because some authors concentrate on the initial establishment of those apparatuses, more or less bracketing subsequent decades or treating them as more of the same. Other authors, notably Lasswell, are far more either-or, seeing democracies at some point as transforming into garrison states and at that point falling outside of their substantive concerns. For us, by contrast, democracies can at the very least find themselves with a significant national security sector that escapes democratic control; at the other extreme, democracies can gradually be colonized by their national security apparatuses even while maintaining formally democratic status. To anticipate a point argued below, in these situations, entire realms of policy making are largely uncontested; whether this is outbalanced sufficiently by contestation in other domains to still deserve the label “democratic” is to some degree a definitional

issue.

There are two principal factors that conduce to the long-term growth of national security apparatuses.⁸ First is fear. In his celebrated 1941 essay, Lasswell explicitly discussed what he called “the socialization of danger” as a hallmark of modern aerial warfare, pointing out that with civilians being threatened, “the nation becomes one unified technical enterprise” (459). Numerous authors have pointed out how fear dominated the politics of the United States not only after the USSR’s acquisition of nuclear weapons (e.g., [Hogan 1998](#)) but during World War II, because of concerns over fifth columns and, more generally, domestic groups deemed potentially subversive (e.g., [Katznelson 2013](#): ch. 9).⁹ Fear is an equally important factor in other states, as incidents of domestic terrorism clearly show; note that this can be traced back at least as far as Lasswell’s first garrison state, i.e., Japan in the 1930s ([Shillony 2000](#); [Gordon 2003](#): chs. 10, 11).

The other principal factor is organizational inertia. Bureaucracies can be established for any number of reasons but, once set up, they tend to persist even after the initial reasons are seen to be no longer applicable. In part this is because of vested economic interests, interacting with lobbyists and policy intellectuals; it is also because an organization, with its capabilities for carrying out particular activities, provides a ready-to-hand tool that can be used to address—though not necessarily successfully—any number of policy problems ([Sylvan and Majeski 2009](#)). For example, even in the 1990s, when the cold war had ended and the war on terror had not yet begun, U.S. foreign intelligence spending declined only slightly, remaining at a level 80 percent higher than in 1980; in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the CIA, which hardly had distinguished itself in the preceding several years, was assigned by Bush the task of “hunting, capturing, imprisoning, and interrogating suspects around the world” ([Weiner 2007](#): 481).¹⁰

⁸There are also secondary factors; see [Sylvan and Thornton 2016c](#) for a discussion.

⁹Katznelson, and Schurmann before him (1974: ch. 1), argue that abiding fears over physical security were twinned with worries over economic security (thus the UN Security Council was first envisaged under the same administration that pushed Congress to pass the Social Security Act).

¹⁰Budgetary data from: <https://fas.org/irp/budget/>. As for Bush’s 17 September 2001 “finding” on interrogation, Mayer (2008: 38-41) points out that the document was in fact drafted by the head of the CIA’s Counterterrorist Center. A related example of organizational “at-hand-ness” is the way in which the current Liberal government in Canada, though opposed to drone strikes, has nonetheless not eliminated the country’s air force from a precision weapons capability in the drones it is planning on buying: <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/trudeau-government-quietly-shopping-for-military-drones-in-the-midst-of-pressure-to-arm-them>. More generally, one can argue that when organizations are created, even demobilization after a crisis leaves the shell of the organization; this may account for the ratchet effect remarked on in U.S. military spending after the War of 1812 and the Spanish-American War, as well as after World War II (cf. [Rockhoff 1998](#)).

2 Democracy and legislative consensus on national security

Both the garrison state concept and the trend argument above pertain to democracies. This may seem one-sided, given that the dominance of “specialists on violence” would presumably be characteristic of nondemocratic states. However, Lasswell’s original claim and the phenomena that seem to point to a general garrison state trend have to do with countries with large numbers of heterogeneous interest groups; high levels of literacy, political involvement, and technical expertise; and clear historical limits on the use of violence and the role of security-related agencies. It is in such countries that fear by elites and the mass public can serve as an impetus to the construction and growth of national security apparatuses, and it is also in such countries that interest intermediation and technical expertise are most likely to lead not only to organizational budget growth but to increased numbers of off-the-shelf activity capabilities within those organizations. By contrast, countries in which specialists on violence already dominate politics have tended to be significantly less sensitive to fear (except, of course, that of losing power) and to be marked more by bureaucratic immobility than by increases in organizational capabilities. Thus, although military-dominated regimes certainly have allied themselves with democratic states for decades, particularly in the context of the cold war or the post-9/11 anti-terrorist campaigns, they otherwise lack some of the key characteristics that would conduce to long-term garrison-state-style trends and so we will leave their study for a later project.

What is significant in the claim about democracies—specifically, representative democracies—is that the trends in question are largely self-inflicted. Since 1945, not a single democracy has been conquered or occupied by foreign invaders; all have functioning legislatures, reasonably free and contested elections, and an active news media. The construction of national security apparatuses was carried out by elected governments and it was those governments, with routine legislative approval year after year, that increased the size and scope of those apparatuses. Many, if not most, of the politicians who pushed through or voted for these various legislative measures did so in full knowledge that oversight would become difficult if not impossible and thus that their power over the bureaucracy would diminish (exactly the opposite situation in certain types of nondemocratic states); but they were convinced that security was at stake and that a current, or perhaps a future, threat, mandated such action on their part. Even the political payoffs of their

actions could hardly have been the principal motivation for most of the legislative votes since many of the activities in question were secret, with legislators being sworn to silence about their knowledge (which often was not very great) of those activities and even simple budget votes being dissimulated among dozens of fictitious accounts. This is not to deny phenomena such as red-baiting, khaki elections, and wrapping oneself in the flag, but although appeals to the mass public are certainly an element in the construction and expansion of national security apparatuses, the critical feature of democracy for our purposes is its representative quality.

This point about the role of legislative elites in the long-term security apparatus trend not only is a theoretical argument in itself but provides a potentially useful means of assessing the validity of the claim about that trend. The problem is that there is no direct way of evaluating the claim systematically. Although data are certainly available on the size of countries' armed forces and on the money spent for those forces, analogous data for intelligence, counterintelligence, and counterterrorism spending are usually secret or only episodically released. The same goes for national security-related activities, many of which are only found out about years later, if at all. This means that cross-national over-time direct measures of the growth of national security apparatuses is not possible.

