Special Issue Article

Parliaments in security policy: Involvement, politicisation, and influence

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Abstract

While parliaments have long been neglected actors in the analysis of security policy, a research literature on the subject is growing. Current research is focused primarily on how parliaments, relying on formal legal competences, can constrain governmental policies. However, this research needs expansion in three areas. First, *informal sources* of parliamentary influence on security policy deserve more systematic attention as the significance of parliaments often hinges on contextual factors and individual decision-makers. Second, we still lack a systematic understanding of the *effects* of parliamentary involvement on security policy. Finally, the role of parliaments for the *politics of security* is almost completely uncharted territory. When parliaments become involved in security policy, does it foster transparency and contribute to the politicisation of security policy so that security policy becomes a 'normal' political issue? The article reviews current research, derives findings from the contributions to this Special Issue, and spells out their wider implications.

Introduction: Parliaments in security policy—Why bother?

Parliament is *the* pivotal democratic institution. Yet, despite a large body of research on the democratic peace thesis and the significance of democracy for security policy—and an equally sized literature on legislatures—the relationship between parliaments and security policy is not well understood.[1] Research on the democratic peace thesis has established that a linkage exists between shared democracy *inside* states and peaceful relations *between* them. While democracies are as war-prone as non-democracies, there are almost no wars between consolidated democracies. According to an influential explanation for the democratic peace, democratic institutions play a causal role in the

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process of interdemocratic peace because they help to transmit the preferences of a war-averse population into government policies (Doyle, 1986).

Against this backdrop, it is surprising that the role of parliaments for the formulation and implementation of security policy has received scant attention in previous studies. Regardless of the type of democracy, parliaments constitute a highly significant representative institution and take a central place in the polity, in which public debate and decision-making about political rules are integrated. If the key mechanism for the democratic peace is that governments need to consider the preferences of the population, parliaments will play an important role in that mechanism, representing and articulating preferences of the electorate.

Similarly, comparative research on parliaments has paid little attention to the role that parliaments have in security and remained largely focused on their legislative functions, matters of domestic policy, or their role in democratisation processes. In a recent handbook on legislative studies (Martin et al., 2014), only a single chapter addresses foreign policy broadly conceived (Raunio, 2014). Others examine whether parliament wields a formal constitutional right to declare war and take it as an indicator of parliamentary influence on security policy (Fish and Kroenig, 2009). However, in an age where declarations of war are obsolescent, this measure has become virtually meaningless.

The lack of interest in parliaments' role in security reflects a traditional view that regards parliaments as inconsequential actors in this policy field and their involvement in decision-making as inappropriate or unnecessary for several reasons. Public debate of security matters is considered inadequate due to requirements of secrecy. Parliamentary procedures are seen as too cumbersome for security policy where swift decisions are warranted. Foreign and security policy is assumed to be of less concern to citizens than domestic politics (Raunio, 2014: 543).

As we will show, this view has become less convincing since the end of the Cold War. Meanwhile, a growing literature has started to address the role of parliaments in the security realm (Dieterich et al., 2015; Kesgin and Kaarbo, 2010; Ku and Jacobson, 2003; Mello, 2012; Peters and Wagner, 2014; Raunio and Wagner, 2017).[2] This Special Issue is both an indicator of and a contribution to this change in the literature. We argue that this research, despite the need for further refinement, holds promise to transcend the narrow concerns of specific fields and equally contribute to international relations (IR) theory, foreign policy analysis, legislative studies, and democratic theory by exploring the neglected interplay between domestic and international politics. For IR and the study of international peace and conflict, it contributes to a clearer understanding of the contribution that domestic institutions make to the use of force by democracies. The same holds for foreign policy analysis, which has been predominantly occupied with the role of the executive in foreign policy decision-making. For comparative politics and legislative studies, it presents an opportunity to test the generalisability of their insights about the workings of parliamentary institutions beyond the legislative realm. Democratic theory has intensively studied general questions of political representation and accountability but seldom focused on the role that legislatures can play for the democratic legitimation of security policy.

However, to realise its potential, this emerging field needs further development. We suggest three areas that deserve particular attention. First, there is a lack of studies that explore the informal sources of opportunities for parliamentary influence on security policy. As we will show below, research has focused on how the relations between parliaments and executives are formally structured. The recent past has brought significant

progress in our knowledge about this issue. Case studies, however, suggest that the significance of parliaments in concrete cases often hinges not only on the extent of their formal authority but also on how the interaction with the executive plays out within this setting. Moreover, situational factors and how legislative–executive relations are managed often appear to be of high significance, but they have rarely been studied in detail.

