

Spying on Friends and Foes: An Analysis of the President's Daily Brief

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June 26, 2022

Abstract: Why do allies spy on one another? In June 2013, Edward Snowden revealed several details about US intelligence collection practices, including the fact that the National Security Agency had tapped the phones of many European officials. Why would the US risk offending its allies to gather such information? Do alliance politics actually affect intelligence collection and reporting? In this article, I argue that they do. Introducing a novel dataset of the President's Daily Brief from 1961-1973, I demonstrate that alliance politics materially influence the content of intelligence reports. Records from the Defense Personnel and Security Research Center, which detail espionage committed by US citizens in the service of foreign governments, also highlight the degree to which alliances alter the nature of intelligence work. The results show that information on allies tends to be more positive, but also more negative, with a greater focus on economic; commercial; and political data.

Introduction

On December 16, 2020, Jonathan Pollard arrived in Israel after spending 30 years in prison for spying against the United States.¹ A former intelligence analyst for the Navy, the US convicted Pollard in 1985 and sentenced him to life in prison for espionage. While the Cold War certainly produced more than its fair share of spies, what makes the case against Pollard seemingly unique is that he was convicted of spying for a US ally. Indeed, Pollard said he turned over classified satellite photos and information about Soviet weaponry and support for Arab countries because “the American intelligence establishment collectively endangered Israel’s security by withholding crucial information.”² This raises an important question: why do allies spy on one another? What information is of such importance that a country is willing to endanger its relationship with a friend to gain? Do alliance politics actually change intelligence collection and reporting?

In this article, I seek to answer these questions. I introduce a novel dataset of the US President’s Daily Brief, the intelligence community’s premier product. After digitizing the daily reports from 1961-1973, I use text-as-data analysis techniques to measure the topic and tone of the intelligence on allied and adversarial countries. I show that information reported on allied nations tends to be much more positive in tone, however, it is also more negative. Additionally, nations friendly to the United States tend to have topics more related to political and economic developments (as opposed to military). Supplementing the quantitative analysis is a brief illustrative case study to explore the mechanisms by which alliance relationships change intelligence collection and reporting. I discuss records from the Defense Personnel and Security Research Center that outline espionage committed by US citizens in the service of foreign governments.

Theory

Alliance politics and intelligence gathering received a great deal of attention in 2013, when the documents leaked by Edward Snowden showed that the National Security Agency (NSA) had tapped the phones of many European officials, including Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel.³ However, most of the work tended to be normative, discussing the merits of whether or not the United States should be collecting intelligence on its allies. This trend included academic work, with Easley discussing what the NSA’s collection programs meant for trust and security cooperation between the US and its partners, along with commentaries from think tanks and popular presses.⁴ The normative work can usefully be split into two different categories: those who think the United States was justified in spying on allies and those who argue that the United States needs to institute reforms to prevent such espionage in the future.

Among the former include AEI fellow Elisabeth Braw, who argues that “countries have a justified interest in informing themselves about the goings-on and prospective developments around the world, including in friendly countries—because those countries may have different priorities regarding what’s

¹ Scott Neuman and Daniel Estrin, “Jonathan Pollard, Cold War Spy Who Spent 30 Years in US Prison, Arrives in Israel,” *NPR*, December 30, 2020.

² As quoted in Neuman and Estrin.

³ For example: Pierre-Paul Bermingham, “Danish Secret Service Helped NSA Spy on Merkel, EU Officials: Report,” *Politico*, May 31, 2021.

⁴ Eric-Leif Easley, “Spying on Allies,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 56, no. 4 (2014): 141–56.

important.”⁵ Mark Stout similarly contends that spying on allies is justified because interests diverge, and there is the chance to gain intelligence on third parties.⁶ About the news that the NSA tapped the phones of European leaders, Christopher J. Murphy says, “As a piece of news, this surely sits alongside the Pope’s status as a Catholic. What else would we expect a national intelligence gathering agency to do? The fundamental purpose of such organizations is to seek out national advantage, in whatever field—whether it is political, economic, military, or otherwise.”⁷ Also in this camp is *Washington Post* journalist Max Fisher, who states, “The international system is, and always has been, inherently adversarial, even among allies. ... Spying on friendly foreign nations does not actually violate the standard practices of international relations and in many ways is consistent with those norms.”⁸ Needless to say, there were vocal parts of the American public that thought the United States should use all of its capabilities, against all potential targets, to gain secrets. However, there were disagreements about the merits of collecting intelligence on friendly states.

CSIS senior adviser Gerald Hyman was a prominent example of those arguing for reformed espionage practices. He argues, “The costs far outweigh the benefits of regular spying on our closest allies, but I do not know what is gleaned from the spying, if it occurs. The costs are clear however: feelings of betrayal, loss of trust, reticence or unwillingness to cooperate, some degradation in the core of the alliance. If the benefits are not more than commensurate, the bargain is a bad one.”⁹ However, Hyman was not the only one calling for reforms in the wake of the Snowden leaks. To be sure, many of the calls for changes in intelligence collection were driven by the revelations about domestic surveillance, but there were still arguments about wholesale alterations to the NSA’s operations. For example, Byman & Wittes contend that the NSA needed to change its actions to be more responsive to public concerns.¹⁰

The different normative approaches actually underscore a broader theoretical debate. Stout highlights how consequentialist or deontological approaches drive opinions on alliance politics and espionage.¹¹ Put differently, those who see the world in realist (primarily offensive realist) terms tend to think that there should be no holds placed on intelligence collection. If alliances are merely temporary marriages of convenience, if intentions change so rapidly that they can never be known or guessed with any degree of certainty, and if offensive military capabilities are the primary driver of international politics, then it makes sense for a state to leverage its entire intelligence apparatus towards the nations against which it is balancing.¹² On the other hand, constructivists are more apt to consider the nature of the relationship when making decisions about the targets of intelligence. If states have mutually constructed identities with other nations in the international system and if norms of conduct ultimately

⁵ Elisabeth Braw, “Spying on Allies Is Normal. Also Smart,” *Politico*, June 4, 2021.

⁶ Mark Stout, “Can Spying on Allies Be Right?,” *War on the Rocks*, November 5, 2013.

⁷ Christopher J. Murphy, “Why Would the US Spy on Its Allies? Because Everyone Does,” *The Conversation*, June 25, 2015.

⁸ Max Fisher, “Why America Spies on Its Allies (and Probably Should),” *The Washington Post*, October 29, 2013.

⁹ Gerald Hyman, “Spying on Allies,” *CSIS*, July 26, 2013.

¹⁰ Daniel Byman and Benjamin Wittes, “Reforming the NSA: How to Spy After Snowden,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (June 2014): 127–38.

¹¹ Stout, “Can Spying on Allies Be Right?”

¹² Sebastian Rosato, “The Inscrutable Intentions of Great Powers,” *International Security* 39, no. 3 (2014): 48–88; John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. North & Company, 2001); Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

influence state-state relations, then more care should be warranted when deploying intelligence resources.

