

# Elite Consensus and the Diminution of Parliamentary Debate on Security Agencies: Findings from the Garrison State Project\*

David Sylvan<sup>†</sup>   Ashley Thornton<sup>‡</sup>   Juliette Ganne<sup>§</sup>   Laura Schenker<sup>¶</sup>

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<sup>†</sup>Department of International Relations / Political Science, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland. Email: david.sylvan@graduateinstitute.ch

<sup>‡</sup>Garrison State Project, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland. Email: ashley.thornton@graduateinstitute.ch

<sup>§</sup>Garrison State Project, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland. Email: juliette.ganne@graduateinstitute.ch

<sup>¶</sup>Garrison State Project, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland. Email: laura.schenker@graduateinstitute.ch

## **Abstract**

Shortly before the United States entered World War II, the political scientist Harold Lasswell argued in his article “The Garrison State” that structural tendencies would lead “specialists on violence” to play an ever greater role in the political life of democracies, with the ultimate risk of having large swaths of collective activities dominated by those specialists and not accountable to the public. Updated and put differently, fear of threats from foreign militaries, or terrorists, or their presumed domestic collaborators, when combined with organizational inertia on the part of agencies created to counter those threats, conduce to render the activities and size of those agencies increasingly unquestioned by legislators: there will be significant decline in oversight and even parliamentary discussion of security agencies. For the last four years, the Garrison State Project has been generating data and testing hypotheses about this trend; the findings suggest that Lasswell was indeed correct and that since the dawn of the cold war, parliaments in all democracies, regardless of size, colonial past, or alliance membership, have increasingly tended to restrict debate (what is talked about, how much talk there is at all) when it comes to the size and role of security-related agencies. The result is that in every country, security issues are in the process of becoming democratic no-go zones.

## Introduction

In the six 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 U.S. Congress overwhelmingly and was signed immediately into law.<sup>1</sup> In France, a bill expanding surveillance powers was approved a good four 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 was, around that time, either already enacted or in the process of being approved by the parliaments of other countries, with even the Swiss doing the same.<sup>2</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>The 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/>

<sup>2</sup>For 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 surveil-

sum, while Snowden's documents may well have sparked a focus on surveillance, they did not lead to significant restrictions on the agencies engaging in those activities more broadly but 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 NSA surveillance to myriad forms of security-related activities. Take for

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lance: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/05/france-passes-new-surveillance-law-in-wake-of-charlie-hebdo-attack> and <http://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/crisis/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](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>; that and other legislation was passed the following year. 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>.

<sup>3</sup>A good summary of the situation as of 2013 is a roundup piece (updated February 2018) 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>.

example the issue of drone strikes by the U.S. against targets in Pakistan and Yemen. These strikes, which became far more frequent under the Obama Administration than its predecessor, were widely condemned, so much so that five 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.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, in spite of the strong European antipathy to Donald Trump, his administration's continuation of drone strikes received no pushback (the more widely condemned 2017 missile strike on Syria was in fact supported by European leaders<sup>5</sup>), with occasional explicit coordination continuing (as in the 2018 strikes on Syria, or as in anti-ISIL bombing operations in both Iraq and Syria). Even the significant kerfuffle over the deaths of U.S. soldiers in Niger did not end U.S. operations there, nor continued coordination in the region with France and various African partners.

The short-lived controversies over surveillance, drone strikes, and other operations suggest two things: that security-related activities of this sort have become 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, to the extent that political debate about, or even parliamentary oversight of, the activities has significantly declined. Indeed, there is a close connection between these two points since it is the support of legislative (and other) 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 since the start of the century (Sgueo 2015), with very little political opposition, and even earlier domestic security agency scandals such as

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<sup>4</sup>See: <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>; and now <https://www.aicgs.org/2019/04/the-fog-of-drone-war-lessons-from-the-u-s-and-european-armed-drone-policy/>.

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

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 to the point where it has significantly weakened the scope of public debate both inside (and, by implication, outside) the legislature. This claim is the starting point for this paper and the multi-year research project designed to assess that claim, with a part of that assessment presented below.

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 could be seen as having gone through 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, particularly via 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. Put differently, the countervailing tendencies which, in earlier eras, helped to roll back the size and scope of security agencies in democratic countries, seem to have been weakened. This may well both represent, and result in, a weakening of democracy itself.

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 involve an assessment of that claim, specifically by using speeches in parliamentary debates as indicators of elite consensus. Speeches are arguments of various sorts, and we code those speeches in order to abduce those arguments and analyze the latter to measure consensus. We then present over-time data about trends in consensus for six countries and discuss their significance. The project is not yet finished – we will have complete results in November – but already the evidence points strongly in support of

the claim about consensus. The paper concludes with more general implications for the persistence of republican democracy.

## 1 National security and the garrison state

The fraught relationship between armies and republics is an evergreen of political theory, extending from Cicero and Machiavelli to Madison and Marx. However, those arguments had to do with the closing or at least intimidation of legislatures, as well as the bankrupting of public accounts through military spending. The idea that there would be a plethora of state agencies, each charged with assuring security, and that legislators would tacitly or explicitly acquiesce in the creation, continued funding, and expansion of the activity of, those agencies, is a far more recent concern, one which had to wait until the proliferation of both parliaments with ostensible control over security-related spending and of security-related agencies themselves. Arguably, formal parliamentary power over security-related agencies only became prevalent across states after World War I; and the runup to that war, as well as its aftermath, is the era in which numerous security-related agencies were either created or reorganized.