Second, we still lack a systematic understanding of the effect of parliamentary involvement on security policy. While there are studies of how parliamentary involvement affected the participation of countries in individual multinational military operations, broader patterns that would be discernible across a wider variety of countries and policies have not yet been uncovered. But it is such patterns that are of crucial importance for establishing the link between domestic representative institutions and the conflict behavior of democracies. What is the evidence for the existence of a 'parliamentary peace' (Dieterich et al., 2015) beyond the case of the Iraq War and a specific subset of countries? And are there discernible effects of parliamentary involvement on media scrutiny, public opinion, and elite consensus?

Third, the role of parliaments for the politics of security is almost completely uncharted territory. This knowledge gap is somewhat surprising. From the viewpoint of democratic theory, it is a primary contribution of parliaments to democracy that they not only constrain the executive and hold it to account but that they also foster public debate before decisions are made. Parliamentary involvement challenges many traditional assumptions about security as an issue area that is characterised by secrecy and a unified interest in national security. When parliaments become involved in security policy, does their involvement foster transparency and contribute to the politicisation of security policy so that security policy becomes a 'normal' political issue?

In this article, we first review current research on the role of parliaments in security policy. Our focus in this introduction—and the general focus of the Special Issue as a whole—rests primarily on 'hard' security issues related to war involvement, military operations, and the use of force.[3] This focus contrasts with broader perspectives on parliaments' place in foreign and security policy (for instance, see Raunio and Wagner, 2017). Based on our review of the literature, we then discuss existing blind spots and consider how addressing them would strengthen research at the intersection of IR and comparative politics more generally. Finally, we outline the contribution of this Special Issue and its individual articles to this endeavor before concluding by proposing some avenues for future research.

Current research and its focus on formal legislative–executive relations

For a long time, the study of the role of legislatures in security policy has focused almost exclusively on the US Congress. There is an established and still growing literature on the relationship between Congress and the Presidency over matters of foreign and security policy, particularly in the field of war powers (Auerswald and Cowhey, 1997; Böller, 2015; Fowler, 2015; Glennon, 2003; Grimmett, 2001; Hallett, 1998, 2012; Howell and Pevehouse, 2005, 2007; Scott and Carter, 2014; Zeisberg, 2013). Outside the US context, this field has gained traction only more recently, coinciding with growing political interest in involving parliaments in matters of security policy after the Cold War.

The reasons for the increased attention lay in two developments. For one, waning Cold War confrontation between East and West and the increasing prominence of robust

peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and military interventions in foreign conflicts made the deployment of troops for many states a matter of *voluntary political choice* rather than a defensive necessity. This change put two questions on the agenda: How to make deployment decisions and which political actors to involve in them? Second, the democratisation of formerly authoritarian states in Central and Eastern Europe sparked debates about the proper role of parliament in policy-making there, including matters of foreign and security policy. Many transition countries—including Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania—initially established firm parliamentary rights in security matters, only to curb these regulations during their North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accession processes in the early 2000s (Cottey et al., 2002; Wagner et al., 2010). All of this led also to increasing research interest in the role that parliaments play when governments send troops abroad, and in democratic security policy more generally (Dieterich et al., 2015; Kesgin and Kaarbo, 2010; Ostermann, 2017; Peters and Wagner, 2011; Strong, 2015b).

Most of these studies, on both US Congress and European parliaments, have centered on one key issue: the significance of parliaments as actors seeking to influence governments. Can parliaments constrain government in matters of security policy, especially when it comes to the deployment of armed forces? And, if so, under which circumstances can they become influential? This research has identified two factors that are particularly important in shaping relations between parliaments and governments in this issue area: constitutional rules and the party composition of parliament. We will address these in turn and also briefly discuss how this research has relied on a rather narrow methodological toolset so far.

Constitutional rules and the role of parliaments in sending troops abroad

A considerable amount of research went into how constitutional or legal rules affect the ability of parliaments to constrain or influence governments. From this research, it has become clear that parliaments around the world are equipped with a highly diverse set of formal competences in the security field. Parliament's authority to veto troop deployments is certainly the most prominent among these competences. A considerable number of parliaments in democracies across the globe (roughly a third of them) possess the constitutional right to veto troop deployments (Wagner et al., 2010). But studies have shown that this veto right is only one aspect of a highly differentiated set of competences that parliaments can possess and that there is 'a trend towards ever more differentiation' (Peters and Wagner, 2011: 187).