However, the role of legislative elites provides an indirect measure. Insofar as such elites increasingly agree on national security issues, they are likely to support funding for apparatuses charged with those issues; indeed, long-term growth in the size and activities of the apparatuses can only occur if there is an accompanying increase in elite agreement.¹¹ That agreement is not only functional from a budgetary and legislative point of view but also serves as a cue to the mass media that particular policies or agencies play a key role in protecting national security, both because of what is said in speeches (see below) and because of what is not said in oversight hearings.¹² On the other hand, there is no reason to expect that such increasing agreement among legislative elites will apply to other issue domains, and this offers a ready-made research design for assessing our thesis. If there is indeed long-term growth in the size and activities of national

¹¹We stress increased agreement among representative legislative elites, not simply continuation of a majority in favor of funding national security apparatuses and activities. Unless one cohesive political party completely dominates a country's politics from the end of World War II to the present, there will be alternation of power and thus an opportunity for those who had been on the losing side to shift funding to other issue domains.

¹²For example, it is striking how rarely one finds significant oversight, much less challenges, to covert activities by even legislatures with considerable institutional power. Consider the oft-quoted response of Senator John Stennis, when asked by then-CIA director James Schlesinger if he wanted to be briefed on an upcoming operation: "No, no, my boy, don't tell me. Just go ahead and do it, but I don't want to know" (Johnson 2012). See also Wetzling (2010) for predictable, but still striking, findings about the lack of oversight in Germany and the UK.

security apparatuses, with this trend being enabled and strengthened by legislative elites, then we should expect that over the decades, those elites will exhibit increasing agreement on national security issues as compared with other issues. In practice, this implies a within-country over-time assessment of elite agreement in different issue domains.

When we use the terms “agreement” and “consensus,” we do not mean unanimity. The point rather is that although elites may hold differing views on what to do in particular circumstances such as whether to commit troops in a given conflict, to fund a particular weapons program, or to authorize the collection of communications metadata, they see eye to eye on a number of issues surrounding those questions: what happened in the past, what is likely to happen in the future, what situations are good, or worrisome, or terrifying, and so forth. If, for example, legislative elites feel that certain leaders are “bad guys”—that therefore they pose a threat, that certain paramilitary programs have the potential to stop them, and that the officials running such programs are competent and well-meaning—then whatever their views on a particular legislative proposal, they are likely to fund those paramilitary programs and support their expansion in the face of new threats.

This part of our thesis implies that legislative elite consensus on national security issues grows significantly after World War II, plateauing at high levels near the end of the cold war, or perhaps in the post-9/11 era. Such an inference may appear to run counter to a significant literature on elite polarization with respect to foreign policy issues, at least in the United States (e.g., [McCormick and Wittkopf 1990](#); [Meernik 1993](#); [Prins and Marshall 2001](#); [Souva and Rohde 2007](#); [Beinart 2008](#)). That literature, though, is not fundamentally at odds with our claim (see, in this regard, [Wildavsky 1966](#); [Krebs 2015](#)). The concept of consensus used here has to do with accord on world views, i.e., on deep assumptions about various phenomena such as foreign threats and the role played by various states. What happens, then, is that the range of agreement (including, crucially, on funding for and the activities of the national security apparatus) expands even as legislative elites vigorously disagree on certain policy alternatives. In this regard, standard means of determining polarization on contested issues, such as survey data or roll call votes, are mostly beside the point as regards deep assumptions on which legislative elites agree.¹³

¹³On roll call votes: if, as frequently occurs, two MPs have the same world view but, for reasons of party loyalty, are constrained to vote on opposite sides, they will have incentives to avoid other recorded votes on matters in that issue domain. In the US Congress, for example, such behavior can be seen in committee hearings and markup sessions, as well as in informal agreements to avoid filing certain amendments for floor debate.

An informal example of growing consensus among legislative elites, and the way in which it can be used as an indicator of increasing size and activity of national security apparatuses, comes from earlier work we have done on the United States in the 1890s, the 1930s, the 1960s, the 1990s, and the early 2000s (Sylvan *et al.* 2014; Sylvan and Thornton 2015; Thornton and Sylvan 2015, 2016). In 1898–99, U.S. legislative elites were in major disagreement on the annexation of the Philippines and, more generally, on the U.S. role in the world. Although the annexationists won out, they did not win over their opponents, and over the next several decades disagreements arose on multiple occasions. As late as November 1939, when Congress finally agreed to repeal the Neutrality Act, isolationists denied that Hitler was a significant threat to the United States or that the U.S. had any interest in supporting Great Britain. Even after the war, during the debate over aid to Greece and Turkey, both left and right were deeply suspicious about the rationale for aid. Over the next two decades, this disagreement began to diminish and so, when the Gulf of Tonkin resolution was debated in 1964, its (two) opponents shared some premises with supporters about the U.S. role, even as they castigated both South Vietnam and the U.S. military. Thirty years later, in debates over the bombing of Kosovo and the authorization for invading Iraq, a genuine consensus had emerged, with both sides agreeing on the moral turpitude of Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein and of the importance of at least isolating, if not fighting against, them. Of course, this quick walk-through does not capture most of the details of the debates and the specific agreements or disagreements, nor does it say anything about the level of (dis)agreement on non-national security issues, but it does at least start to suggest that earlier efforts at building up national security apparatuses had tailed off and that it was not until after World War II that our hypothesized long-term trend in fact began.¹⁴ This is exactly what happened, and while this in itself does not prove anything, it does indicate that growing legislative elite consensus on national security, as opposed to other issues, can indeed be used as an indicator of a long-term trend toward larger and more active national security apparatuses.

Although we do not yet have systematic results to communicate, similar stories can be told about other countries being studied in our research project. Thus, at the time of the debate in

¹⁴The institutionalist arguments discussed in the first section point to the Spanish-American War as the moment when, organizationally, important capabilities were put in place (e.g., a modernized army and navy, Marines constabulary training, Wall Street oversight of customs collections in client states) and new legal doctrines elaborated (via the so-called Insular Cases); for a discussion of these points, see Sylvan and Majeski (2009: chs. 4, 7). However, ideological consensus lagged behind, arguably because there was no abiding sense of fear (principal U.S. enemies through the end of the 1920s were Nicaragua and Germany for a few years, Russia after World War I, and, for a quarter of a century, Mexico).