Fittingly, the oldest scholarly literature arguing that there is likely to be a long-term trend toward significant expansion of state capabilities connected with national security<sup>6</sup> dates back to the 1930s, i.e., to the “low, dishonest decade” in which legislative elites began to find themselves bypassed by (or in fact to acquiesce in) the aggrandizement of security-related agencies. We have in mind here the work of the political scientist Harold Lasswell about the “garrison state” (Lasswell 1937, 1941, 1950, 1962; earlier revivals are, e.g., Aron 1979; Fitch 1985; recent revivals include Engel 2011; Morgan 2004; Friedberg 2000), work which began with an analysis of the transformation of Japan from a parliamentary democracy into a military-dominated state. However, Lasswell’s key move was to recognize that both the factors conducing to the garrison state and the nature of that state were potentially endemic to any parliamentary democracy, a point he presciently made in his 1941 article.

Lasswell’s original focus, and that of most scholars who used his ideas, was on a structural

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<sup>6</sup>See 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.

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, even Lasswell’s own work, makes the exact claim as 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 inside parliament or in the public sphere generally; 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 the latter situations, entire realms of policy making are largely uncontested; whether this is outbalanced sufficiently by contestation in other domains for the polities 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 of attack 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).<sup>8</sup> 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) and can be seen clearly, for example, in the French post-Bataclan debates mentioned above. Indeed, fear interacts with the organizational factor discussed below, so that legislators, trying desperately to show that they can meet the threat, shower statutory authority and financial resources on existing security-related agencies, granting most of the items on the latter’s wish lists.

Along the lines of this last point, but much more generally, 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).<sup>9</sup> Another example,

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<sup>7</sup>There are also secondary factors; see ([Sylvan and Thornton 2016b](#)) for a discussion and the implications for country selection.

<sup>8</sup>Katznelson, and Schurmann before him ([Schurmann 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).

<sup>9</sup>Budgetary data from: <https://fas.org/irp/budget/>. As for Bush’s 17 September 2001 “finding” on interrogation, one author ([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-edness” is the way in which the current Liberal government in Canada, though opposed to drone strikes, nonetheless did not elimi-

mentioned below, is that of France in 1989: after several years of Gorbachev's rule, the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and increasingly cooperative ties with the United States, the United Kingdom, and other western countries, the Rocard government still proposed a significant increase in military spending. Even the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the middle of the French debate, did not change the government's view on the necessity of modernizing the country's nuclear deterrent as a counter to the Soviet Union. Thus, even in the absence of an immediate threat, security-related agencies are unlikely to be on the chopping block or scrutinized closely: incremental budgeting, prudential reasoning, and long-term contact between agency officials and legislative elites, keep spending from being cut drastically and activities from being investigated critically.

## **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," SOP-style capabilities within those organizations (Sylvan and Majeski 2009). By contrast, countries in which specialists on violence already dominate politics have tended in general to be significantly less sensitive to fear of attack (there are, of course, some notable exceptions, particularly in Latin America) – fear of losing power is another matter – and, because of resource constraints

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nate the country's air force from a precision weapons capability in the drones it was 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).

(again, there are several exceptions) 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. Unfortunately, there is no direct way of systematically evaluating that claim. Although data are certainly available on the size of countries' armed forces and on the money spent for those forces, analogous data for intelligence, counterintel-

ligence, 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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 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,

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<sup>10</sup>We 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.

<sup>11</sup>For 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’s work (Wetzling 2010) for predictable, but still striking, findings about the lack of oversight in Germany and the UK; and, more recently, Fowler’s study of (non)-oversight in the U.S. Congress (Fowler 2015).

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. Similarly, if elites have these views, then even discussion of alternative points of view is unlikely to occur, a Holmesian “Silver Blaze” moment<sup>12</sup> which we can see in operation in countries as different as Switzerland (the near-disappearance of calls to get rid of the political police) and Japan (the same, regarding the Self-Defense Forces).

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.<sup>13</sup> MPs may be, and often are, required, for reasons of party loyalty, to vote the party line on a particular piece of legislation, but this does not mean they necessarily buy into the official reasons (this can be seen clearly in our data, when MPs who are “whipped” to oppose a bill spend three-quarters of their speeches making arguments in its favor). Legislators from the same party may vote alike but reason differently, whereas those from opposing

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<sup>12</sup>“Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?” “To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.” “The dog did nothing in the night-time.” “That was the curious incident.”

<sup>13</sup>On 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 U.S. 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.

parties may vote differently but reason similarly. As our interest is in the consensus which arguably undergirds the national security state, we therefore have to look at reasoning, not at roll call votes.

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 (who were all anti-imperialists, some from the left and others from the Southern Democratic right) 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 urban Democrats and small-town Republicans 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 the South Vietnamese government 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.<sup>14</sup> This is

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<sup>14</sup>The 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, constabulary training by the Marines, 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 earlier arguments by one of us (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).

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.

Similar stories can be told about other countries being studied in our research project. Consider only the changes that took place from the early days of the cold war until its end (i.e., not even thinking about concerns over terrorism post-9/11). At the time of the debate in 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 both the peace treaty and the security treaty with the United States (1951) and the debate in 1990 over Japanese involvement in the Gulf War: a significant portion of the left had been defanged, in a sense. The same can be said of the United Kingdom from the time of the reestablishment of conscription (1947; analyzed below) to the debate about the launching of the Gulf War (1991); of France between the first debate over the European Defense Community (1952, a short time after the German debate) and the above-mentioned debate over the military budget in 1989, just before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall; of New Zealand from the 1951 debate over the red-baiting quashing of the dock workers' strike at the height of the Korean War to the 1987 debate over banning nuclear armed- and powered-ships from New Zealand ports; and of Switzerland between the 1947 debate over the purchase of jet fighters from the UK and the 1990 debate over large-scale spying on citizens by the federal police. 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, particularly those bearing on democracy. One such issue is particularly worth highlighting, having to do with the relation between war and democracy. The exten-

sive 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 classified<sup>15</sup> – 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 event 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, the originator of the concept ([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 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 the reasoning (or ad hominem arguments, or smears) used by the speakers. Below we will discuss our methodology of coding 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 en-

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<sup>15</sup>“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/>).



gaging 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. This is one of the reasons why legislators are careful about what they say, both within parliament and without: certain comments can make their career, or end it. For them, at least, talk is not cheap.