In fact, even the veto right itself is not a uniform phenomenon. Where it exists at all, it usually does not cover all potential deployments. Rather, it encompasses only certain types of operations, depending on their size, their goals, or the international organisation under whose mandate they are carried out. Moreover, the right is not always exercised by the entire plenary but by specialised parliamentary committees. For instance, Austria delegates parliamentary votes on military deployments to a committee with 32 members; Bulgaria exempts NATO- and European Union (EU)–led operations from mandatory parliamentary approval; and Germany does not require ex ante parliamentary votes on humanitarian and non-offensive operations, although this provision is interpreted restrictively (Peters and Wagner, 2011; Wagner et al., 2010).

At the same time, it is important to note that the absence of a veto right does not imply that parliament has no formal competences when the executive plans to send troops abroad. Parliaments can, for instance, enjoy the right to be informed before troops are

deployed and thus make their positions heard even if they are not allowed to co-decide on the issue. In response to these complexities, Dieterich et al. (2010) have developed a fine-grained classification of parliamentary 'war powers', which includes not only parliament's participation in decision-making on military deployments but also its control resources during an operation, its ability publicly to debate operations, and its ability to remove actors responsible for military operations from office.

Classifications of parliamentary competences have been used to account for decisions on war involvement in individual conflicts (Dieterich et al., 2015; Haesebrouck, 2016; Mello, 2014). These studies found that parliamentary competences alone do not suffice to explain government's propensity to deploy troops but that interactions with other factors need to be considered, especially public opinion and the partisan composition of parliament and government.

Party politics and the role of parliaments in security

The party composition of parliament has become a second intensely studied factor affecting parliament's position vis-à-vis government (Howell and Pevehouse, 2007; Huff, 2015; Kesgin and Kaarbo, 2010; Mello, 2012; Schuster and Maier, 2006; Wagner et al., 2017). Having no parliamentary majority makes it difficult for governments, even in presidential systems, to send troops abroad. Howell and Pevehouse (2007) demonstrate that partisan congruence between the White House and Congress affects the frequency with which troops are sent abroad. But even single-party majority governments can be challenged by parliament if there are intraparty divisions concerning a proposed policy, as Kesgin and Kaarbo (2010) show for the case of Turkey. In a similar vein, Huff (2015) argues that both intraparty coherence and polarisation between parties (in addition to parliamentary culture and the political salience of an issue) matter for the intensity with which member state parliamentarians scrutinise the EU's security policy.

Moreover, there are indications that the left–right spectrum matters for the support that government can expect for military deployments. Parties toward the center and the center-right are most willing to support deployments. Moreover, leftist parties, by and large, appear to be more interested in parliamentary scrutiny than parties on the right (Wagner et al., 2017). Mello (2012, 2014) finds indications for the interaction between formal institutional constraints, the party political composition of government and parliament, and military participation in the Iraq War.

While there is strong evidence, therefore, that party politics matter for whether parliamentarians will seek to interfere with governmental policy, we still lack a coherent understanding of the circumstances under which it plays out. The significance of the left–right spectrum and of a governmental majority suggests especially interesting questions for the study of parliamentary politics when coalition governments seek to send troops abroad or implement security policy, for example, when governments enjoy a parliamentary majority but comprise parties with diverging preferences (in this Special Issue, see Oktay).

Methodological issues

Research on parliaments in security policy is a relatively new and still emerging field. This youth is also visible in the restricted set of methods that are currently being applied. Typically, studies focus either on exploring parliament's role in an individual country or

comparing a small number of countries with respect to a small number of operations. While this focus is helpful for gathering evidence in a new field, it also restricts the scope of the conclusions that can be drawn.

Two other methodological limitations of the field reinforce the point. For one, key concepts are defined and operationalised in different ways in different studies. There exist, for example, different conceptions of parliamentary competences or 'war powers'. While a consensus has emerged that a parliamentary veto over troop deployments should somehow figure in an operationalisation of war powers, studies either restrict their operationalisation to this veto right or add a diverse set of additional parliamentary competences. Similarly, there is a consensus that the 'influence' of parliaments on security policy is an important variable and that parliamentary influence is more than voting down government proposals. Yet there is no agreement on how to operationalise and measure parliamentary influence. Second, studies that seek to establish causal relations and demonstrate parliamentary influence usually rely on correlational evidence. Experimental methods or qualitative process tracing that could assess causal relations is almost never used.