West Germany over the European Defence Community (1952), many opponents flatly contested the claim that the Soviet Union posed a threat to the Federal Republic; by the time of the debate over the first Gulf War, in 1991, opponents agreed that Iraq posed a threat to its neighbors, though not one that justified military action. Much the same tendency can be seen in Japan between the ratification of the peace treaty and the security treaty with the United States (1951) and the debate in 1990 over Japanese involvement in the Gulf War. The same can be said of the United Kingdom from the time of the reestablishment of conscription (1947; analyzed below) and the debate about the launching of the Gulf War (1991). Conversely, in each of these cases, proponents of the legislative action were themselves more divided in the first period than in the second; this is another reason why roll-call analysis is problematic as a means of capturing trends in ideological consensus.

By arguing that long-term growth of national security apparatuses has been enabled and strengthened by consensus among legislative elites, we not only point to an indicator by which comparative research can be carried out but we also help address additional theoretical and substantive issues. One such issue is particularly worth highlighting, having to do with war and democracy. The extensive literature on the “democratic peace” carves out a partial exception to the correlation when it comes to covert interventions (e.g., [Downes and Lilley 2010](#); [Poznansky 2016](#)), but fails to grapple with the larger issue raised by our thesis: that an extensive and growing array of activities has largely been removed from public debate. For example, the drone strikes referred to at the start of this paper, although discussed at some length in certain press outlets, have not been the object of sustained debate in Congress—not least because most documents and testimony are classified¹⁵—and, as a result, have largely escaped becoming an issue in election campaigns ([Horton 2015](#): ch. 8; [Woods 2015](#): chs. 9, 12; [Savage 2015](#): ch. 6). This raises questions about our knowledge of war-like activities (including the validity of standard conflict databases), about the scope conditions on theoretical claims about constraints on the executive, and, more fundamentally, about whether entire realms of policy making can be qualified as democratic in the first place. Ironically, [Lasswell \(1950\)](#) raised the possibility that the garrison state might be marked by a plebiscitary executive; what he did not perhaps reckon on is the possibility that consensus

¹⁵“The collateral damage has been extraordinarily low,” says Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the ranking member of the Senate’s Intelligence Committee. “That really is a fact. I only wish I could tell you what it was. That is the irony here. This is all classified.” This and similar statements from Republicans, including presidential candidates during the 2016 election, and even from liberal Democrats, are perfect examples of the blank zones on both war and democracy referred to above (<http://www.defenseone.com/politics/2015/04/congress-drone-strikes-are-here-stay/111067/>).

would be so strong among legislative elites as to obviate the need for even plebiscitary rituals.

3 Speeches as arguments

How can we study the presence, absence, or growth of legislative consensus on national security issues? Our proposal, as adumbrated above, is to study legislative debates, specifically speeches made in the course of those debates, looking for agreement or disagreement on world views. Below we will discuss our proposal to code speeches in terms of the arguments made in them, contrasting that approach with alternative ways of analyzing speeches. But before we address that issue, we need to put to rest one of the long-standing shibboleths in social science: that speeches are only “cheap talk” and thus can be discounted or even ignored.

In game theory, the reason that some kinds of talk are considered to be cheap is that engaging in them is not costly for those speaking or otherwise transmitting the message. This is the antithesis of what happens in legislative speeches, as they are one of the few means by which legislators’ positions can be determined. Moreover, what matters both to legislators’ supporters and opponents is not only their eventual vote on a bill (if there is indeed a bill that is voted on) but the words they use in announcing their vote: if a member of parliament says she is in favor of a resolution because other alternatives are worse, it is a very different message than praising the resolution as moral, or as leading to good consequences.

Another cheap talk criticism is that speeches simply fail to reflect what legislators actually think. Even if this argument were true (the evidence is ambiguous), it is not of great import. Legislators run a significant risk if they evince significantly different beliefs in public than in private; similarly, their credibility as deal-makers is undermined if they articulate different beliefs from one day to the next. The fact that they carefully choose their words does not logically imply that they hold a different, “true,” set of beliefs which could be articulated in some nonlinguistic fashion and, even if they were to display a high level of cynicism about their own floor speeches, the fact that they have to ally with some members of parliament, oppose others, and stand for reelection, all on the basis of what they say (and, of course, how they vote), means that their speeches, and not some other, nonexpressed, set of views, are what matters. Note that the need for allies and opponents suggests that instead of analyzing isolated speeches (say the kind given late at night, when there is no floor debate), we should focus on speeches made in the course of debates

on pending legislation.

There are a number of ways in which speeches can be analyzed. One can, for example, study them as expressing belief systems linked by logical entailment relations; as manifestations of underlying positions on multiple scales or “sentiments” on particular subjects; as focusing on particular “topics”; as a series of discursively connected utterances; or as an exercise in framing (Roseman 1994; Lowe *et al.* 2011; Thomas, Pang and Lee 2006; Roberts, Stewart and Airoidi 2016; Cabrio, Tonelli and Villata 2013; Chong and Druckman 2010). Our approach, instead, focuses on speeches as arguments, i.e., as a series of reasons advanced for taking a position, such as voting in favor of or against a particular legislative proposal (cf. Thornton 2016). We hasten to add immediately that the arguments made by legislators may be logical or shot full of circularities and contradictions; solidly grounded in history or scientific studies or, on the contrary, based on a combination of fantasy, ignorance, or deliberate lies; positive or normative; high-minded or filled with ad hominem attacks and personal slurs. But whatever the specific points made, every speech is an argument of sorts, and our proposal is to characterize each argument so as to determine what it shares with other arguments put forward in the same legislative context, i.e., the debate in which the speech is made. If, as we will discuss below, the zone of agreement for particular issue areas expands over time, we can say that there is a move in the direction of consensus.