The divide between realists and constructivists gives rise to testable hypotheses about alliance politics and intelligence collection/reporting. If the realists are correct, then there should be no difference between the information gathered and disseminated on communist states and nations allied with the US. With this worldview, US policymakers would be equally concerned about the military deployments of India as they are with China. Conversely, if the constructivists are correct, then we would expect to see tangible differences with intelligence when it comes to adversaries versus allies. Wendt would be correct when he asserts, “500 British nuclear weapons are less threatening to the United States than 5 North Korean nuclear weapons, because the British are friends of the United States, and the North Koreans are not.”¹³

Using text-as-data analysis on US intelligence documents provides a tangible way to see whether the realists or constructivists are correct. I therefore look to assess the following propositions:

1: As a state’s relations with the United States improve, the content of intelligence reporting/collection does not change.

2: As a state’s relations with the United States improve, the content of intelligence reporting/collection changes and becomes more positive.

Dataset

To examine the degree to which alliance politics affect intelligence collection and reporting, and test the above propositions, I introduce a novel dataset of the recently declassified President’s Daily Brief (PDB). The PDB is the premier product of the intelligence community and is hand delivered to the president and senior policymakers every morning. Former PDB briefer David Priess discusses the importance of the document, saying, “The Central Intelligence Agency’s spies, the National Security Agency’s listening posts, and the nation’s reconnaissance satellites gather secrets for it. ... No major foreign policy decisions are made without it.”¹⁴ To create a machine-readable dataset on which to use text-as-data analysis, I digitized the PDB from 1961-1973, transcribing the initial spreadsheet using an “item of intelligence-date format.” After this initial transcription, using a mix of hand coding and entity recognition, I identified the target to which the intelligence pertains. For example, the PDB item from September 4, 1961, that reads, “Brazilian military. Last night agreed to accept Goulart under the revised constitution. Goulart has also accepted, probably believing the constitutional amendment so vaguely worded that he can recover much of the presidency’s power and will probably be inaugurated tomorrow afternoon. While Goulart’s position now seems secure, extremists on both sides retain some capacity for troublemaking” is coded with Brazil as the target of the intelligence. After coding for the country ID of each item of intelligence, I transformed the data from wide to long format, leaving the final unit of analysis as “item of intelligence-country-date.”

¹³ Alexander Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 71–81.

¹⁴ David Priess, *The President’s Book of Secrets: The Untold Story of Intelligence Briefings to America’s Presidents* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016). For more information on the PDB, see Adrian Wolfberg, “The President’s Daily Brief: Managing the Relationship between Intelligence and the Policymaker,” *Political Science Quarterly* 132, no. 2 (2017): 225–58.

Codifying the PDB presents a unique opportunity to quantitatively examine the nature of intelligence. Many studies of intelligence rely on case study approaches, and while informative and interesting to read, this method tends to limit the generalizability of the findings. Even works that take a medium-n view of intelligence still base the majority of their findings on specific cases. For example, Dahl (2013) explicitly eschews a quantitative approach to intelligence failures and successes.¹⁵ The approach I take here leverages large-n econometric approaches with the study of intelligence, which has the benefit of adding generalizability across time and space to the findings.

Independent Variable

My independent variable of interest is the nature of another country's relations with the United States. Broadly speaking, this is meant to convey whether other countries should be categorized as allies or adversaries of the US. Given the time frame (1961-1973), I break this measure (*relations*) down into four categories: communist (0), neutral (1), allies (2), and NATO allies (3). Because the PDB documents in this sample cover the Cold War period, I use communist countries as a proxy for enemy states. While this is an assumption (that communist states are enemies), it is certainly well grounded in broader Cold War politics, where the US national security establishment opposed the specter of communism in any form. I classify states as communists based on Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland's Democracy and Dictatorship dataset, which includes an indicator variable that is coded 1 if the ruler of a country during any given year is the Communist Party leader. The list of communist countries over this time period includes Albania, Bulgaria, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Mongolia, North Korea, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia.¹⁶

States are coded as neutral (1) provided they are not communist, and they had no formal alliance with the United States from 1961-1973. Examples of neutral countries include Egypt (or the UAR), Laos, Algeria, Cambodia, and many other unaligned nations. Data on formal alliances comes from the Correlates of War project.¹⁷ COW judges formal alliances to be between nations that have defense pacts, neutrality or non-aggression treaties, or an entente agreement. For the United States during this time period, such states include the majority of South and Latin America, along with nations such as India, Iran, and South Korea. These states receive a *relations* value of 2. However, because the nature of the alliance is not as structured, or as vital to national security, I create a separate measure for NATO countries.

NATO rapidly expanded after the Cold War, but from 1961-1973, membership was much more limited. To account for this, *relations* only takes on a value of 3 to indicate a NATO ally if the country had already ascended to the alliance by 1961 (no country joined NATO during this 12-year timeframe). Nations coded as a NATO ally include Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, West Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey, and the UK. The value of *relations* can thus be said to increase as a nation grows closer and more vital to the security interests of the United States. In other words, the value of the variable moves from enemy to allied states.

¹⁵ Erik Dahl, *Intelligence and Surprise Attack: Failure and Success from Pearl Harbor to 9/11 and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, n.d.).

¹⁶ Jose Antonio Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland, "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited," *Public Choice* 143 (2010): 67–101.

¹⁷ Douglas M Gibler, "International Military Alliances, 1648-2008," *CQ Press*, 2013.

Dependent Variable

After constructing the initial PDB dataset and merging in data on alliances, I then turn to measure the primary dependent variable: the content of intelligence reporting and collection. I do this using the *quanteda* package, which offers sentiment analysis for textual data.¹⁸ The first thing to consider is the tone of the intelligence. *Quanteda* uses the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary (LSD) to generate quantitative measures of negative sentiment; positive sentiment; positive words preceded by a negation (such as the phrase “not good”) to convey negative sentiment; and negative words preceded by a negation (“not bad”) to convey positive sentiment. For sentiment analysis, many possible dictionaries exist to measure tone, however, not all are equally well suited to code political texts. Young & Soroka (2012) show “LSD produces results that are more systematically related to human coding than are results based on the other available dictionaries,” particularly for documents involving political communication.¹⁹ While I do employ other dictionaries to test the robustness of my findings, the suitability of LSD for political communications makes it the best tool to measure the sentiment of the items of intelligence in the PDBs.

As noted above, the LSD produces four different distinct measures. To account for the fact that negated positivity conveys negative sentiment and negated negativity conveys positive sentiment, I create a simple additive measure that captures overall positivity or negativity. *PositiveLSD* therefore refers to a sum of both positive sentiment and negated negativity. *NegativeLSD* is the sum of negative and negated positivity. These two measures serve as my primary dependent variables.