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 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, or at least concedes to, 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.

Note that in using the word consensus, we are not implying that legislators necessarily agree on which way to vote for a particular piece of legislation. For example, in New Zealand, the National Party government proposed legislation in 2013, just two months after the first Snowden revelations, to expand the powers of the Government Communication Security Bureau (GCSB), one of the country's two main intelligence agencies. Labour and other opposition parties fiercely opposed the bill on numerous grounds; but both sides agreed that intelligence agencies were absolutely vital for the country's security and that a modicum of oversight was needed. Similarly, the French military budget debate of 1989 discussed above was marked by considerable acrimony, with conservative opponents justifying their opposition on procedural and preparedness grounds. Socialist speakers, with noticeable bitterness, recalled that two years earlier, they had voted for a very similar bill put forward by the conservatives when they controlled parliament and accused the conservatives of playing politics. However, both sides agreed on a broad range of issues, from their suspicion of Gorbachev's changes to the need for France to maintain a broad range of forces, including nuclear weapons. It is this agreement that to us signals consensus, a signal made all the stronger by the occasional swipes of both sides at the communists. Politicians can and do agree on how the world works without voting the same way, and this has important consequences for ignoring contrary views, limiting the time or subjects of debate, or eschewing oversight.

Nor does the word consensus imply that legislators are persuaded by each other's speeches or that they make speeches with such persuasion in mind. Quite the contrary: legislators know before they start speaking who is likely to vote on which side and their speeches are not aimed

at changing opponents' minds (lukewarm proponents may be another question, though not from formal speeches). Instead, floor speeches have other audiences in mind: constituents, lobbyists, party leaders, and, not least, the speakers themselves (we have continually been struck by the deep and abiding antipathy some legislators show for others. Many MPs are genuinely joyful at verbally eviscerating their opponents, all the more so as they may have loathed each other since their years at university, or even secondary school). One can despise one's political adversaries and yet reason the same way.

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.<sup>16</sup> A *reason* is a point made in support of a claim. When a reason X supports a claim directly, we can stylize the argument as "vote for the bill because of X"; when a reason Y supports a claim indirectly, we can stylize the argument as, for reason Y, "vote for the bill because of X, and X is the case because of Y." In our methodology for coding debates, every speech in our database has at least one reason and in the vast majority of cases, a number of reasons; each of those reasons directly supports the claim and many of them also support each other and thereby indirectly support the claim.<sup>17</sup> Of course, a reason that indirectly supports a claim can itself be supported by one or more other reasons, and thus we define a *reasoning chain* as a claim supported directly by a reason which in turn is supported by at least one additional reason and, recursively, by any other reasons in support of that latter. At the minimum, then, reasoning chains are composed of three connected elements: a claim, a directly supporting reason, and an indirectly supporting one; but if the latter is in turn supported by one or more additional reasons, the reasoning chain may be composed of four, five, or more connected elements, although these longer possibilities are relatively rare. As we will discuss below, two chains in a speech may start out with the same two reasons, then, further down, as it were, di-

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<sup>16</sup>As 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 unless it sparks a major debate on its own.

<sup>17</sup>This constraint – that every reason directly support the claim – enormously simplifies coders' task, as it obviates the need for them to decide if a given reason is only used indirectly.

verge into different additional supporting reasons. Such *compound* chains may, for purposes of pairwise similarity assessment, be treated as composed of multiple individual chains.<sup>18</sup> However, some reasons are not part of chains: quite often, speakers put forward a reason unsupported by another reason 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.<sup>19</sup>

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 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 to the debate.

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,

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<sup>18</sup>Chains 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 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).

<sup>19</sup>Terminological 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 (Hornikx and Ulrike 2012); it is definitely not as differentiated in its notion of “support” as Toulmin’s canonical model (Toulmin 1958) or as limited to direct responses as Rescher’s notion of a back and forth between two different persons (Rescher 1978).

via the type of connection between its elements (for example, the reasons in one chain may be connected as putative consequences, whereas in another chain, they may be connected as a series of claimed motivations for bad behavior), even if the individual reasons may appear ludicrous to many observers.

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 between 2008 and 2016, and displayed in Appendix 1.<sup>20</sup> 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 (S meaning support the claim and O oppose it); 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.

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.

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<sup>20</sup>Note 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>.

## 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 little if the reasons being abduced are too general: vote for the resolution because unspecified good things will happen or because we want to avoid other unspecified bad things. Just as obviously, one should avoid abducting 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." Neither the claim about what Labour used to believe nor the reference to Churchill are 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 fewer existing ones (though there

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<sup>21</sup>As we will see below, some semantic 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. A further implication of this point is that standard “bag of words” approaches to text analysis will themselves be problematic, since a particular combination of words scattered throughout a speech may well mean something different politically in different paragraphs, whereas the same political point may be conveyed by different combinations of words.

are some flagrant exceptions to this, typically involving marginal or independent legislators; see above).