Here is some terminology. An *argument* is any verbal construction of the sort A because of B. The various types of “because” (e.g., causal, legal, and so forth) will be discussed below; but the important thing is that an argument links two points. As we are concerned with legislation being debated in parliaments, the A point is a *claim*: a speaker’s position on the pending vote.¹⁶ A *reason* is a point made in support, whether directly or indirectly, of a claim. A reason that supports a claim directly (so that we could represent the role of reason X in the speech, say, as “vote for the bill because of X”) is a *core reason*; a reason that supports a core reason (hence, for reason Y, “vote for the bill because of X, and X is the case because of Y”) is a *secondary reason*. There can be multiple core reasons in a speech and also multiple secondary reasons in support of a given

¹⁶As noted above, legislators can and do announce their positions on issues which are not the subject of pending votes, but although some parliaments set aside time for members to make speeches of that sort, this is not universal. Hence we have opted for speeches on pending measures, even if the measure may not yet have been introduced formally or even if, on the contrary, it ends up being withdrawn for redrafting or in the face of opposition. Similarly, for reasons of tractability, we ignore speeches on amendments unless the amendment is in effect a proposal to kill the bill (“strike the rest of the text”) or if it sparks a major debate on its own.

core reason; there can also be a secondary reason in support of another secondary reason, with the latter in support of a core reason. In some cases, a reason that is used as a secondary reason in one speech may be used as a core reason in another (indeed, this may even occur within a single paragraph). A *reasoning chain* is a claim supported by a core reason which in turn is supported by at least one secondary reason and, recursively, any secondary reasons in support of the latter. At the minimum, then, reasoning chains are composed of three connected elements: a claim, a core reason, and a secondary reason; but if the secondary reason is in turn supported by one or more additional secondary reasons, the reasoning chain may be composed of four, five, or more connected elements, though these latter possibilities are relatively rare. As we will discuss below, two chains in a speech may start out with the same core reason in support of the claim and the same immediately supporting secondary reason in support of the core, then, further down, as it were, diverge into different supporting secondary reasons. Such *compound* chains may, for purposes of pairwise similarity assessment, be treated as composed of multiple individual chains.¹⁷ Not all core reasons are part of chains: quite often, speakers put forward a core reason unsupported by a secondary reason¹⁸ because it seems obvious or because, at that moment, they are engaged in constructing a different argument. Finally, the *justification* made in a speech is the combination of the claim and all the reasons and reasoning chains supporting it.¹⁹

Below, we will discuss the coding process of abducing reasons from speeches. But one point is helpful to anticipate: that not all the points (whether reasons, chains, or other sorts of statements) made by a speaker are necessarily part of the justification. Sometimes a speaker spends relatively little time on the claim and relatively more time on other issues: skirmishing with a long-time adversary, warning about what he or she will do after the vote (e.g., ask for more money

¹⁷Chains may be interconnected not only because they all lead to the same claim (this is trivially the normal case, although there are speeches in which more than one claim is made [e.g., to vote in favor of something and also to be wary of something else in the future]), but because they may be so-called “divergent structures” (Freeman 1991) in which a given secondary reason is used in support of more than one “higher” reason. We do not discuss such chains here because they pose no particular issues for coding or similarity assessment, though, interestingly, they are not permitted in many kinds of argument mapping software (since they are not, mathematically speaking, trees).

¹⁸Note that the reverse cannot be true: a secondary reason must by definition support a core reason, and thus be part of a reasoning chain. However, as we will discuss below, our coding procedure does not actually identify secondary reasons directly from summarized speeches. Instead, we code summaries as a set of candidate core reasons, then, among the latter, identify some as supporting others, i.e., as secondary reasons. The rationale behind this procedure is discussed below.

¹⁹Terminological notes. The phrase “reasoning chain,” as we use it, overlaps to some degree with its use in political science and in computational linguistics (e.g., Sniderman *et al.* 1986; Sizov and Öztürk 2013). Our concept of “argument” is similar, though not identical, to the first two meanings discussed by Hornikx and Ulrike (2012); it is definitely not as differentiated in its notion of “support” as Toulmin’s (1958) canonical model or as limited to direct responses as Rescher’s (1978) notion of a back and forth between two different persons.

or propose follow-up legislation), giving a history lesson, or enunciating a statement of general grievances. Such remarks are not, in essence, part of the debate, and we find that they are particularly likely to be made by speakers from marginal parties or factions. In fact, multiple codes of NA within a speech are often useful indicators that that speech, at any rate, is peripheral not only to the debate but more generally.

It is important to keep in mind that the reasoning chains for a particular speech may not be consistent, at least in the eyes of many observers. A justification may include chains that not only differ in their content but appear contradictory: for example, “vote against the resolution because the Soviets are aggressive; they are aggressive because Stalin made a speech calling for supporting revolutions” and also “vote against the resolution because the Soviets are trying to lull us to sleep; they are trying to lull us to sleep because Stalin made a speech calling for peace and negotiations with us.” A justification can thus be composed of chains that are mutually inconsistent; on the other hand, a particular chain will display some consistency, via the type of connection (as discussed below), even if the individual reasons may appear ludicrous to many observers.

Consider now the connections by which reasons are linked into chains. We said above that each reason is connected to other reasons, or to the claim, by a “because.” These *connectors*, as we call them, are subdivided by type: 1) L: legal or conceptual/definitional (e.g., “we can’t do X because it would be unconstitutional”); 2) H: historical (e.g., “we should do it because we’ve done it before”); 3) C: consequential (including slippery slope arguments) of the sort X occurs, triggering Y (e.g., “if we do X, it will put the budget into deficit”); 4) N: normative (e.g., “we can’t do X because it’s immoral to treat people in that way”); 5) A: anthropological (e.g., “we should do X because it’s the only kind of language people like Y understand”); 6) I: identity/who we are or are not (e.g., “we shouldn’t do X because we’re a democracy, not a dictatorship”; “do X because advocates of X [like me and my allies] are certain kinds of people”); 7) O: opponents (e.g., “do X because opponents of X are reprobates”); and 8) E: even though (e.g., “do X even though Y is the case”).²⁰ Note that ad hominem arguments (connection type O), pleas of good faith or being on the side of the angels (connection type I) and “notwithstanding” arguments (connection type E) can be categorized using these connectors.

²⁰This list of connectors was put together after provisionally coding a number of speeches in the U.S. Senate debate over Philippines annexation (Thornton and Sylvan 2015), as amended after coding speeches in the research project. From a technical point of view, the connectors are similar to certain standard argument schemes (Walton, Reed and Macagno 2008) or to components of particular such schemes (e.g., concessions in Toulmin 1958).