Descriptive Statistics

In total, the dataset contains 48,099 “item of intelligence-country-date” observations: 12,576 refer to communist countries; 22,767 pertain to neutral countries; 7,622 are about allied nations; and 5,134 mention NATO. Values of *PositiveLSD* range from 0 to 67, with a mean of 4.11. *NegativeLSD* runs from 0 to 105, with a mean of 5.04. The average item of intelligence is roughly 70 words long, although some entries run to over 970 words. Vietnam is the most frequently occurring country in the dataset, followed by the Soviet Union and China.

Results

After constructing the independent and dependent variables, I can phrase the propositions in more concrete terms. The testable hypotheses are therefore,

H1: As relations with the United States improve, the tone of intelligence does not change.

H2a: As relations with the United States improve, the tone of intelligence becomes more positive.

H2b: As relations with the United States improve, the tone of intelligence becomes less negative.

Both *PositiveLSD* and *NegativeLSD* represent counts. The LSD approach in *quanteda* renders these values as the number of times such words occur in the text. With count dependent variables, a negative

¹⁸ Kenneth Benoit et al., “*Quanteda*: An R Package for the Quantitative Analysis of Textual Data,” *Journal of Open Source Software* 3, no. 30 (2018): 774.

¹⁹ Lori Young and Stuart Soroka, “Affective News: The Automated Coding of Sentiment in Political Texts,” *Political Communication* 29, no. 2 (2012): 205–31.

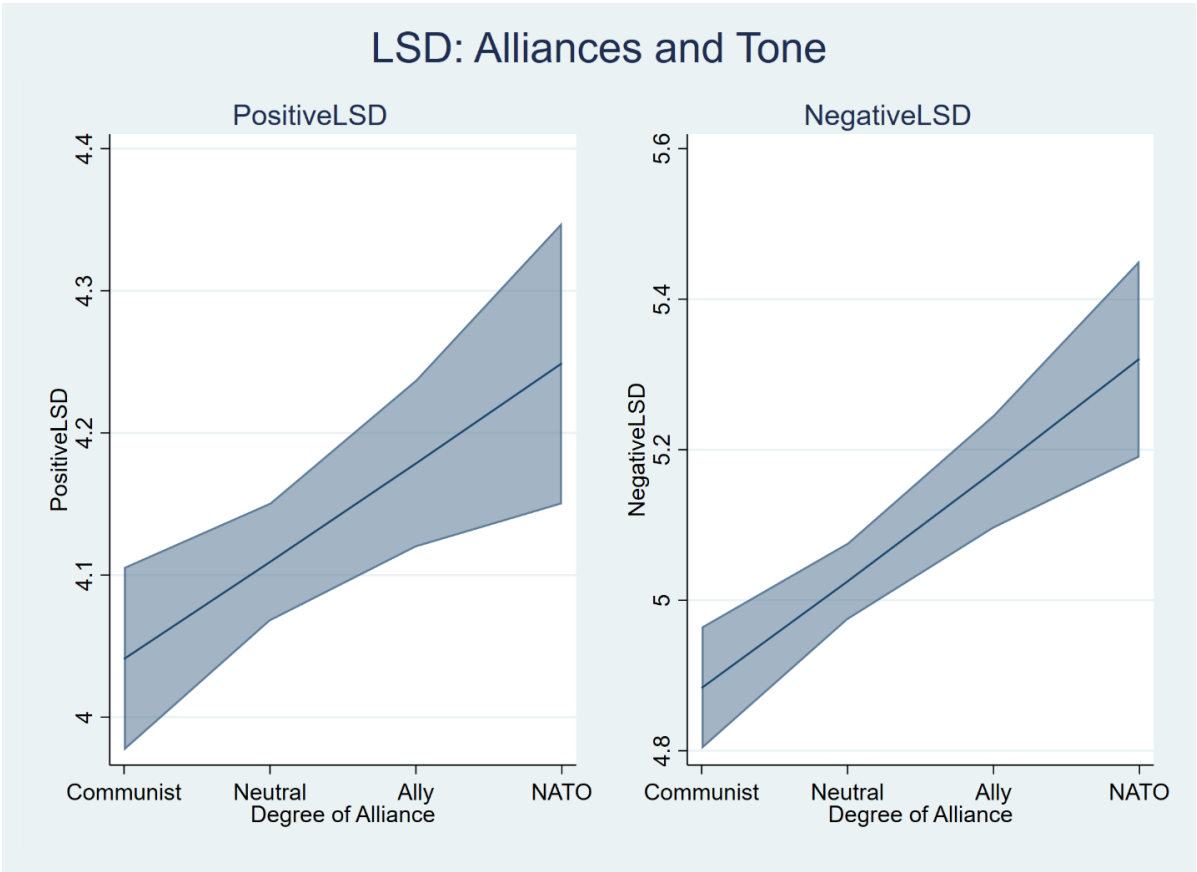
binomial is the most appropriate model to demonstrate the degree to which alliance politics impacts the tone of intelligence collection and reporting. Table 1 shows the output of the negative binomial regression. To better illustrate these findings, Figure 1 below shows the predicted probabilities for alliance politics and the tone of intelligence.

Table 1:

	(1) PositiveLSD	(2) NegativeLSD
Relations	0.0167** [0.00558,0.0279]	0.0286*** [0.0167,0.0405]
Constant	1.396*** [1.380,1.412]	1.586*** [1.569,1.603]
Inalpha	0.0249** [0.00866,0.0411]	0.0797*** [0.0643,0.0951]
Observations	48099	48099

95% confidence intervals in brackets
 * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

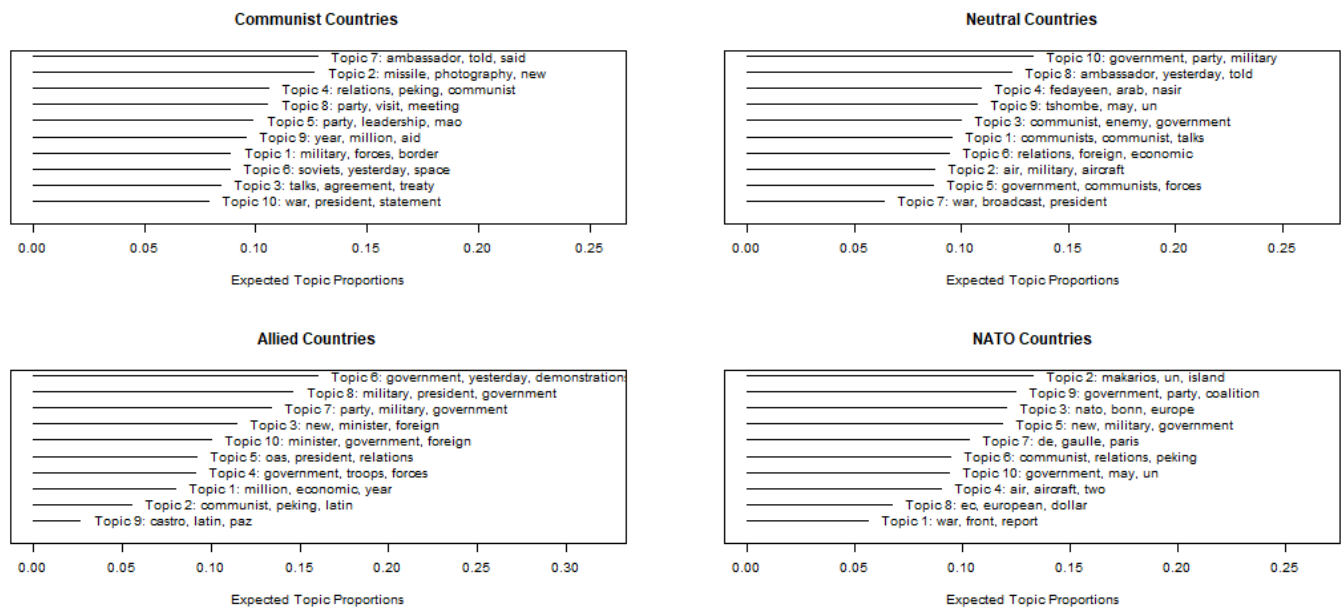
Figure 1:



The first pass results generate interesting findings: as the nature of the relationship with the United States improves, the tone of intelligence tends to get both more positive and more negative. This evidence contradicts Hypothesis 1: as the nature of the relationship with the United States changes, the content of intelligence does indeed change. This would seem to reject the realist notion that intelligence collection against allies and adversaries is materially the same. However, the change in intelligence is not wholly in support of Hypothesis 2. Figure 1 demonstrates firm support for Hypothesis 2a: as states obtain better relations with the United States, the tone of intelligence does indeed get more positive in nature. However, in contradiction of Hypothesis 2b, the intelligence is also quite negative for allied states.

To investigate why this might be the case, I use Structural Topic Models (STM) to visualize the sort of reporting that might be driving the results. Figure 2 shows the results of the topic models below.

Figure 2:



The topic analysis reveals important trends about the content of the intelligence based on the alliance relationship. First, intelligence on communist and neutral countries is more likely to be about military topics. For communist countries, common issues involved “missile,” “military, forces, border,” “space,” “war.” Neutral countries also tend toward militaristic fields; examples include “air, military, aircraft;” “government, communists, forces;” and “war, broadcast, president.” However, the shift to neutral countries brings about a new topic that is much more common among friendlier nations: the economy. One of the important neutral themes is “relations, foreign, economic.” This focus on economic relations continues with allied and NATO countries. Allied nations have a mix of military, economic, and political topics. Military subjects include “military, president, government” and “party, military, government.” Given that many of the nations allied with the US (*relations* = 2) during this time are in South America, it is likely that the items of intelligence refer to military governments.²⁰ Economic intelligence report continues to

²⁰ Examples of military governments in Latin America during this timeframe include Ecuador; Guatemala; Brazil; Bolivia; Argentina; Peru; Panama; Honduras; Chile; Uruguay; and El Salvador.

be important, with “million, economic, year” a relevant point of emphasis. A new change for allied countries is a focus on the domestic political situation. “Government, yesterday, demonstration” is one such topic that reflects the concern about domestic politics. This likely refers to political demonstrations against existing governments. Finally, the subjects for NATO countries continue the trend towards political and economic reporting, with military matters playing a lesser role. Political topics include “government, party, coalition,” “NATO, Bonn, Europe,” and “Makarios, UN, Island” (the latter referring to the Greek-Turkish dispute over Cyprus). “EC, European, dollar” is one of the primary examples of material on economics. The PDBs still reference the military aspects of NATO allies, with topics such as “new, military, government” and “war, front, report,” but one of the subtle changes is “air, aircraft, two,” which no longer includes reference to military air forces.

So, what are we to conclude from the regression and topic analysis? First, alliance politics do have a substantial impact on the tone and topic of intelligence collection and reporting. This would suggest that the realists are not correct when arguing that a state’s relationship with the United States does and should not have a bearing on intelligence practices. The sentiment and topic analyses firmly contradict Hypothesis 1. Second, the nature of a state’s relationship with the United States is relevant for how positive the intelligence is. When states grow closer to the United States, the tone of intelligence reporting is significantly more positive. This would support the notion that constructivists are correct when arguing there are tangible differences in intelligence practices when it comes to allied and adversarial states. However, the constructivists are not wholly correct either because intelligence also becomes more negative for allied states. Therefore, the third finding is that intelligence on allies will contain “warts and all.” In other words, while the tone of intelligence for allies will be more positive in nature, it will still be critical when necessary.

One of the interesting, and influential factors in this analysis, is that the process of collecting intelligence will vary depending on the relationship with the United States. It is easier to collect intelligence on allies: US citizens can freely enter the United Kingdom; US businesses operate quite unrestrictedly in western Europe; and there is a high degree of military cooperation with NATO countries. Communist nations, on the other hand, were famously hard targets. US citizens could not roam freely around the Soviet Union (at least without being under surveillance). Diplomats and military attaches were not expected to cooperate with their US counterparts and there would be no joint military exercises. All of these factors influence what is ultimately reported to the President in the PDB. What the analysis here suggests is that the US intelligence establishment will use the freer access to allied nations to show what positive things are happening in the nation but will not pull punches when reporting on potentially consequential negative events.

Robustness Checks

To solidify and confirm these findings, I conducted a series of robustness checks. The primary focus of these checks is to consider alternative specifications of the dependent variable (the tone of the intelligence). Sentiment analysis is extremely sensitive to the dictionary used to assess the tone. While Young & Soroka (2012) do show that LSD is best suited for political communications, there are other ways to measure the tone of a text. For the robustness checks, I employ four different sentiment analysis dictionaries (from the SentimentAnalysis package in R): DictionaryGI; DictionaryHE; DictionaryLM; and DictionaryQDAP. DictionaryGI lists positive and negative words to correspond with the psychological Harvard-IV dictionary used with General Inquirer software. DictionaryGI is generally

considered to be the most multi-purpose of the sentiment analysis dictionaries. DictionaryHE refers to Henry’s finance-specific sentiment analysis.²¹ Henry developed this dictionary to analyze press releases about earnings statements. DictionaryHE is not the only finance-centric approach to sentiment analysis, as Dictionary LM, otherwise known as Loughran-McDonald, also focused on financial statements. Loughran and McDonald designed the dictionary to take a more nuanced approach to accounting and finance.²² DictionaryQDAP (quantitative discourse analysis package) includes polarity words originally designed to bridge the gap between “qualitative transcripts of dialogue and statistical analysis and visualization.”²³

All of these dictionaries produce variables for the positivity and negativity of any piece of text. Therefore, the dependent variables become PositivityGI; PositivityHE; PositivityLM; PositivityQDAP; NegativityGI; NegativityHE; NegativityLM; and NegativityQDAP. One important change with these dictionaries is that the output of the variable is a proportion (to indicate what proportion of the text is positive/negative). Because the value is no longer a count, a negative binomial is an inappropriate model choice. I therefore use OLS regression to assess the sentiment of the PDBs. *Relations* remains as the independent variable to indicate how friendly each nation is with the United States. Table 2 shows the results of the regression analysis with positivity as the dependent variable. I also translate the regression findings into predicted probabilities to better illustrate the effect of alliance politics on the sentiment of intelligence. The results of the predicted probabilities are in Figure 3. I repeat the analysis in Table 3 and Figure 4, with negativity as the dependent variable.