## **4.2 General considerations: speeches and reasons**

Our methodology, and the bulk of the project's activity, involves taking floor speeches made within legislative debates (typically, a bill or a motion put forward and on which a vote is intended to occur; see below for a list) and coding them for reasons. By floor speeches, we mean statements, ranging from a few sentences to a lengthy oration, made by speakers in a session of the parliamentary house as a whole (i.e., not in committee hearings, nor outside of parliament), and bearing (ostensibly) on the legislation under consideration.

We distinguish between speeches and interruptions. In general, the latter are not considered to be speeches, which is not to say that they are uncommon or well-ordered. Speakers in parliaments all over the world are often interrupted by other MPs, and when a speaker is being particularly outrageous or when s/he is disliked by the other side of the aisle, it is not rare to hear shouting. Of course, supporters can also express their encouragement. Those interruptions if they last a few sentences are not considered and coded as proper speeches. However, coders use them to make sense of the overall atmosphere and to understand relationships among political parties. Longer and properly acknowledged interruptions, for example when an interruptor asks for a rectification or answers the speaker's question, are coded separately under the interruptor's name.

Depending on a given parliament's procedural rules, some speakers, most often the prime minister, cabinet members, or rapporteurs, take the floor many times. For our analysis, multiple speeches uttered by the same speaker in one session (i.e., the morning of a given day) are merged into one to avoid multiplying the number of speeches on one side and therefore overcounting the supporters of the bill compared to the opponents. For the results presented in this paper, the 18 national security debates (6 countries, 3 time periods) involved a total of 719 separate coded speeches.

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 likely the justification as well.<sup>22</sup> 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 repeats "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 (cf. the above discussion on "top-down" coding). 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.")

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<sup>22</sup>Evidence for this is abundant, from characterizations of speakers by other speakers (then, or afterward) to press accounts of speeches.

## 4.3 Coding

Coding speeches involves a number of preliminary steps, which we discuss elsewhere (Sylvan and Thornton 2016a). Briefly, we pre-process debates into a collection of pro and anti speeches, then paraphrase each speech, sentence by sentence, and summarize the paraphrases (see Appendix 3 for an example); implicit meanings are captured through interpolated sentences or phrases in square brackets. In each of these steps, as well as in the actual coding (see below), validity and reliability checks are built into the process. The person who did the paraphrasing and summarizing goes over his/her work with another team member, who makes suggestions for changes in order to capture the pragmatics of the paragraphs. In addition, during subsequent multi-person group meetings, in which usually only summaries, reasons, and chains are presented, it is not uncommon for a particular reason, or chain, or bracketed phrase, to trigger a discussion of the paraphrasing or summarization.

### 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.

Some MPs, for various reasons, decide to abstain or not vote at the end of the debate. In these cases, or if the bill is pulled before a vote (that happened in the case of Japan at the time of the first Gulf War), the overall tenor of the speech is used to determine the position of the speaker, either voting for or against the bill. If some paragraphs go against this general tone, or if the paragraphs are frankly irrelevant to the legislation at hand (for example, if in the middle of a speech about national security, an MP starts complaining about the shortage of housing in his district), we code them as not applicable (NA).

There is no limit to the number of reasons for a given paragraph. Some paragraphs will

have a single reason, others as many as eight or nine; but most paragraphs will be coded with between two and five reasons. In some cases, the speaker is definitely in “laundry list” mode, checking off items that may not be related to each other (see below on chains), whereas in other cases, the arguments are interlocked. To an astonishing degree, we found that speakers regularly repeated themselves, often putting forward the same reasons, and in some cases, using the same phrasing, paragraph after paragraph.

It is worth noting that certain reasons are, in effect, concessions to the other side. Although speakers can and do use the same arguments as their opponents, they also gesture toward them by the use of phrases that acknowledge the latter’s arguments. Two examples of these “even though” reasons come from the French 1952 debate over the EDC: one critic of the government motion, defending himself from the charge of ignoring the French people’s desire for peace, argued that even though they wanted peace, French independence should not be traded for peace and security in Europe; another speaker, also from the right, argued that even though the Soviet Union was a threat, that in itself was not a reason to accept German supremacy. Another example comes from the above-mentioned New Zealand debate on the GCSB: the Justice Minister argued that MPs should vote for the bill because the country’s intelligence agencies were vital for national security. Opponents, whether from the left or the right, tacitly conceded this point while still arguing that the agency’s wings needed to be clipped, in one case using “even though” explicitly and in another the concessional phrase “of course.”

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 all but one of the debates we have coded, there have been between 250 and 400 reasons (the one exception is France in 1952, with 529 reasons); the total for the 18 debates analyzed below is 4530. For retrieval and simplicity purposes, reasons are assigned a number and arranged in the master list both numerically and, 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 U.S. 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 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. Similar reasons pop up again in the late cold war debates, often cast as the Soviet Union being powerful and ill-intentioned. After 9/11, of course, reasons about terrorism were frequently advanced.

Other reasons are more country-specific, such as those about reputation. French MPs, for example, are often concerned about the greatness of France and a corollary fear of looking weak abroad; New Zealand MPs typically use reasons about being at the vanguard of anti-nuclear policies or being an innovator in oversight of intelligence agencies. In Japan, a recurring theme is the gaining, maintenance, or loss of honorable status in international society (this is one reason why opposition parties' castigation of the government as a U.S. puppet apparently sting badly enough to provoke ministers into repeated angry denials).

It should also be noted that there are other evergreens across most, if not all, parliaments. Governments are regularly accused of failing to consult with opposition parties, of rushing through legislation, of lying and/or incompetence, of blatantly switching their position over time, and of maneuvering with an eye to the next elections. This last argument is taken up with gusto by the government and applied to its opponents; the government also typically makes a point of claiming both that the opposition is extreme and that some of its members either side with the government or know in their hearts that it is correct.