Moving beyond the state of the art

This Special Issue aims to move this state of research forward in two ways. For one, there is widespread acknowledgment that looking at structural features like constitutional rules or ideational factors like the party composition of parliament does not suffice to understand how legislative–executive relations play out in the security realm. Rather, informal and contextual factors also shape the ability of parliament to influence government. One set of contributions to this Special Issue, therefore, explores such factors in more detail. Second, the focus on parliaments as constraints on government has left other areas of parliamentary involvement in security policy unexplored. In particular, the *effects* of parliamentary involvement have received little attention, and a number of the contributions to this Special Issue seek to address these effects more systematically. This focus includes, on one hand, the effects parliaments have on security policy (does parliamentary involvement contribute to more peaceful policies?). On the other hand, parliaments can also have effects on the politics of security and especially on public debate (does parliamentary involvement contribute to the politicisation of security? Does it enhance public deliberation?). In addressing these questions, the Special Issue also seeks to demonstrate the merits of using a diverse set of methods from survey experiments to quantitative analyses and within-case comparisons.

Informal sources of parliamentary influence on government

Previous studies have done much to clarify how structural factors shape the opportunities for parliaments to influence governmental policy. Yet the relationship between government and parliament is not determined by constitutional rules or party affiliations alone. Both sides can seek to reinforce, soften, or overwrite constraints on parliamentary influence. On a general level, this point has already been acknowledged for the side of parliaments. In their often-cited distinction of the '3 A's', Born and Hänggi (2004, 2005) argue that opportunities for parliament to affect security policy result not only from its formal legal rights (authority). Rather, parliament's capability to become involved effectively ('ability', as in parliamentary resources like budget, staff, and infrastructure) and

willingness of Members of Parliament (MPs) to conduct effective oversight (attitude) are important conditions as well.

There are some cases which offer obvious evidence that parliamentarians can create opportunities to influence executive policies even when they do not possess strong formal rights to do so. The most prominent and intensely studied case certainly has been the informal veto of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom against military involvement in Syria in August 2013 (Kaarbo and Kenealy, 2016; Lagassé, 2017; Mello, 2017a; Strong, 2015a, 2015b). By refusing to support military action against the Syrian government, British MPs not only influenced government policy but even changed the rules of parliamentary involvement for the future. While Parliament's legal and constitutional authority may have remained unchanged by the Syria vote (Kaarbo and Kenealy, 2016), it contributed to the emergence of a new convention. For some, this new convention implies that 'Parliament now decides when Britain goes to war' (Strong, 2015b) although its exact shape remains contested (Mello, 2017a).[4]

Moreover, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have proven especially skilled in eliciting additional powers as the European Parliament (EP) has gained most of its competences (not only in the security realm) by stubbornly insisting that it is entitled to them and by making strategic use of its position in the policy process continuously to expand its own role (Riddervold and Rosén, 2016). However, where parliamentarians lack the will or ability to assert their preferences or make their voices heard, even strong constitutional powers will not lead to parliamentary involvement and influence. In Belgium, parliament has recently gained increased involvement in military deployment matters, but MPs have not succeeded in translating it into tangible influence, as noted by Reykers and Fonck (2015).[5]

Similar considerations also hold for government. Even when parliaments enjoy participatory competences, governments can try to sideline them in concrete decisions. Raunio and Wagner (2017: 9) argue that despite a seeming trend toward parliamentarisation of foreign policy, the executive still enjoys informational advantages over parliaments in this realm, which put it in a privileged position. In fact, there are cases in which governments successfully shut out parliamentarians from decision-making although parliament arguably was entitled to participate. In Germany, for example, several smaller military deployments have been retroactively ruled improper by the constitutional court because the executive did not hold a vote in the Bundestag before authorising operations.[6] In the United States, the conflict between President and Congress about the legal status of the War Powers Resolution also illustrates the ability of governments to constrain parliamentary participation in decision-making. In Spain, the government has repeatedly circumvented parliament when prolonging or modifying the mandate of ongoing operations, which has sparked protest by parliamentarians (Wagner et al., 2017: 34). Österdahl (2011) notes that, in Sweden, parliament may be formally involved in decisions on the use of force, but parliamentary procedures often merely amount to the execution of policies 'formed elsewhere'.

Another strategy is for governments to use external pressure to undermine meaningful parliamentary participation. The German government, for example, has in some cases agreed internationally to contribute German troops to multinational operations, effectively 'tying its own hands' (Schelling, 1960) before asking for parliamentary approval. MPs then felt obliged to agree to those commitments to prevent undermining the multinational operation and the country's standing on the international stage (Wagner, 2011). In Britain, the Cameron government decided to initiate military action over Libya several

days before holding a vote in the House of Commons (Mello, 2017a). Yet governments may occasionally also wish to involve parliament in such decisions, even if they are not legally required to do so. This choice will happen most often in the hope that it will reduce opposition and secure support in the long run. Tony Blair's decision to hold a vote on British participation in the Iraq War in 2003 (Strong, 2015b: 608–610), Ronald Reagan's decision to accept a Congress Resolution concerning the Lebanon intervention in 1983 (Howell and Pevehouse, 2007: 131), and the decision of Canada's Conservative government to hold votes on the Afghanistan deployment in 2006 and 2008 (Lagassé and Mello, in press) illustrate this logic.