Table 2:

	(1) PositivityGI	(2) PositivityHE	(3) PositivityLM	(4) PositivityQDAP
Relations	0.00820*** [0.0075,0.00889]	0.000533*** [0.000326,0.00074]	0.00117*** [0.000945,0.00140]	0.00543*** [0.00490,0.00595]
Constant	0.136*** [0.135,0.137]	0.0157*** [0.0154,0.0160]	0.0184*** [0.0181,0.0187]	0.0863*** [0.0855,0.0870]
Observations	48099	48099	48099	48099

95% confidence intervals in brackets

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

²¹ Elaine Henry, “Are Investors Influenced by How Earnings Press Releases Are Written?,” *Journal of Business Communications* 45, no. 4 (2008): 363–407.

²² Tim Loughran and Billy McDonald, “Textual Analysis in Accounting and Finance: A Survey,” *Journal of Accounting Research* 54, no. 4 (2016): 1187–1230.

²³ See RDocumentation for qdap package.

Figure 3:

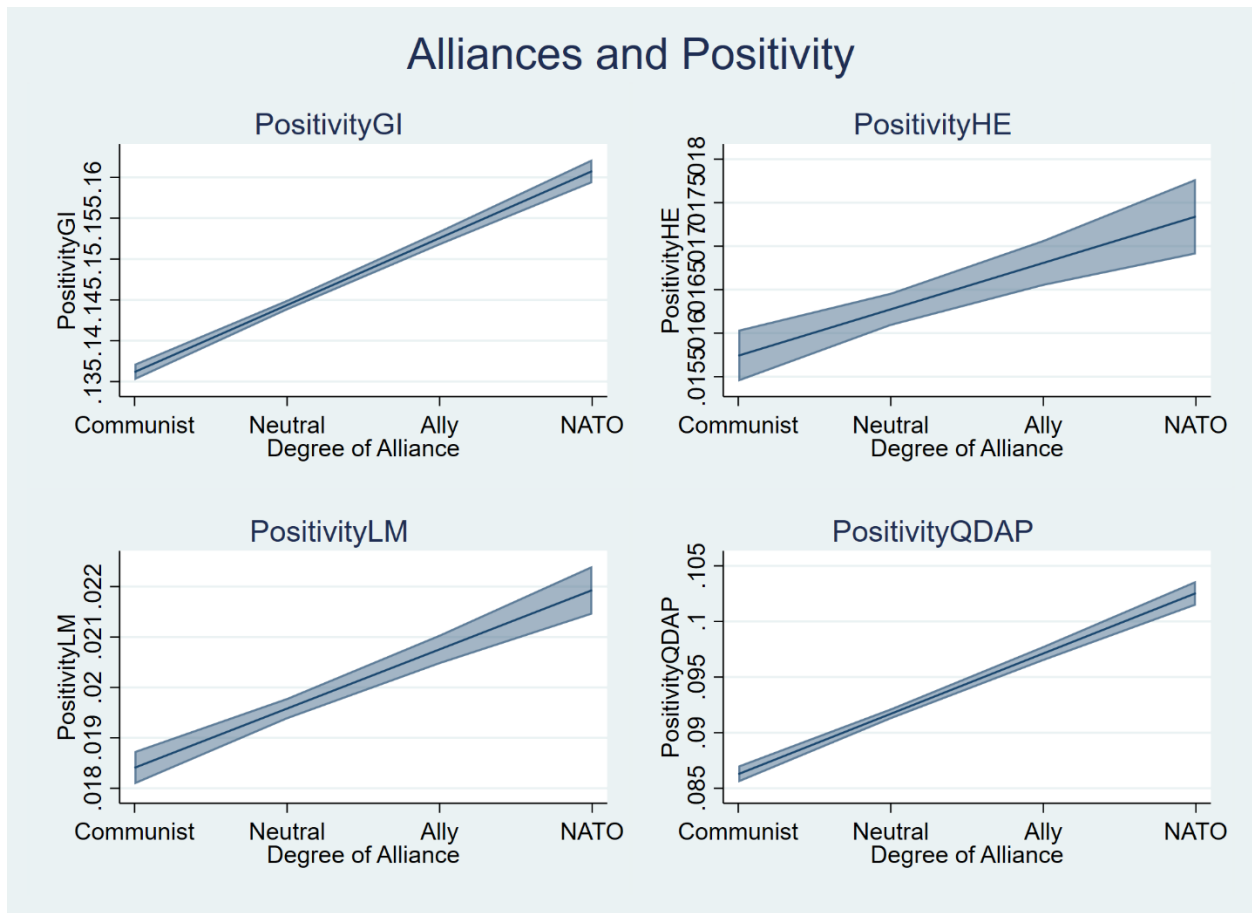


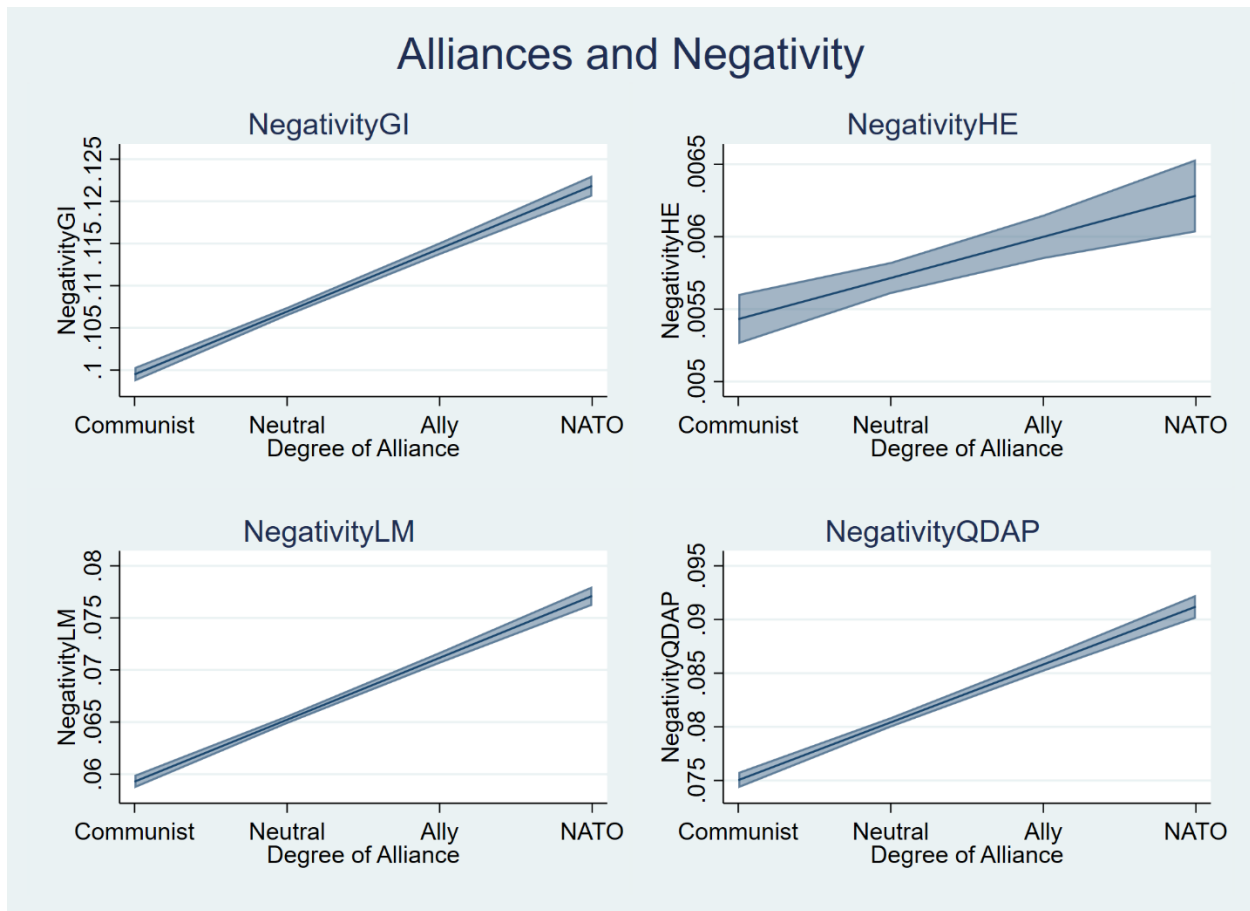
Table 3:

	(1) NegativityGI	(2) NegativityHE	(3) NegativityLM	(4) NegativityQDAP
Relations	0.00745*** [0.00686,0.00804]	0.000284*** [0.000164,0.000404]	0.00594*** [0.00550,0.00639]	0.00539*** [0.00486,0.00592]
Constant	0.0995*** [0.0986,0.100]	0.00543*** [0.00526,0.00560]	0.0593*** [0.0586,0.0599]	0.0750*** [0.0743,0.0758]
Observations	48099	48099	48099	48099

95% confidence intervals in brackets

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 4:



The results from the robustness check broadly support the initial findings obtained with the LSD approach. As a state improves its relations with the United States, the tone of intelligence tends to get both more positive and more negative. The result is statistically significant across all specifications of positive and negative tone. The primary finding therefore remains: while alliances with the United States do change intelligence collection and reporting practices, that change is not always for the better. Nations allied with the United States can still expect to be spied on, that information will still find its way to the President of the United States, and that intelligence will be both more positive and negative than neutral countries.

Illustrative Case Study

While the preceding analysis statistically shows how alliance politics influence intelligence collection/reporting with a large-n approach, smaller-n designs are very useful to discuss the mechanisms in more detail. In this section, I show the concrete ways in which alliance politics change intelligence practices. I do this with a review of records from the Defense Personnel and Security Research Center. These records detail “espionage and other compromises of national security” from 1975-2008.²⁴ One of the primary benefits of examining the cases of espionage against the United States is to demonstrate that allies and adversaries are also collecting intelligence against the USA. I began by

²⁴ Records can be accessed here: <https://www.dhra.mil/perserec/espionage-cases/>

discussing the case of Jonathan Pollard, but he is not the only individual caught providing American secrets to allied nations.

PERSEREC Espionage Cases