#### **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 distinct 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 situation A causally leads to situation B, then the order of 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.

There is no need for a given paragraph's reasons to be linked as chains. Some speakers simply tick off points in a list-like (or even robotic) fashion, whereas others construct intricate, multi-part arguments. Nor is there a maximum length for chains: some reasons are concatenated in lengthy A because of B and B because of C and C because of D chains, whereas others are in pairs or triplets. We do employ a certain kind of chain "algebra": if A because of B and B because of C, then those chains should be rewritten as a triple: A because of B because of C. (However, if A because of B and A because of C, then the chains have to stay separate.)

### **4.3.3 Validity and reliability**

As mentioned above, validity and reliability checks are built into every step of the coding process. Reasons and chains are reviewed twice among coders, once when they are first coded, and then again in an "amalgamation" process. In the first stage of the process, coders present the summaries, reasons, and chains of each paragraph in consecutive speeches, drawing particular attention to grey areas and uncertain coding. Team members focus on the validity of reasons by discussing and arguing over the possibility of adding particular reasons to certain paragraphs, or removing other reasons, or splitting reasons into component parts, or rewording reasons. Votes are not taken; instead, consensus is sought. On occasion, the coder is asked to display the paraphrase, or even the original text; and, from time to time, the coder may be asked to consult secondary sources, such as contemporaneous newspaper articles, to see whether a particular reason validly captures one of the points the speaker is considered to have been making.

After the coding for every paragraph of every speech has been checked (this usually takes numerous meetings) for validity, a second review process occurs, in which reasons are discussed for possible amalgamation (for example, one reason folded into another, a third reason eliminated on grounds of being irrelevant or tangential, a fourth reason rewritten to clarify its similarity or difference with a fifth reason). This provides an additional validity check, but it also serves as a way of maintaining reliability, since by looking synoptically, at the way a given reason was used over all speeches, we can see if the de facto coding rules changed over the course of the multi-week coding process and in such instances, correct them. (In fact, each of

the coders experienced some degree of “drift,” with some new reasons, applicable to earlier speeches, being added only in later speeches.)

Note that this set of procedures provides a stringent check on both validity and reliability in a way not normally associated with open-ended coding of text. While we cannot say, for example, that two coders, starting with the same text, would arrive at the same exact list of reasons and chains, we can say that intra-debate reliability is high and that the codes validly indicate the ways, both overt and tacit, in which speakers justify their votes for or against the legislation. Once the data are posted online, future users will be able to take the reasons and chains and use them with a high degree of confidence.

One final point, on tractability. Although coding of the sort carried out in this project is designed to capture the range of arguments that members of parliament use, and although those arguments are usually highly political, individual coders need not have a background in either the politics of the country concerned or political science. What coders do need, however, is both time and group interactions: the former in order to grasp specialized terminology and spot allusions to (supposed) facts and/or other speakers; the latter to be forced to explain coding rationales and to learn from what other coders have done. Absent these conditions, the inferential abilities of human coders are arguably attenuated.

## **5 Computing consensus: agreement between arguments**

### **5.1 Criteria**

Once speeches have been coded as arguments, we can compare those arguments to see just how much agreement there is between them and in that way ascertain whether, over time, a particular country displays growth in the extent of agreement for national security debates. We measure agreement in two ways, one using overlaps in individual reasons, the other using concessions.

For overlaps, we aggregate over agreement in pairs of speeches 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 reasoning is really the same. Thus, we need to capture both types of overlap.

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 165-030-174, and for now we ignore these partial matches<sup>23</sup>), then normalize by the maximum possible number of reasons and chains which could match in that pair of speeches. For example, if for a pair of speeches A and B, A puts forward individual reasons 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, along with reasoning chains 1-2, 1-5, and 2-3-4; and B puts forward individual reasons 1, 2, 4, and 6, along with reasoning chains 1-2, 4-6, and 1-2-4, then there are three individual reason matches (1, 2, and 4) and one precise chain match (1-2), for a total of 4 matches. We divide this by the maximum possible number of reasons and chains which could match in this pair of speeches: in this case, 11 (6 individual reason matches plus 5 chains), to give an overlap score of  $4/11 = 0.364$ . We then take the overlap score for every pair of speeches and average those scores in three ways: across all pairs of speeches in favor of the legislation (within-side PRO), across all pairs of speeches against the legislation (within-side CON), and across all pairs of speeches where one speech was in favor of the legislation and the other against it (across-side). The first and third of 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.<sup>24</sup>

On a technical note, the scores we calculated using the overlap method were for pairs of speeches and of chains, with chains being given the same weight as individual reasons. We tried out 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 dis-

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<sup>23</sup>In coming months, we will look into calculating matches between between portions of chains, e.g., between the 3-4 in 1-2-3-4 and 3-4-5-6.

<sup>24</sup>As discussed above, within-side PRO agreement signals consensus; within-side CON, though, only does so if the bill or motion in question is put forward by the opposition (this happens in two cases). Otherwise, the fact that the opposition is or is not cohesive internally with regard to pairs of individual reasons tells us nothing about a consensus regarding national security.

played in Table 1 and discussed below are for unweighted pairs.