Parliamentary influence, moreover, is not restricted to formal parliamentary decisions. It can work in ways that are not immediately apparent. Cases when parliament vetoes a government decision are only the most visible instances of such influence. But they are also extremely rare, especially in parliamentary systems. That such cases are exceptional, however, does not imply that parliaments are ineffective in the making of security policy. Rosén and Raube, in their contribution to this Special Issue, employ a classification originally developed by Russell and Cowley (2016) to argue that parliaments can become influential in every phase of the policy-making process from agenda setting to evaluation. Parliamentarians may—through questions, debates, hearings, public statements, or behind-the-scenes bargaining and arguing—exert influence on much more than just the decision to send troops abroad. They may also affect (a) the framing of a situation as a crisis or as relevant for security policy; (b) the formulation of policy alternatives that are taken into consideration before a decision is made; (c) the frames through which ongoing operations are perceived by the public; or (d) the 'lessons learnt' from a completed operation, which will inform future decisions.

Parliamentary influence that flows from formal competences and becomes apparent in official parliamentary decisions is thus the most straightforward type of influence to detect, but not the only form in which influence can materialise. Those other forms of influence and their sources, however, are not yet well understood. This Special Issue seeks to contribute to such an understanding.

Comparing effects of parliamentary involvement on government policies

Given the literature's predominant focus on legislative–executive relations, there is an obvious tendency to look at the effects of parliamentary involvement primarily in terms of its effects on the policies of individual governments. We propose two ways in which this inclination could be usefully expanded. First is by focusing more strongly on the comparison of policy effects across different cases, which would produce more generalisable results: does parliamentary involvement make a difference across countries for how governments act?

Exploring these effects will directly contribute to the study of the democratic peace. Are differences in the conflict behavior of democracies rooted in the different ways in which parliaments can participate in decision-making? The studies by Dieterich et al. (2009, 2015) and Mello (2012) represent contributions to answering this question. Taken together, they demonstrate how a combination of sceptical public opinion, strong parliamentary war powers, and party constellations in parliament and government can contribute to military restraint. In line with these findings, Haesebrouck (2016) shows that a causal condition for military involvement against Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)/ Daesh was the absence of parliamentary war powers.

Yet, there is also reason to caution against overly optimistic conclusions about a probable pacifying effect of parliamentary involvement. Even for the Iraq War—which should be a most likely case for the parliamentary peace because citizens were strongly opposed to the war—we see that several democratic parliaments explicitly authorised military participation. Apart from the United States, this result occurred in Bulgaria, Denmark, and the Baltic countries, to name just a few examples where parliaments enjoyed veto rights, the public was opposed to the war, and countries nonetheless participated militarily in Iraq (Mello, 2014: 172).

Moreover, it appears that the parliamentary peace mechanism does not apply to certain military operations, such as missions conducted within alliance frameworks (see Wagner, this issue). To complicate matters further, parliamentary veto rights often, but do not always, coincide with constitutional restrictions on the use of force and a political culture of military restraint (Mello, 2014). This complication makes it challenging to isolate the effect of parliamentary war powers because outcomes might as well have been the result of firm constitutional restrictions or a restrained foreign policy culture. Expanding this kind of research in terms of operations, countries covered, and accounting for plausible alternative explanations is an obvious next step for consolidating knowledge about the effects of parliamentary influence and checking whether the results are generalisable.

Effects of parliamentary involvement on the politics of security

There are other potential effects of parliamentary involvement that go beyond immediate policy impact. By zeroing in on legislative–executive relations, research has lost sight of the fact that parliaments have functions other than directly constraining governments. Most importantly, they also represent, and contribute to, the public debate of policies. Their impact on public debates or, more broadly, on the politics of security is therefore the third, and final, concern of this Special Issue: what effect does parliamentary involvement have on the politics of security?