The Defense Personnel Security Research Center (PERSEREC) regularly releases data on espionage threats to national security.²⁵ This office of the Secretary of Defense lists offenders by name, date, and the organization to which they belonged. They also provide short biographical sketches and details of the case to illustrate how espionage develops in real life. For my purposes, these documents help to show who was spying on the United States, and what nation was sponsoring that espionage.

The records detail the activities of 180 individuals who had some role in spying against the US. Not all were American citizens. Some, like Valdik Enger or Rudolf Chernyayev, were Soviet employees of the UN Secretariat who accepted information from “a US Naval officer acting on instructions of the Naval Investigative Service and the FBI.”²⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Soviet Union (and later Russia) was the most common destination for individuals providing or attempting to provide classified US information. Out of the 180 individuals, the Soviet Union was the recipient of intelligence in at least 73 of the cases. Other adversarial nations shown collecting US intelligence include Cuba (12 cases); China (18 cases); East Germany (12 cases); Hungary (10 cases); and Poland (5 cases).²⁷

The information collected by these governments tended towards military and intelligence secrets. For example, the Walker spy ring, comprising John Anthony Walker; Arthur James Walker; Michael Lance Walker; and Jerry Alfred Whitworth, passed on more than a million classified military messages. Michael Walker, a petty officer on the USS *Nimitz*, provided US Navy documents. Whitworth, meanwhile, furnished Naval communications.²⁸ Antonio Guerrero, a Cuban spy, provides a similar example of military espionage. After getting a job doing maintenance and construction at the Boca Chica Naval Air Station in Key West, Florida, Guerrero provided reports on plane counts, base remodeling, and changes in command.²⁹ Foreign governments also prize intelligence secrets, particularly the names and cover identities of US officers operating in their countries. Harold Nicholson was one spy providing this kind of information. The highest-ranking CIA officer charged with espionage for passing highly classified

²⁵ One important note of clarification is that intelligence collection and espionage are not synonymous. Espionage is a form of intelligence collection, but it is not nearly the only one. Other examples include technical intelligence through reconnaissance satellites and obtaining phone communications through signals intelligence. So, while the PERSEREC documents deal exclusively with espionage, there is certainly other forms of intelligence collection taking place against the United States.

²⁶ Department of the Navy Naval Investigative Service Command, “Espionage,” 1989; David Binder, “2 Russians Arrested by FBI for Spying,” *The New York Times*, May 21, 1978.

²⁷ The full list of states collecting intelligence on the US as documented by PERSEREC is as follows: Soviet Union/Russia (73); North Vietnam (2); Cuba (12); Hungary (10); South Africa (3); Poland (5); Libya (2); Bulgaria (1); East Germany (12); Czechoslovakia (4); China (18); Israel (5); Ghana (2); Philippines (5); Al Qaeda (2); Taiwan (2); Iraq (3); Jordan (1); Japan (1); Germany (1); Thailand (1); El Salvador (1); South Korea (1); Italy (1); France (1); Saudi Arabia (1); Ecuador (1); Liberia (2); Greece (1); and North Korea (1).