Below, we will discuss the procedure for coming up with connectors, including a consistency criterion that constrains the variety of connectors in a given chain. For now, note that representing speeches as justifications along the lines proposed above offers a tractable and systematic way of seeing just how much agreement in reasoning there is across speeches. For example, consider the quotations on waterboarding drawn from different political elites in the United States and displayed in Appendix 1.²¹ An informal look at the quotations suggests that Bush’s reasoning is similar to that of his vice president, Cheney; that McCain and Clinton agree in some respects; and that Trump partly tracks Bush and Cheney while going further in other regards. These intuitions can be checked through coding the statements as arguments, using the methodology laid out below. Appendix 2 lists all the reasons used in the statements, as well as the reasoning chains which connect them in the arguments; the chains should be read across in this fashion: S-3-5 means support the claim because of reason 3 and support reason 3 because of reason 5.²²

Thus our proposal is to analyze speeches as arguments, to code those arguments into their component reasoning chains, to assess the agreement between the arguments in a given debate, and then to see whether, over time, national security debates show significantly greater increases in agreement than do debates on other issues. We now turn to a discussion of our methodology for coding speeches into arguments, and, after that, of the means for assessing agreement between arguments in a debate.

4 Coding speeches into arguments

4.1 General considerations: granularity

In coding a speech, it is necessary to identify which reasons are being used in support of the claim. Here, it is important to avoid two obvious extremes. It obviously would add very little if the reasons being adduced are too general: vote for the resolution because good things will happen, or because it is the right thing to do, or because the opponents are incorrect. Just as obvi-

²¹Note that only one of the statements (Cheney’s) was part of a speech, although another one—the McCain press release—reflected what he said on the Senate floor. Bush’s statement was drawn from his memoirs, which were presumably drafted with some concern for consistency. It should also be noted that Clinton’s statement to some degree contradicted another statement made years before when she was still in the Senate: <http://www.democraticunderground.com/1251711013>.

²²If the claim were to be opposed, the string would begin with O. For reasons of legibility, in this example we have omitted the types of connections discussed above.

ously, one should avoid abducing hyper-specific reasons: vote against the bill because its provision for sending troops for 4 months violates Title 14 of Public Law 882, as per the Constitutional Court's ruling in 1973. Within these extremes, there is a broad range of alternatives, and it is impossible to say a priori how abstract or granular reasons should be; instead, the degree depends on the distinctions made by the speaker in developing his/her argument. For example, in the House of Commons debate of 1947 about reinstating military conscription in the UK, one speaker (Yates) made this particular complaint partway through his speech:

This then is our problem. Here we have these huge Forces and we have a policy of peacetime secretiveness. We do not know where the Forces are or how many there are, for they are stationed all over the world. I understood in my early days in the Labour movement that we did not believe in secret diplomacy, or in secrecy at all. I do not see any reason for approving this Measure. Even the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Woodford (Mr. Churchill) was asking for information which is, of course, absolutely essential if the House is to make a sound decision on a matter of this kind.

The coding procedure we followed (see below) led us to code this passage as a single reason: “Government hasn’t given us the info we need to decide on conscription.” The claim about what Labour used to believe, or the reference to Churchill, are not in this particular case indicative of a finer-grained distinction.

On the other hand, the government minister (Isaacs) who began the debate by introducing the bill made a point of distinguishing between, on the one hand, deferment of service because of employment or educational training, and, on the other hand, reinstatement in a pre-conscription job following military service. We could have coded both these points as a single reason—for example, “not harm conscripts’ civilian employment”—but, because the speaker insisted on the difference as a way, *inter alia*, of arguing for the legislation on grounds of both flexibility and equity, we instead coded two reasons: “Some valid deferments/postponements of service will be permitted” and “Reinstatement rights will continue to apply, with some caveats.” (As there were several other specific but related distinctions made by Isaacs, we then added an additional, more overarching reason, one used with some frequency by other speakers: “Conscription will not interfere with young men’s futures.”)

This emphasis on the speaker’s *legislative focus* (whether any particular point is a justification of her/his position on the legislation, as contrasted with other things s/he may also be doing in the speech, such as demonstrating bona fides, settling scores, or announcing future struggles) implies that the reasons used in any one speech may be heterogeneous in their degree of granularity; taking the collection of reasons across all speeches in a given debate, we would expect high levels of heterogeneity. Consequently, standard top-down approaches to coding speeches will be problematic, except of course as a starting point (Grimmer and Stewart 2013; D’Orazio *et al.* 2014; cf. Bunea and Ibenskas 2015). On the other hand, so-called bottom-up approaches, such as that employed in topic modeling methods (Quinn *et al.* 2010; Lucas *et al.* 2015; Törnberg and Törnberg 2016) or in Wordfish (Slapin and Proksch 2008, 2014) are also problematic not only because of the sheer size of the corpora needed to discover co-occurrence patterns but, above all, because of the idea that particular phrases are determinately mappable onto reasons irrespective of the speakers’ legislative foci.²³ Hence, our coding procedure is very much an exercise in “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967): an iterative process in which an initial set of reasons is added to with successive speeches, some reasons being complemented by new ones, others being merged, and still others split up into multiple reasons. As the number of coded speeches increases, the general tendency is that each additional speech adds fewer new reasons and changes few existing ones (though there are some flagrant exceptions to this, typically involving marginal or independent legislators; see below).

4.2 General considerations: speeches and reasons

How are individual speeches related to each other, and to reasons? To start with, we know that regardless of how striking or idiosyncratic a given legislator’s language may be, it must be (and almost always is) understood by others. Although some of this understanding may well be due to the speaker’s past performances and to listeners’ expectations, the words actually uttered must be sufficiently comprehensible that, at a minimum, the speaker’s claim must be clear, and most

²³As we will see below, some distinctions (e.g., between “dictators” and “thugs”) may be irrelevant pragmatically, whereas others (e.g., between “we will be able to act” and “we may be able to act”) may be relevant. More importantly, some reasons are inferrable even without explicit words: for example, in the Yates quotation above, there is nowhere a sentence stating explicitly that the government has not in fact given the information; rather, it is an inference that most competent English speakers would routinely and unproblematically make.

likely the justification as well.²⁴ This places a severe limit on the extent to which not only words can be used nonstandardly by any individual speaker, but also the extent to which the reasons advanced through certain words are different than those of any other legislator.

In addition, we know (and the various speeches we have studied demonstrate clearly) that speakers often aim at making points similar to those of other speakers. This can happen because a legislator approves what his/her peers have said, or deliberately echoes their speeches, or is repeating “talking points” distributed by party whips or floor leaders. We thus should expect that certain reasons will be advanced over and over in the course of a debate, so much so that later speakers may well fall into a sort of shorthand, condensing details or referring to reasons by exophora (e.g., “Mr. Smith’s [or: “my distinguished colleague’s”] argument”).