Answering this question can lay the groundwork for addressing important normative questions about parliamentary involvement in security policy. For a long time, political theorists have regarded political debate about foreign and security policy as problematic and argued for leaving this sphere to the executive as, for instance, John Locke 2004 [1690] in his *The Second Treatise*. This sentiment has been shared by many decision-makers who argue that 'partisan politics stops at the water's edge' (a claim attributed to US Senator Arthur Vandenberg) because the pursuit of national security requires national unity.

However, democratic theory today emphasises the general need for public debate and public justification and sees an extension of this debate into the security sphere as generally beneficial. Deliberative theories of democracy hold that democratically legitimate policies require public justification and deliberation. Arguably, parliaments have a particularly important place in such processes. As 'strong publics', they combine public deliberation of policies in a representative forum with the power to make binding decisions (Brunkhorst, 2002; Fraser, 1990: 75). In contrast to other forums for public debate, parliaments 'link justification on the one hand with public control and political equality on the other' (Lord, 2011: 1141). In a similar vein, scholars of the Copenhagen School advocate the "de-securitization" of political issues, that is to say, moving issues from the sphere of security into the sphere of public debate (see Behnke, 2013: 55–59). Although this result is rarely spelled out explicitly, parliamentary procedures can provide an avenue

for such "de-securitization" as they provide for a slowing down of political processes and offer the opportunity for open contestation of executive policies by the opposition.

At the heart of such arguments in favor of including parliaments into decision-making about security lies their role as forums for debate, contestation, and justification. Empirically, however, it is unclear whether the inclusion of parliaments in the making of security policy has this effect. On one hand, having parliaments debate security policy may well lead to a politicisation of security that extends partisan politics beyond the water's edge. It can put the executive under pressure to justify its policies publicly and provide room for the opposition to test the government's arguments and seek public support for its own position. Yet there may just as well be the contrary effect: the logic of security may be extended to the parliamentary realm. Consequently, parliamentary debate might become subdued in the security sphere and political parties may feel the pressure to demonstrate national unity vis-à-vis potential security threats. This question, however, can be settled only through empirical investigation, and, therefore, this Special Issue includes contributions which examine the levels of politicisation and debate in parliaments when security issues are concerned.

Contribution of the Special Issue

The articles assembled for this Special Issue can be organised into groups in line with the three guiding questions discussed in the preceding section. The first group identifies opportunities for parliamentary influence on security policy that result from informal sources. Strong revisits the debate about parliamentary war powers in Britain. He demonstrates the flexibility of constitutional rules by examining the new convention about parliamentary participation in decisions about troop deployments and exploring the areas where this convention remains open to interpretation. The inherent vagueness of the convention ultimately gives government a role in deciding whether to bring in or shut out parliament from decisions about troop deployments. Strong examines the incentives government has in such situations. Governments will weigh the likelihood of winning a vote and the political costs of circumventing parliament. Misperceptions may lead to miscalculations and eventually to defeat in parliament, as illustrated by the House of Commons' Syria vote. While Strong's argument may be particularly applicable to the British case with its convention-based constitutional system, it serves as a reminder that formal rules are rarely unequivocal and always need interpretation. This situation creates openings for other interested actors to enable or constrain parliamentary involvement. It also underlines that the executive might occasionally be interested in having parliament participate to share political responsibility and enhance the legitimacy of military operations.

Kaarbo takes this a step further and zeroes in on the role of one executive agent, the Prime Minister, in shaping the role of parliament. She offers the argument that formal constraints need to be activated before they become effective and argues that personality traits of the government leader can help explain why some are more inclined to allow or encourage parliamentary involvement than others. She uses Leadership Trait Analysis as an established toolset to develop hypotheses about the link between Prime Ministers' personalities and the role they allow for parliament and uses the cases of Britain and Turkey to illustrate their plausibility.

The other contributions in this section turn their eyes on parliament rather than the executive and examine how far parliamentarians themselves might be able to extend their influence beyond formal constraints. Kriner argues that even when the executive has

been able to circumvent the legislature in deploying troops, MPs can still constrain it indirectly by influencing public opinion. He demonstrates how statements by US Congressmen/Congresswomen can affect public opinion about the use of force in concrete cases. As executives are well advised to ensure public support for military operations, directly speaking to the public creates opportunities for parliamentarians to influence policy indirectly even for parliaments with weak formal competences. By using a survey experiment to test his claims, he goes beyond correlational analysis and demonstrates the causal influence that statements by Congressmen/Congresswomen have on public opinion.