²⁸ Ben A. Franklin, “Ex-Navy Officer Is Charged With Espionage,” *The New York Times*, May 21, 1985; Stephen Engelberg, “Father and Son Get Spying Terms,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 1986; Bill Mears and Joshua Berlinger, “Convicted Cold War Spy John Walker Dies in Federal Prison,” *CNN*, August 29, 2014; John Prados, “The John Walker Spy Ring and the US Navy’s Biggest Betrayal,” *USNI News*, September 2, 2014.

²⁹ Navarro, “10 People Are Charged with Spying for Cuba,” *The New York Times*, September 15, 1998; Sue Anne Pressley, “10 Arrested on Charges of Spying for Cuba,” *The Washington Post*, September 15, 1998; “Ten Indicted for Spying for Cuba,” *Associated Press*, October 2, 1998.

intelligence to Russia, he was a GS-15 or colonel equivalent. The intelligence he furnished included biographic information on all CIA case officers trained from 1994-1996. He was also suspected of compromising the identities of US and foreign business leaders who provided information to the CIA.³⁰ Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen also gave details on US agents to the Soviet Union. As a whole, the PERSEREC records highlight the extent to which adversarial nations predominantly attempted to collect military and intelligence information.

While adversarial nations do represent the bulk of the foreign governments collecting secrets on the United States (at least within the PERSEREC documents), neutral and allied nations also sought to gather intelligence when possible.³¹ However, when the relations with the United States improve, the nature of the intelligence does change. As the topic analysis above suggests, economic and political intelligence represents a higher share of the information these states gather.³² Moreover, in several instances, the information actually pertains to mutual enemies, but was not covered under intelligence sharing agreements. For example, in 1988, Thomas Dolce admitted that he supplied documents on the Soviet military to South Africa. Dolce reportedly told the FBI that he “believed he was doing for South Africa what the United States should have been doing.”³³ Dolce’s motivation is remarkably similar to Jonathan Pollard’s reasoning for supplying military secrets to Israel. Both had strong ideological ties to the nation to which they were furnishing the intelligence, and both believed the United States was not doing enough to protect the security of that country. More substantively, what these cases demonstrate is that neutral and allied nations will still collect intelligence on the United States, exploiting the ideological ties of US citizens when necessary, but the content of that information tends to be different than that gathered by traditional adversaries.

One of the best examples of allied nations conducting espionage against the United States in order to obtain commercial technology is Ronald Hoffman. A general manager for Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), Hoffman had worked under a classified contract for the US Air Force to develop a software program called CONTAM, which classified rockets after launch from their exhaust trails. After growing dissatisfaction with his SAIC salary, Hoffman created Plume Technology, a sideline business under which he marketed the software to a variety of different countries. He reportedly sold entire CONTAM modules, comprising data; components; systems; and training, to four Japanese companies, including Nissan and Mitsubishi. Hoffman also tried to sell the software to companies in Germany, Italy, Israel and South Africa. With his side business, Hoffman made \$750,000 before his SAIC

³⁰ James Risen, “Career CIA Officer Is Charged with Spying for Russia,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1997; Robert L. Jackson, “Alleged Mole to Plead Not Guilty,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 1997; Tim Weiner, “CIA Officer Admits Spying for Russians,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 1997; Brooke A Masters, “Convicted Spy Says He Did It for His Family,” *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1997.

³¹ One of the distinct possibilities, indeed likelihoods, of relying on the PERSEREC documents to discuss espionage against the United States is that allied, and NATO nations are underrepresented. When friendly nations are caught spying on one another, both parties have an incentive to conceal that espionage from the broader public. The PERSEREC files document the espionage cases that have been brought before the public, which would therefore indicate a more substantial presence of adversarial nations in the first place.

³² This is certainly not to say that adversaries do not care about political and economic information. China, for example, undoubtedly cares about America’s commercial secrets. This is also not to say that allies are uninterested in military secrets. What I am driving at here is the relative balance of the intelligence collection and reporting.

³³ Paul W Valentine, “MD Man Admits to Espionage for South Africa,” *The Washington Post*, October 12, 1988; Paul W Valentine, “Spy for S. Africa Called Reserved,” *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1988.

secretary noticed an improper fax. Hoffman was arrested in 1990 and convicted in 1992. What Hoffman's case shows more broadly is that allied nations (such as Japan in this case) are perfectly willing to obtain classified intelligence, particularly when it deals with an economic area of interest.³⁴

Spies have even been caught obtaining secrets for NATO countries, much as the United States has worked to obtain confidential information from NATO countries. Military secrets remain an important target of intelligence collection practices, but economic and political information continues to occupy a larger relative balance compared to what adversarial states gather.³⁵ In a particularly noteworthy case of economic espionage, France expelled five Americans for bribing government officials to disclose data on global trade talks (France's negotiating position on the World Trade Organization); domestic political positions; and telecommunications.³⁶ Those declared *persona non grata* included the CIA Station Chief Richard Holm, who had gained notoriety for being burned and scarred in the Congo before going on to a distinguished career in the agency.³⁷ A counterespionage report cited in *Le Monde* at the start of the episode noted, "The clandestine research detected concentrated essentially on French domestic politics as well as on the broad economic and commercial policies of our country, in particular in the audiovisual domain and in telecommunications."³⁸ An additional element of interest in this case is that it was initially supposed to be handled privately. In a joint statement, the French Interior Ministry and Foreign Ministry said the episode was not meant to become public. After reports did leak to the press, a State Department spokeswoman said, "The handling of this matter in France is inconsistent with the approach that allies have taken to resolve sensitive matters in the past."³⁹ This episode is paradigmatic of alliance politics and intelligence collection/reporting in several ways. First, the information the CIA gathered centered on economic interests and domestic politics. Second, when France uncovered the espionage, officials in both countries initially downplayed what happened and sought to avoid damaging the friendship between the two nations.⁴⁰

While allies (including NATO countries) do have a predilection for economic and political intelligence, that is not to say these nations are disinterested in military secrets. Indeed, the case of Steven L alas provides an interesting example of a US citizen furnishing military intelligence to a NATO ally. In his role as a State Department communications officer, authorities contend that L alas started spying for the Greeks in 1977. L alas passed some 700 classified documents over the course of his career. He disclosed information detailing the plans and readiness for the US' military strategy in the Balkans, a US assessment of Greece's intentions with regards to the former Yugoslavia, and DIA reports on troop

³⁴ Peter Schweizer, "The Growth of Economic Espionage: America Is Target Number One," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 1 (February 1996): 9–14.

³⁵ For a look at economic espionage in the United States, see John J Fialka, *War by Other Means: Economic Espionage in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).