The concession method, although based as well on our coding of reasons, is somewhat different. In each debate, we look for concessions, e.g., reasons prefaced by phrases conceding what the speaker considers a reasonable argument on the other side: *even though X*, still Y; *in spite of X* being true, the bill isn't the way to go about it; *notwithstanding X*, Y has problems of its own.<sup>25</sup> We also look for reasons that are, in effect, assurances to the other side: these are, as it were, defenses that say, "good point, but we've already thought about it." Neither type of these concessive reasons can easily be matched to specific reasons put forward by the other side, in no small part because they are made in anticipation of the other side's arguments, or as a frank gesture to those on the other side. Instead, we simply count them: the number of separate concessive reasons put forward by both sides and the number of speeches, for each side, in which one or more of those concessive reasons is put forward. In each case, we normalize by the total number of separate reasons, or, for each side, the total number of speeches.<sup>26</sup>

One final note. For both the overlap method and the concession method, in any given speech, we calculated on the basis of only reasons (and thus of chains in which they were used) that had been used more than once in that speech. The rationale here is simple: if a given reason is used by a particular speaker in only one paragraph in that speech, it is hard to say if the reason is really salient for the speaker. In later work, we will explore what difference, if any, it makes to include such reasons.

## 5.2 Expectations

The Lasswellian idea behind this project is that the factors conducive to the development of the garrison state should manifest as a long-term increase in consensus on national security issues, compared with other issues. However, what this means for the specific numbers from T1 to T2, as well as from T2 to T3, is not clear. Here we would make several observations. In the early days of the cold war, opposition to the national security state was concentrated

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<sup>25</sup>A few of the reasons, coded relatively early in the project, were not worded with one of these phrases and had to be identified by reading the relevant summary paragraphs.

<sup>26</sup>It would also be possible to calculate a third measure of concession: the number of times a concessive reason is used, whether by itself or also with a chain, in a given speech, normalizing by the total number of reasons and chains in that speech, and calculating average scores for each side.



in traditional leftist parties in certain countries, and in particular right-wing parties in other countries. With shifts in both sets of parties, we should expect an increase in overlaps between pro and con. In the long run, that shift should lead to stronger pro-pro overlaps, perhaps with T2 teething pains; but, as indicated above, the same need not apply to con-con overlaps, since much depends on whether new political forces arise on the con side.

Regarding the concession method, we would expect that there should be increases in concessions on both sides: on the one hand, if parties shift to supporting the national security state, MPs in T2, at least, are likely to gesture toward their former comrades (hence an increase in concession scores on the pro side); on the other hand, as opposition parties become more comfortable with the national security state, those who find it necessary to continue voting against national security legislation will want to signal their agreement on core issues, and thus we should also expect an increase in concession scores on the con side, at least around the era at which the shift is occurring.

### 5.3 Intermediate results

For this paper, we report on reasoning agreement in national security-related debates in three time periods (T1: early cold war, T2: late cold war, and T3: post-9/11) in six countries: Germany, the UK, France, Japan, New Zealand, and Switzerland (U.S. debates are currently being coded).<sup>27</sup> Later this autumn, when coding is finished, we will have both a seventh country – the United States – and contrasting data (non-national security foreign policy debates) for two time periods (T1 and T3) for three countries (France, Germany, and the UK). Note that this latter point means the results we present here are still partial, missing not only one country (the U.S.) but the contrasting cases; in spite of that, some extremely interesting patterns are appar-

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<sup>27</sup>See the reference in footnote 7 on country selection. Debates were chosen within a 5-year window for each time period on the basis of the number of speakers on each side, the range of the issues discussed, and the sense on both sides that important decisions were at stake. For most of the debates, we code only speeches in the lower house; in all the Japanese and in Switzerland T1, the smaller number of speeches led us to code speeches in the upper house as well. We coded exclusively floor speeches, exactly because of their posturing and acrimonious nature and thus as a way to test more severely our hypothesis (using committee speeches would have biased the results in favor of consensus, particularly because most of those speeches are short). It should be noted that while there are numerous speeches made about national security-related issues, relatively few of them are in the context of formal legislative debates; conversely, many of the latter are quite brief, in part because for some parliaments (e.g., New Zealand and Switzerland), there is not a strong tradition of parliament debating these issues. Hence, careful case selection – i.e., choosing the right debates – is essential. Note that we are not claiming the debates we analyze are representative or typical (although anecdotal evidence suggests that they capture key features of national security debates in those countries at those times), but rather that the debates are, because of their length and their acerbic tone, particularly stringent as tests of our hypothesis.

ent.

To start with the overlap method, an obvious point: what we might call the baseline level of overlap is clearly different from one debate, and indeed one side, to another. The maximum degree of overlap is the within-side score for Japan in 1952, a figure some 23 times higher than the lowest score, namely, across-sides for Switzerland in 2015. It is tempting to see this overlap as country-specific: consensus-seeking in Japan (but not Switzerland?) versus hammer-and-tongs parliamentary slanging in the UK, to recycle some fairly standard journalistic tropes. However, such an inference is unwarranted, in part because the frequency and nastiness of insults is fairly constant across countries (albeit constructed differently), but mostly because the real heterogeneity in types of overlap scores is not across-side but within-side. On the minimal-consensus side, we have the right- and left-wing opposition to Schröder's maneuvers over Afghanistan and terror in 2001, and the combination of Conservatives and right-wing Labourites supporting Major over the First Gulf War (so much for two-party polarization); on the maximal-consensus side, we have the Japanese left and independents opposing the 1952 treaties, and a similar coalition opposing the Swiss fighter jet purchase (RIP the supposed culture of consensus?).

These differences, however, should not obscure the even more obvious point that comes through in every single debate: the significant difference in overlap within sides versus across sides. In all but four cases (Germany T3, France T3, Japan T2, and Switzerland T2), the across-side overlap is never greater than half the size of the smaller of the two within-side scores; in most cases, the ratio is 4:1, if not more. This, as well as the point about within-side heterogeneity, suggests that our methodology is actually picking up subtleties about issue consensus or dissensus missed by roll call vote or party ID measures: MPs on the same side of an issue may not see the world the same way, just as those who vote differently may reason so similarly that they will agree to avoid certain oversight activities.