Rosén and Raube, in contrast, examine opportunities that parliamentarians can create *within* parliamentary procedures. They explore ways in which the MEPs have managed to extend their influence over the EU's security policies. The EP is usually conceived as particularly powerless in security policy, but it has found several ways to exert influence at various stages of the decision-making process. Similarly, as Kriner and Rosén and Raube emphasise, parliamentarians can influence policies without actually co-deciding on them and argue that research needs to take into account the full policy process from agenda setting to the evaluation of policies in order to identify avenues of parliamentary influence. Moreover, they demonstrate how members of the EP have utilised their competences in other areas to gain leverage over security policies in those various stages.

Schade stays with European security policy but shows how the multilateralisation of security policy also opens up new opportunities for national parliaments. Where previous research had taken the multilateral character of deployments into account at all, it usually depicted it as a challenge and a problem for national parliaments that were argued to be the losers of the extant two-level games dynamics (e.g. Born and Hänggi, 2004). Schade, however, demonstrates that, in the case of the EU, there are often additional scrutiny mechanisms available to national parliaments. These procedures were created to allow for national parliamentary scrutiny of the EU's legislative activities. They can, however, be employed in the security realm as well to enhance the flow of information from the European level to national parliaments. The result can improve their position in the two-level game of EU security policy. His analysis of three parliaments and three EU operations demonstrates also, however, that the existence of opportunities does not imply that these opportunities are used by parliamentarians.

Finally, Oktay adds party politics to the equation. She shows how coalition politics can create opportunities for small parties and for the opposition in parliament to gain leverage. Analysing three parliaments (Denmark, the Netherlands, and Israel), she finds that coalition governments of different types and at different stages in their life cycles have strong incentives to seek support of opposition parties for their security policies. The result is logrolling. The opposition parties take the opportunity to extract concessions in other policy areas in exchange for their support of important decisions in the security realm.

What emerges from these contributions is a view of legislative–executive relations in the security realm that is much more dynamic than a focus on parliamentary competences and the partisan composition of parliament alone might suggest. The 'strength' or 'weakness' of parliaments in each situation appears, to a considerable degree, a matter of negotiation between parliamentarians and the executive. Both sides can employ a variety of resources in these interactions. Parliamentary competences and party coherence are only two such assets.

That formal competences are important but not all-encompassing is also reflected in the contribution that tackles the second of our guiding questions. What is the effect of parliamentary involvement on security policies of democracies? Wagner examines the question whether stronger parliamentary participation rights reduce involvement in military operations. To find a generalisable answer, he extends considerably the scope of earlier studies and examines the (non-)participation of all NATO members and Partnership for Peace countries in five military operations. His results not only provide modest support for a 'parliamentary peace' but also show the importance of contextual factors like the type of mission. For some operations, countries with weak parliamentary participation rights are indeed more likely to participate. This outcome does not occur, however, in two of the operations he examines: Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and the Iraq War. In explaining this difference between operations, he highlights the conditioning effects of *international* circumstances, whereas previous research has shown that domestic factors, such as public opinion and government ideology, condition the link between parliamentary competences and participation in military operations. Wagner argues that the international framing of an operation as a test for alliance solidarity can restrain the effect of parliamentary veto power.

Lagassé and Mello explore the 'unintended consequences' of parliamentary involvement, investigating parliamentary debates about troop deployments to Afghanistan in the Canadian and German legislatures. They find that involving parliaments does not necessarily lead to more pronounced political contestation. Rather, there are incentives for party elites to collude, to organise large majorities in favor of operations, and thus to suppress politicisation, especially once troops have been sent abroad.

This observation leads to the final set of articles, which focuses on the effect of parliamentary involvement on the politics of security. Does parliamentary involvement result in the politicisation of security or is security treated differently from other policy areas in parliament, and political debate is muted? In his study of the Finnish *Eduskunta* (its unicameral parliament), Raunio concludes that politicisation of security does occur in parliamentary proceedings but that it does so especially in times of political change. When strategic change was discussed in the Finnish parliament, security issues grew more salient and diverse political opinions were articulated. But this politicisation appeared to subside over time. It appears to have created a consensus about the desirability of both crisis management and parliamentary involvement, which makes today's debates about individual deployments generally less controversial. This outcome resonates with the findings of Lagassé and Mello, as they examine two countries where general debates about whether and how to use the armed forces after the Cold War have diminished as of late.

Hegemann, finally, extends the search for effects of parliamentary involvement in security in two ways. His study, first, puts this nascent strand of research in a broader context and links it to research about securitisation. Second, he extends the concept of security policy and examines the politicisation not of military deployments but of the oversight of intelligence agencies. He shows, for the German case, that recent intelligence scandals have led to increased public deliberation and political contestation in a policy area that is traditionally dominated by notions of consensus and confidentiality.