³⁶ Frank Viviano, "5 American 'Agents' Told to Leave France--Interior Minister Alleges They Spied for CIA," *SF Gate*, February 23, 1995; Daniel Schorr, "Why the French Expelled Those Five Americans," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 10, 1994; Craig R. Whitney, "5 Americans Are Called Spies by France and Told to Leave," *The New York Times*, February 23, 1995; Schweizer, "The Growth of Economic Espionage: America Is Target Number One."

³⁷ Richard Holm, *The American Agent: My Life in the CIA* (London: St. Ermin's Press, 2003); Tim Weiner, "CIA Confirms Blunders During Economic Spying on France," *The New York Times*, March 13, 1996.

³⁸ As quoted in Whitney, "5 Americans Are Called Spies by France and Told to Leave."

³⁹ As quoted in Whitney.

⁴⁰ The way that allies handle espionage claims also points to the likelihood that the PERSEREC documents severely undercount the number of individuals caught spying for friendly nations.

strength, political forces, and military discussions contained in diplomatic cables.⁴¹ The Lalas incident helps to illustrate the fact that nations with close relations to the United States, including NATO allies, still remain interested in gathering military secrets.

The PERSEREC documents reveal important trends in the ways that adversarial and allied nations collect intelligence against the United States. The vast majority of US citizens convicted of espionage engaged in these activities at the behest of adversarial nations. The Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc nations were the primary instigators of these schemes. That being said, neutral; allied; and NATO partners all conducted espionage against the United States in some form or fashion. However, the nature of the alliance did change the content and balance of the information that spies collected. While adversarial and neutral nations prized military and intelligence information, economic and commercial secrets represented a larger proportion of the intelligence that allied nations collected. In other words, alliance politics are a crucial driver in the tone, topic, and content of intelligence collection and reporting. The PERSEREC records provide a useful high-level overview of the nature of espionage over the course of the Cold War and its immediate aftermath.

Conclusion

In conclusion, alliance politics have a substantive effect on intelligence collection and reporting procedures. As states grow closer to one another, intelligence tends to become more positive and more negative, with a greater focus on economic; commercial; and political data. In contrast, information gathered on enemies tends to be less positive, less negative, but with more attention paid to military and intelligence secrets. I demonstrate this fact in several ways.

I start by introducing a novel dataset of the President's Daily Brief from 1961-1973. The PDB, seen by the president and senior leaders every morning, is one of the most important products of the intelligence community. All intelligence arms of the government contribute to its reports, and it represents a whole of government approach to collecting, analyzing, and disseminating the secrets of foreign nations. After digitizing the PDB with an "item of intelligence-country-date" unit of analysis, I merge in data on regime types. Specifically, I code the target of intelligence based on its relations with the United States. At the low end of the spectrum are the communist countries. These represent the nations most adversarial to US' interests throughout the Cold War. Next are the neutral countries, with whom the United States has no formal relations. Then come allied countries, who have formalized agreements with the US. Last are NATO allies. These countries represent those closest to the United States throughout the Cold War. After evaluating the targets of intelligence collection based on their relations to the United States, I then turn to quantifying several aspects of the PDB. More specifically, I use text-as-data analysis techniques to consider the tone and topic of each item of intelligence. I employ the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary to obtain concrete values on the positive and negative tone of the intelligence and Structured Topic Models to illustrate how content varies across relationships. This approach has the benefit of introducing econometric techniques to the study of intelligence. Works on intelligence tend to rely on case studies, but creating a dataset based on the PDB allows for large-n quantitative analysis.

⁴¹ Steve Bates, "VA. Arrest Made in a Spy Case From Greece," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1993; Douglas Jehl, "American Employee at Embassy in Athens Arrested on Spy Charges," *The New York Times*, May 4, 1993; James Rubin, "FBI Says Embassy Employee Admitted Spying, But His Lawyer Denies It," *Associated Press*, May 5, 1993.

The results of several negative binomial regressions highlight how alliance politics drive the content of intelligence reports. On a scale of communist to NATO allies, when a country's relations with the United States improves, the intelligence becomes statistically both more positive and more negative. The topic models confirm the degree to which the reporting on allies and adversaries is different. The analysis shows that military secrets are more likely to be the topic for communist countries, while reports on allied and NATO countries are more likely to be about economic and political matters. These results are robust to a series of alternative specifications. While sentiment analysis is sensitive to the dictionary, checking the tone against DictionaryGI; DictionaryHE; DictionaryLM; and DictionaryQDAP yields the same output: alliance politics are a statistically significant driver of the content of intelligence.

I supplement the quantitative analysis with a short, illustrative case study on the individuals who committed espionage against the United States. Using documents from the Defense Personnel and Security Research Center, I show how enemies and allies have worked to collect classified data from the United States. While adversarial nations, primarily the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries, tended to collect military and intelligence data, allies, including NATO nations, worked to gather more commercial, economic, and political intelligence. The review of the PERSEREC records confirms the econometric results: alliance politics affect intelligence collection and reporting procedures in a significant way.

This finding helps to shed light on one of the important observable implications of the divide between realists and constructivists. In the wake of Edward Snowden's leaks, realist commentaries tended to focus on the degree to which all nations, even allies, spy on one another. The realists considered this a standard operating practice. After all, in this view, alliances are but temporary reflections of the current balance of power. The constructivists, on the other hand, emphasized how the US needed to reform its intelligence practices so as not to endanger relations with allied countries. Constructivists asked why the US should violate norms in order to gather secrets, when there are more productive ways to conduct international diplomacy. My results are not entirely satisfactory for either camp. The analysis I present here contradicts the notion that the nature of a country's relationship with the United States has no bearing on intelligence procedures. There is a difference in the information gathered on adversaries compared to allies, in contradiction to what the (primarily offensive) realists would expect. However, the constructivists are not wholly correct either. While the intelligence on allies is uniformly more positive than that of enemies, it is also more negative. This suggests that the intelligence the US collects on close friends is "warts and all."

The nature of these results suggest that the balance of threat realists may offer the best explanation. Such theorists focus on geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions.⁴² These results also broadly conform to the theories that focus on the importance of economic interdependence.⁴³ In both cases, the United States would be concerned that the intentions of neutral or allied nations is changing, and thus require monitoring. Similarly, the US would heavily focus on the economic preferences of neutral and allied countries with an eye towards the future, especially preventing changes that present security risks. Both approaches offer more satisfying theoretical reasons for the degree to which alliance politics guide intelligence collection and reporting.

⁴² Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁴³ Dale Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

In sum, using a novel dataset of the President's Daily Brief from 1961-1972, I show the degree to which alliance politics influence intelligence gathering and dissemination. Secrets taken from allies tends to be both more positive and negative in tone, with a greater focus on economic, political, and commercial information. The data on adversaries, on the other hand, is less positive and negative, and is more likely to focus on military and intelligence matters. The finding is robust to a variety of different measures of tone and is further confirmed with an examination of the PERSEREC records that document espionage against the United States.

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