If we turn now to the over-time overlap results (color-coded in Table 1), we find mixed evidence in support of our hypothesized trend. Three of the six countries showed the expected T1-T2 shift for pro-con overlap, but only one country (Germany) for the expected T2-T3 shift. On the other hand, and somewhat along the political mechanism (shifts in leftist parties) discussed above, the pro-pro overlap, after declining in most countries from T1 to T2, showed a

significant increase in five of the six cases from T2 to T3.

However, the concession method results (color-coded in Table 2), present a picture much closer to the long-term trend we adapted as a hypothesis from Lasswell's argument. (This is not surprising, in light of the extremely stringent match requirements built into the overlap method.) In five of the six countries, there is a monotonic increase in concessions from T1 to T2 to T3, with only Germany, ironically, a partial outlier (there, concessions increase from T1 to T2 but then decline in T3, albeit to a level twice as high as T1). This result suggests that as time went on, legislators who voted on opposite sides on national security issues were increasingly likely to concede substantive points they identified with their opponents. (Of course, that shift does not mean that both left and right were equally likely to concede, much less do so at the same rate across countries.) Putting this result together with the pro-pro overlaps may well point to an outside-in gloss on major shifts in leftist parties from the late 1950s to the end of the cold war: they not only changed their doctrine on capitalism and the market, but in some cases, came to terms with many of the institutions of the national security state. Perhaps the iconic example of this, albeit in a country that is not part of our sample, is the figure of the former communist, Italian prime minister Massimo D'Alema, solemnly participating in NATO's 50th anniversary expansion of the alliance, against the backdrop of its Kosovo bombing campaign.

From the standpoint of the left (and to some degree the right, as in France, where both the Communists and the Gaullists opposed the EDC), the game was worth the candle. They had already backed the U.S. side during the cold war, and to be treated as serious parliamentary rapporteurs, potential ministers, and loyal members of working bodies meant that they could get their hands on the instruments of power and (so at least they thought) be immunized from future red-baiting electoral attacks. However, the price of those compromises was a serious erosion of democratic norms. This can be seen by the most casual glance at the range of issues debated from T1 to T2 to T3. In the first time period, everything was up for grabs, from how aggressive the Soviet Union was, how much former enemies could be trusted, and which problems to turn over to the UN, to labor relations, industrial ownership, and the role of the police and the military. By the second time period, debate had become both more technical and, at the same time, much more single-mindedly moralistic. Only in Switzerland is the left

still launching full-bore attacks on the national security state (and even then, while being very careful); elsewhere, Burke's "sophisters, economists, and calculators" were dominant in the left (even in the SPD, with Willy Brandt's anti-war arguments being hedged in by his party comrades).<sup>28</sup> By T3, the *aggiornamento* is largely complete, with debate revolving around matters of "balance" (say between privacy and protection from terrorism), ritualistic denunciations of dictators, opponents reduced to outbidding maneuvers, and the competence, much less the *raison d'être*, of various agencies completely off the table. The days when the Atlantic Alliance could be called into question (as in Germany T1), the constitutionality of the SDF contested (as in Japan T2), or, for that matter, the CIA held up as a potential Gestapo (in 1949: see [Johnson 1989](#)) are gone.

## 6 Conclusion

The results discussed above, though promising, are still incomplete. We are lacking several cases (particularly the contrastive ones), as well as additional methods for determining partial and weighted overlaps, and speech-centered concessions. Nonetheless, some interesting things can already be said theoretically, methodologically, and substantively.

Theoretically, what began as a measurement exercise to breathe life into an almost 80-year old social science classic turns out to have interesting possibilities as a way to bring together legislative politics, on the one hand, and the growth of security-related institutions and programs, on the other. While Lasswell duly sketched the way in which fear, and to a lesser degree organizational inertia, would conduce to the establishment and growth of the garrison state, he said little about the mechanisms by which this could come to pass. Our focus on the limitations to legislative debate suggest one proximate mechanism, namely shifts in professional politicians' behavior. In the coming months, we will try to connect those shifts explicitly to Lasswell's proposed explanations by content-analyzing the reasons put forward by MPs and seeing how, and how often, they refer to fear or to organizational inertia. Of course, that is not the end of the question, and one useful follow-up would be to track analogous shifts in the mass media.

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<sup>28</sup>Interestingly, in New Zealand, the right had to change its views on nuclear weapons, but to win that battle, the left had to proclaim, loudly and often, its attachment to ANZUS, the West, and the security services.

Methodologically, the approach we have used to analyze long-term trends, namely by looking systematically at legislative speeches, seems both tractable and capable of being generalized. The coding we have done is systematic and holds up in terms of both validity and reliability. If one wants to get at (often secret) program or policy data, this is a promising path. The obvious problem is that it is incredibly time-consuming. For the moment, we do not see an automated alternative: the pragmatic inferences our coders regularly make about why legislators are saying certain things are, as best we know, still not possible on a large scale. However, we are currently experimenting with machine learning methods, and it may be possible to use our data as input.

Substantively, the results point to a trend that is both striking and disturbing. What Lasswell talked about seems to be coming about, though, interestingly, not in the form of “specialists on violence” ruling directly (the U.S. may be a partial exception here). Rather, legislators seem to be questioning the activities of these specialists less and less, not only by acquiescing in secrecy and increasingly *pro forma* oversight, but above all by restricting the range of debate over security-related organizations and their activities. For representative democracy to work, legislators must be able to speak widely on a wide range of topics; barring that, the public is uninformed and elections decreasingly meaningful. In these days of concern over authoritarian populism and its grounding in civic intolerance, we might spare a thought for a complementary, distinctively Lasswellian, problem: the hollowing out of legislatures in democratic countries.