Hence, political contestation is not a matter of course once security issues become the subject of parliamentary procedures. But such procedures offer an opportunity for politicisation when issues are salient. Taken together, the contributions by Hegemann, Raunio, and Lagassé and Mello demonstrate the cross-cutting pressures at work in parliaments that debate security policy.

To some degree, we indeed see politicisation introduced through parliamentary involvement. This result appears to concern foremost questions that are judged to be of strategic relevance, however. Once the big decisions have been made, MPs have less incentive to question them afterward, especially if they had made these decisions themselves. This pattern holds for both debates about military operations and intelligence oversight. This outcome shows that insights from the study of military security issues may be extendable to broader security issues and that comparing the two areas may provide another useful avenue for future research.

Conclusion

This Special Issue focuses on the often neglected role that the pivotal democratic institution—parliament—plays in security policy. This introduction and the individual articles are structured along three analytical angles, focusing on parliamentary *involvement* in security policy, the *politicisation* of security matters, and parliamentary *influence* on policy outcomes. While the contributions share a focus on the questions developed in the introduction, they are methodologically and empirically diverse, including case studies, experiments, as well as statistical analyses, and drawing on 11 different parliamentary bodies and cross-national data on parliaments from 34 countries.

Our focus on parliaments shows what is peculiar about the security policies of democracies. These policies need to be justified publicly and parliament provides an institution that is designed as a forum for such justification and for holding executives to account over their policies. The cases discussed in this collection amply demonstrate that parliamentarians seek to fulfill this task also in the security realm and that they do have opportunities to debate and contribute to decision-making in this issue area.

Although these opportunities may generally be structured by their constitutional competences and by party affiliations, the contributions also make it clear that legislative–executive relations in this realm are flexible and dynamic. They are managed by both members of parliament and members of the executive, and the success of parliamentarians in making their voices heard depends on several informal and situational factors, including the personality traits of the government leader and the aptitude of actors on both sides in exploiting opportunities resulting, for example, from coalition dynamics, their competences in other areas, or their exposure to the media. This result does not imply that parliaments necessarily pose strong immediate constraints for government action. Their effects may be minimised by international pressure, and the level of contestation of security policies in parliamentary procedures appears to be limited, especially once strategic decisions have been made.

Pursuing these insights further promises to be beneficial for research on both IR and comparative politics. For democratic peace research, a focus on the processes of public justification and their institutional underpinning in parliaments will not only help to better understand what democracies have in common and what may inhibit them from going to war with each other. It also points to differences between them that may help to explain the differences in their conflict behavior vis-à-vis non-democracies.

Comparative politics and legislative studies can employ the insights to extend their reach into a policy area to which they have paid less attention and in which the level of politicisation may be less pronounced than in other policy areas. Scholars interested in the democratisation of security policy and decision-makers themselves may be interested in learning about the broad inventory of tools and assets that exist for parliamentarians to seek influence on what was long regarded as an executive domain. It is our hope that this

Special Issue sheds light on these issues, which we are just beginning to understand, and encourages further research along these lines.

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Notes

1. For recent overviews on democratic peace research, see Geis and Wagner (2008), Hayes (2011), and Mello (2017b). On legislative studies, see the contributions in Martin et al. (2014).
2. See also the individual contributions to a recent special issue of *West European Politics* (Raunio and Wagner, 2017). We do not argue that this rising research interest indicates an empirical trend toward the empowerment of parliaments in the security realm (comparable, for example, to parliamentary empowerment in European Union (EU) affairs; Winzen et al., 2015). While there have been claims about a trend toward the parliamentarisation of security policy (Damrosch, 2002), the empirical evidence in terms of formal parliamentary competences across countries and time is mixed (Peters and Wagner, 2011). Rather, we are concerned with better understanding the role of parliaments in security policy, which can serve as a basis for judging whether or not parliaments are becoming more empowered *de facto*.
3. In line with this focus, most of the contributions to this Special Issue deal with parliamentary involvement in military operations. Nonetheless, the collection also contains one article on intelligence oversight (Hegemann) that extends the scope to broader issues of security policy and that serves to demonstrate what can be gained from comparing insights about military security issues with issues of domestic security.
4. On parliamentary war powers in Britain, see also the contribution by Strong in this Special Issue. McCormack (2016) notes that the new convention of mandatory parliamentary approval does not apply to 'warfare by remote control' (especially the use of drones), which has become a prominent element in Western military action.
5. On the role of parliamentarians in negotiation delegations, see Onderco (2017).
6. See the contribution by Lagassé and Mello in this Special Issue.

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