It follows, then, that the same reason can be advanced by more than one speaker and thus that, for two or more reasons, the same reasoning chain can also be advanced in different speeches. However, the fact that reasoning chains are put forward in speeches but are not the same as speeches does not mean that there is a pre-set collection of reasoning chains for any particular debate and that speakers, say, choose among that collection to construct their own speeches. Certainly speakers have in mind that they wish to make a particular point but they cannot do so without words, and it is exactly their choice of words that not only instantiates reasoning chains, but also modifies them. A speaker may want to emphasize a hitherto neglected point, or to modify someone else’s argument, and so even if debates were not joined—e.g., if speakers did not try to rebut their opponents—they would still progress, because later speakers will necessarily make slightly different points than earlier ones. (Imagine that you are the 30th speaker in a debate. Even if you only say, “I agree with everyone else on my side of the issue,” the fact of saying that adds a reason: “Those on my side are correct.”)

4.3 Coding

Coding speeches involves a number of preliminary steps, which we discuss elsewhere ([Sylvan and Thornton 2016b](#)). Briefly, we pre-process debates into a collection of pro and anti speeches, then paraphrase each speech, sentence by sentence, and summarize the paraphrases. In each of these steps, as well as in the actual coding, reliability checks are built in to the process.

²⁴Evidence for this is abundant, from characterizations of speakers by other speakers (then, or afterward) to press accounts of speeches.

4.3.1 Reasons

In principle, each phrase, or at least clause, of each sentence in a summary is coded as one or more reasons. Tacit points, whether complementary to a particular explicit reason or implicit in a set of explicit reasons, will also be coded as reasons, though we signal this to ourselves by putting them in square brackets. To capture the speaker's legislative focus, researchers are instructed to use argument-related formulas such as "vote for the bill because of X," where X is the candidate reason. If for a given summary paragraph there are no arguments that are part of the justification, then instead of the paragraph being coded as one or more reasons, it is coded as NA.

As speeches are coded, researchers construct, draw upon, add to, and at times revise the wording, of a master list of reasons. That list can be quite lengthy: for each of the debates we are currently coding, it appears that there will end up being between 250 and 350 reasons. For retrieval and simplicity purposes, reasons are assigned a number and arranged in the master list either numerically or, in some cases, crudely, by topic (e.g., cost of the bill, motivations of supporters). Although our focus is not on individual reasons, impressionistically, it appears that debates in different parliaments at roughly the same time period overlap at least to some degree on the type of reason: for example, and unsurprisingly, speakers in the debates in the UK on conscription (1947), in the US on aid to Greece and Turkey (1947), in Japan on the Peace and Security Treaties (1951), in France and in Germany on the EDC (1952), in Switzerland on the purchase of jet fighters (1947), and even in New Zealand on a dock workers' strike argued to be due to Communist agitation (1951), all advance reasons having to do with the cold war, usually citing the Soviet Union as a threat.

4.3.2 Reasoning chains

After each summary paragraph has been assigned reasons, researchers make another pass through the summaries and, for each paragraph, code none, some, or all of the reasons into chains (so far, the number of chains varies per debate from just over 100 to almost 250, depending in part on the length of speeches and argumentative styles). Researchers are instructed to use the same sort of argumentative formula as for the abducing of reasons "vote for the bill because of X, and X because of Y." In linking reasons into chains, some standard political science ways of producing arguments, notably causality (A leads to B, which leads to C, etc.) have to be modified: if situa-

tion A leads to situation B, then the reasons referring to those situations may have to be reversed: vote for the bill because situation B will occur (which is a good thing), and situation B will occur because of situation A.

In forming reasoning chains, it is necessary to specify the kind of connection (see above), for each chain, between core reasons and claims, between secondary reasons and core reasons, and between secondary reasons advanced in support of core reasons and secondary reasons advanced in support of other secondary reasons. We have found that for any given chain, each connection must be of the same type: if there is a single lowest connector of type A, the second-to-lowest connector and all higher ones for that chain must also be A; if there is a compound chain with two lowest connectors, one of type A and the other of type H, the second-to-lowest connector must be either A or H and, whichever it is, all higher connectors must be the same, i.e., all A or all H. Violation of this criterion is indicative of either a missing reason (see below) or a miscoded one.²⁵ We have found, in particular, that knotty issues of directionality (for a posited chain involving reasons A and B, does A support B or vice-versa?) can be resolved using the homogeneous connector criterion. For example, the West German EDC debate of 1952 contains considerable invective directed by Christian Democrats at the Communists and vice-versa. One frequently finds pairs of reasons characterizing both the actions of the other side and the personal qualities of its speakers. Using the homogeneous connector criterion, we can decide if the chain should go from the claim to one reason to another reason (if the connector associated with both reasons is type O, i.e., about the opponent) or from the claim to a different reason, then to an additional different reason (if the connector associated with both reasons is type L, i.e., about the definition of the policy). The criterion can also be used to evaluate reasoning “algebra,” for example, if one has chains 1-2 and 2-3, one can merge them into 1-2-3 if each chain has the same connectors.

4.3.3 Filtering

In order to avoid overemphasizing particular reasons and to capture the main points of a speech, after the reasoning chains are coded, researchers make a final pass and classify as nonretained all reasons that are only used once in that speech.²⁶ If a reason is nonretained, then the chain in

²⁵To be clear, we are not saying that reasons have to be linked into chains by strict logical consistency but simply that the form of reasoning in a chain is locally homogeneous: speakers may and often do contradict themselves, but if a particular bit of reasoning is heterogeneous, it is not usually grasped by listeners as a single argument.

²⁶We distinguish between retained and nonretained reasons and chains as a way of capturing the main point of each paragraph, but because it is possible for multiple speakers to put forward the same reason and for at least one of

which it may be included will also be nonretained. The result is a datum for each speech consisting, first, of a claim, second, of a filtered set of retained reasons and chains, and third, of a set of nonretained reasons and chains.

5 Computing consensus: agreement between arguments

5.1 Criteria

Once speeches have been coded as arguments, we can compare arguments to see just how much agreement there is between them and in that way ascertain whether, over time, a particular country displays a growth in the extent of agreement for national security debates. Our proposal is to aggregate over agreement in pairs of speeches, both on opposing sides of a debate and on the same side. Both types of agreement are important as a way of measuring consensus: if those in favor of a legislative proposal agree to some degree with those against, they are closer to consensus than if there is no agreement in their justifications. But by the same token, if those on the same side of a legislative proposal advance widely different arguments, it is hard to say that their world view is really the same. Thus, we need a method for capturing both types of agreement.