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Table 1: Overlap scores<sup>a</sup>

	Within sides		Across sides
	PRO	CON	
Germany T1	0.088	0.103	0.018
Germany T2	0.124	0.142	0.029
Germany T3	0.131	0.069	0.066
UK T1	0.073	0.086	0.015
UK T2	0.060	0.106	0.037
UK T3	0.120	0.052	0.018
France T1	0.129	0.084	0.031
France T2	0.117	0.118	0.032
France T3	0.065	0.111	0.024
Japan T1	0.146	0.233	0.062
Japan T2	0.095	0.196	0.043
Japan T3	0.268	0.211	0.043
New Zealand T1	0.132	0.124	0.014
New Zealand T2	0.100	0.105	0.020
New Zealand T3	0.132	0.124	0.014
Switzerland T1	0.107	0.215	0.039
Switzerland T2	0.028	0.031	0.020
Switzerland T3	0.096	0.165	0.010

<sup>a</sup> PRO positions: GT1, CDU govt, EDC; GT2, CDU govt, First Gulf War; GT3, SPD govt, Afghanistan/terror; UKT1, Labour govt, conscription; UKT2, Conservative govt, First Gulf War; UKT3, Conservative/LibDem govt, Syria bombing; FT1 Radical govt, EDC; FT2 Socialist govt, mil spending; FT3, REM govt, terrorism; JT1, Liberal govt, peace & security treaties; JT2, Liberal govt, First Gulf War; JT3, Liberal govt, Iraq; NZT1, Labour opp, no-confidence motion on dock strike; NZT2, Labour govt, nuclear arms/ships; NZT3, National govt, intelligence agencies; SwT1, Radical majority, purchase of fighter jets; SwT2, Socialist opp, domestic spying; SwT3, coalition govt, surveillance

Table 2: Concession scores<sup>a</sup>

	By speeches		All reasons
	PRO	CON	
Germany T1	0.037	0.158	0.011
Germany T2	0.143	0.625	0.067
Germany T3	0.067	0.286	0.026
UK T1	0.033	0.042	0.014
UK T2	0.085	0.231	0.019
UK T3	0.125	0.325	0.079
France T1	0.389	0.258	0.016
France T2	0.409	0.692	0.037
France T3	0.276	0.188	0.052
Japan T1	0.429	0.000	0.019
Japan T2	0.015	0.462	0.042
Japan T3	0.409	0.182	0.118
New Zealand T1	0.000	0.143	0.010
New Zealand T2	0.300	0.222	0.026
New Zealand T3	0.588	0.174	0.054
Switzerland T1	0.333	0.100	0.032
Switzerland T2	0.000	0.273	0.036
Switzerland T3	0.500	0.000	0.110

<sup>a</sup> PRO positions: GT1, CDU govt, EDC; GT2, CDU govt, First Gulf War; GT3, SPD govt, Afghanistan/terror; UKT1, Labour govt, conscription; UKT2, Conservative govt, First Gulf War; UKT3, Conservative/LibDem govt, Syria bombing; FT1 Radical govt, EDC; FT2 Socialist govt, mil spending; FT3, REM govt, terrorism; JT1, Liberal govt, peace & security treaties; JT2, Liberal govt, First Gulf War; JT3, Liberal govt, Iraq; NZT1, Labour opp, no-confidence motion on dock strike; NZT2, Labour govt, nuclear arms/ships; NZT3, National govt, intelligence agencies; SwT1, Radical majority, purchase of fighter jets; SwT2, Socialist opp, domestic spying; SwT3, coalition govt, surveillance

# 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

## Appendix 3

### Paraphrasing, summarizing, reasons, and reason chains

From the debate over the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Bill (1987)

Lead speech, David Lange (PM, Labour)

*Paraphrase* (sentence by sentence)

§1. I move, That this Bill be now read a second time. The Bill is the most serious measure of arms control ever enacted in New Zealand. It reflects the Government's determination to adopt measures of arms control that are real. It will be passed because nuclear weapons are the greatest threat to New Zealand's existence. The Government has a duty to the people to adopt every serious and responsible measure of arms control that is within its power.

*Summary*

§1. The Government is determined to adopt serious and substantial measures of arms control. The greatest threat to New Zealand's existence comes from nuclear weapons and the Government has a duty to the people to reduce that threat [That is the responsible thing to do.]

*Reasons*

Reason 1: The Government advances real – not symbolic – measures against nuclear weapons

Reason 2: Nuclear weapons are the greatest threat to NZ

Reason 4: The Government is acting responsibly

*Chains*

Chain: 4-1-2

*Paraphrase* (sentence by sentence)

§2. The Bill contributes to arms control by excluding nuclear weapons from New Zealand. It provides the legal basis for this policy. It enacts the provisions of the arms limitation and control treaty [the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which entered into force in 1970] that New Zealand signed, and includes the provisions of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty [1985]. It is part of New Zealand's continuing effort in the international process of disarmament and arms control.

*Summary*

§2. The Bill provides the legal basis to exclude nuclear weapons from New Zealand, which is a central measure of arms control. The Bill enacts the provisions of the NPT and the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty [later SPNFZ] and continues New Zealand's effort toward disarmament and arms control.

*Reasons*

Reason 5: The Bill provides the legal basis to exclude nuclear weapons from NZ

Reason 6: The Bill implements the SPNFZ and continues NZ's effort toward disarmament and arms control

*Chains*

None