For any two speeches in a debate, we add up the number of individual reasons that are the same, whether or not they are part of chains; we add to this sum the number of chains that match precisely (e.g., chain 030-174 in one speech would match precisely only to 030-174 in another speech; it would match partially to 174-030, or to 030-165), then normalize by the maximum possible number of reasons and chains which could match in that pair of speeches. This yielded an overlap score for every pair of speeches and we then averaged those scores across all pairs of speeches in favor of the legislation, all pairs of speeches against the legislation, and all pairs of speeches where one speech was in favor of the legislation and the other against it. These three scores for each debate can then be compared, for each country, over three time periods to see if indeed national security-related debates show an increase in consensus as compared to other debates on foreign policy.

those speakers to put it forward only once (and thus to have some degree of overlap in reasoning), we enter nonretained reasons and nonretained chains in the database along with retained ones. In fact, at least for the three debates analyzed in this paper, the difference in overlap between pairs of speeches with retained reasons and chains only, and pairs with both retained and unretained reasons and chains, is relatively slight, with some scores going up a bit, others down a bit, and others staying roughly the same.

On a technical note, the scores we calculated were for pairs of speeches with retained reasons and chains, and with chains being given the same weight as individual reasons. We also calculated overlap scores for pairs of speeches with both retained and unretained reasons and chains, but, as mentioned above, the differences were minimal. We also calculated overlap scores, for both retained elements only, as well as for retained and unretained elements, employing a weighting scheme that counted two-part chains more highly than individual reasons and three-part chains more highly still; but although these scores did differ for certain types of pairs for particular countries, the differences were not striking. Thus, the scores displayed in Table 1 and discussed below are for pairs with retained elements only, unweighted.

5.2 Preliminary results

For this paper, we report on reasoning agreement in national security-related debates in three countries: the UK, Japan, and Germany. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, we only have speeches for all three countries coded in our database for the first time period, that of the early years of the cold war; we will update this paper with the T1-T2 over-time scores in the coming weeks. Nonetheless, it is instructive to examine the T1 overlap scores for the three countries, keeping in mind that the significance of a particular overlap score can only be determined relative to scores for other debates in that same country, then or subsequently.

Each of the three debates is shot through with a set of discussions about other issues, distinct from the cold war itself, and on which one might imagine there was a fairly high level of cross-party consensus (for the UK in 1947, the fact that both the Labour Party and the Liberal Party had a long tradition of opposing conscription; for Japan in 1951, the loss of territory and of markets; and for Germany in 1952, the issues of Germans outside of the Federal Republic's borders, as well as of soldiers from the war still held as POWs). In spite of this, the overall levels of agreement within each side of the debates never exceed 25%, with individual scores going as low as 7%. More significantly, and quite strikingly, the level of cross-side (pro to con) agreement within each country is notably lower than the level of within-side agreement, dipping down to as low as just over 1%.²⁷ Both within sides and across sides, consensus on national security issues had nowhere to go but up.

²⁷The Japanese scores are a bit higher than the UK and German ones, but this may be an artifact of the relatively small number of speeches in the Japanese debate (13) as compared with the other two (54 and 46, respectively).

However, should it turn out, as per our hypothesis, that overlap scores for T2 and T3 are indeed higher than for T1, this would not mean that the T1 scores are a fluke. As Table 1 shows, in all three countries, the opposition to the legislation was concentrated in the left side of the political spectrum. It was Labour members of parliament who led the fight in the UK against conscription, SPD and KPD members of the West German parliament who, along with some centrists faced off against Adenauer and the EDC, and Social Democrats, Communists, and other leftists who formed the principal opposition to the peace and, especially, the security, treaty in Japan. In each of these countries, the left arguably underwent important ideological changes in the ensuing decades, with members gradually accepting some elements of cold war thinking they had earlier, and quite vehemently, opposed. This involved, among other things, making their peace with the military establishment – precisely what our version of Lasswell’s garrison state argument would predict – and seeing its use against various types of dictators as at worst a necessary evil and at best a positive good. Our coding of debates at the end of the cold war, and in the post-9/11 era, points very much in this direction, both for the three countries in question and for others as well.

In this sense, the very preliminary results presented here are both methodologically and theoretically significant. Methodologically, it does appear that it is possible to have a sense of ideological consensus regarding national security by looking at overlaps in reasoning during parliamentary debates. Theoretically, if the trends evoked above are confirmed, it suggests that the garrison state is a cross-national phenomenon, that the war on terror is simply the latest phase in a much longer-term development, and that democracies may well be less robust – at least with regard to key issues of war and peace – than one might imagine.

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Table 1: Overlap scores, T1

	Within sides		Across sides	Composition	
	PRO	CON		PRO (R)	CON (L)
UK (54 speeches)	0.073	0.086	0.015	50%	83%
Germany (46 speeches)	0.088	0.103	0.018	93%	47%
Japan (13 speeches)	0.146	0.233	0.062	100%	83%

Appendix 1

Statements on waterboarding

1. Cheney (2008)

“The military has interrogated terrorists held at Guantanamo Bay. And in addition, a small number of terrorists, high-value targets, held overseas have gone through an interrogation program run by the CIA. It’s a tougher program, for tougher customers. These include Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of 9/11. He and others were questioned at a time when another attack on this country was believed to be imminent. It’s a good thing we had them in custody, and it’s a good thing we found out what they knew.

“The procedures of the CIA program are designed to be safe, and they are in full compliance with the nation’s laws and treaty obligations. They’ve been carefully reviewed by the Department of Justice, and very carefully monitored. The program is run by highly trained professionals who understand their obligations under the law. And the program has uncovered a wealth of information that has foiled attacks against the United States; information that has saved thousands of lives.

“The United States is a country that takes human rights seriously. We do not torture—it’s against our laws and against our values. We’re proud of our country and what it stands for. We expect all of those who serve America to conduct themselves with honor. And we enforce those rules. Some years ago, when abuses were committed at Abu Ghraib prison, a facility that had nothing to do with the CIA program, the abuses that came to light were, in fact, investigated, and those responsible were prosecuted. . . .”

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/cheney-defends-us-use-of-waterboarding/>

2. Bush (2010)

“CIA experts drew up a list of interrogation techniques. ... At my direction, Department of Justice and CIA lawyers conducted a careful legal review. The enhanced interrogation program complied with the Constitution and all applicable laws, including those that ban torture.

“There were two that I felt went too far, even if they were legal. I directed the CIA not to use them. Another technique was waterboarding, a process of simulated drowning. No doubt the procedure was tough, but medical experts assured the CIA that it did no lasting harm.”

Though Bush confirms that he knew the use of waterboarding would one day become public, and acknowledges that it is “sensitive and controversial,” he asserts that “the choice between security and values was real,” and expresses firm confidence in his decision. “Had I not authorized waterboarding on senior al Qaeda leaders, I would have had to accept a greater risk that the country would be attacked. In the wake of 9/11, that was a risk I was unwilling to take,” he writes.

Bush further declares that the new techniques proved effective, yielding information on al Qaeda’s structure and operations, and leading to the capture of Ramzi bin al Shibh, the logistical planner of the 9/11 attacks who was captured on the first anniversary of 9/11.

And if there were any lingering doubts or conflict about the use of waterboarding, Bush discloses that he received reassurance from an unlikely source: terror suspect Abu Zubaydah.

The former president writes, “His understanding of Islam was that he had to resist interrogation only up to a certain point. Waterboarding was the technique that allowed him to reach that threshold, fulfill his religious duty, and then cooperate.” Bush elaborates that Zubaydah gave him a direct instruction, ““You must do this for all the brothers.””

Intelligence gleaned from interrogations of Abu Zubaydah and other suspects led to the capture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Bush writes. During a raid on Mohammed’s compound, agents discovered more plans for terrorist attacks on U.S. soil.

Prompted by the discoveries, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet asked if he had permission to use enhanced interrogation techniques including waterboarding on Mohammed.

Bush exposes his inner thoughts on what led him to reach this decision: “I thought about my meeting with Danny Pearl’s widow, who was pregnant with his son when he was murdered. I thought about the 2,971 people stolen from their families by al Qaeda on 9/11. And I thought about my duty to protect my country from another act of terror.

‘Damn right,’ I said.”

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/11/05/bush.book/>

3. McCain (2016)

“Given the loose talk on the campaign trail about reviving waterboarding and other inhumane interrogation techniques, it is important to remember the facts: that these forms of torture not only failed their purpose to secure actionable intelligence to prevent further attacks on the U.S. and our allies, but compromised our values, stained our national honor, and did little practical good. It is also important to remember that our nation has tried, convicted, and executed foreign combatants who employed methods of torture, including waterboarding, against American prisoners of war. As I have said before, our nation should never have employed such practices in the past, and we should never permit them in the future.

“There is broad, bipartisan agreement on this fundamental question. Last year, the United States Senate passed in an overwhelming vote of 91–3 the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, legislation that took a historic step forward to ban torture once and for all by limiting U.S. Government interrogation techniques to those in the Army Field Manual. The Manual embodies the values Americans have embraced for generations—preserving the ability of our interrogators to extract critical intelligence from our adversaries while recognizing that torture and cruel treatment are ineffective interrogation methods. Some of the nation’s most respected leaders from the U.S. military, CIA, FBI, as well as faith communities and human rights organizations, have expressed their support for this legislation.

“As Americans of conscience we must remember that in the war on terrorism, we are fighting not only to defend our security, but for an idea that all men are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights. How much safer the world would be if all nations believed the same. How much more dangerous it can become when we forget it ourselves even momentarily, as we learned in the aftermath of Abu Ghraib. Our nation needs a Commander-in-Chief who will make clear to

those that fight on our behalf that they are defending this sacred ideal, and that sacrificing our respect for human dignity will make it harder, not easier, to prevail in this war.”

<http://www.mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=6044CE90-20F1-4823-A126-C03D5F770565>

4. Clinton (2014)

“Today we can say again in a loud and clear voice, the United States should never condone or practice torture anywhere in the world,” Clinton said.

The former secretary of state, accepting an award from the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, acknowledged that Americans are frustrated by the country’s “division and polarization” that often seems to block progress.

“That should be absolutely clear as a matter of both policy and law, including our international treaty obligations, and if that requires new legislation, then Congress should work with President Obama to quickly enact it and it shouldn’t be an issue of partisan politics,” Clinton said of eliminating the use of torture techniques.

“America is at our best when our actions match our values,” she said.

Clinton said she was “proud” to be part of the Obama administration noting brutal interrogation tactics such as waterboarding were banned with a 2009 executive order.

“Yes, the threat of terrorism is real and urgent, scores of children were just murdered in Pakistan, beheadings in the Middle East, a siege in Sydney, these tragedies not only break hearts but should steel our resolve and underscore that our values are what set us apart from our adversaries,” Clinton said.

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/hillary-clinton-speaks-us-torture/story?id=27654296>

5. Trump (2015)

“Would I approve waterboarding? You bet your ass I would—in a heartbeat,” Trump said to loud cheers during a rally at a convention center here Monday night that attracted thousands. “And I would approve more than that. Don’t kid yourself, folks. It works, okay? It works. Only a stupid person would say it doesn’t work.”

Trump said such techniques are needed to confront terrorists who “chop off our young people’s heads” and “build these iron cages, and they’ll put 20 people in them and they drop them in the ocean for 15 minutes and pull them up 15 minutes later.”

“It works,” Trump said over and over again. “Believe me, it works. And you know what? If it doesn’t work, they deserve it anyway, for what they’re doing. It works.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2015/11/23/donald-trump-on-waterboarding-if-it-doesnt-work-they-deserve-it-anyway/>

Appendix 2

Reasoning chains for waterboarding

Claim: Blanket prohibition on waterboarding

Reasons

- 01 Waterboarding is good
- 02 Prisoners talk
- 03 Waterboarding is not torture
- 04 Waterboarding is safe
- 05 Prisoners deserve to be waterboarded
- 06 Waterboarding is torture
- 07 Waterboarding is bad
- 08 Prisoners lie
- 09 Waterboarding stains our reputation
- 10 Waterboarding is contrary to our values
- 11 US should never condone waterboarding
- 12 US follows international law

Reasoning chains

Cheney

- O-1-2
- O-3-4

Bush

- O-1-2
- O-3-4

McCain

- S-7-8
- S-9-10

Clinton

S-11-12

S-9-10

Trump

O-1-2

O-5-6