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How Major Powers Diverge on Global Governance? Evidence from the United Nations General Debate

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Abstract

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is a central arena for countries to express their perspectives on global governance. Most of the existing literature focuses on how nations vote in UNGA but overlooks what they say. This paper examines the divergent views on global governance among major powers by conducting automated content analysis of UNGA speeches. We select key values in global governance through the UN as content categories, which include security, development, human rights, and democracy. Based on the results of automated text classification, we revealed the contrasting structures of discourse made by major powers. We also investigated major powers' attitudes towards global governance norms by conducting sentiment analysis. Our results show evidence contradicting conventional wisdom. For instance, UK, France, and Germany do not deliver more speeches on democracy and human rights than China and Russia at the UNGA, although the EU was argued to be a normative power.

Keywords:

global governance; UN General Debate; norms; automated content analysis

1. Introduction

Global governance has become an increasingly important area of study in International Relations (IR).¹ Although the concept of global governance has been widespread to depict the new modes of international and transnational response to

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1 Oran R. Young, *Governance in World Affairs* (Cornell University Press, 1999); Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, eds., *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kenneth W. Abbott et al., eds., *International Organizations as Orchestrators* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

urgent issues in post-Cold War international politics, there has been little agreement on the definition of global governance.² Nonetheless, scholars have concluded that the perspective of global governance fundamentally focuses on “the existence of norms, rules, and standards that structure and constrain social activity.”³ We consider that actors’ perceptions of international norms and values are one of the critical aspects in global governance. Constructivist scholars have developed extensive research on how international norms affect agents’ perceptions and how new norms emerge through agents’ interactions. Most of the previous research has focused on specific and concrete norms related to global governance, such as the non-use of nuclear weapons norm,⁴ anti-apartheid norm,⁵ the abolishment of anti-personnel landmines norm,⁶ and so forth. However, there is a notable paucity of studies investigating the international acceptance of more basic values that serve as the foundation for these specific norms.

After the Cold War’s demise, some expected that international support for fundamental values of global governance such as human rights and democracy would be strengthened.⁷ The acceptance level of these values would increase, and these values and norms would be shared among major powers. However, others argued that member states’ support for these values has eroded, especially since China and other non-Western countries gained more international influence and asserted divergent views on how the world should be governed.⁸

We are interested in whether international acceptance and understanding of values that serve as the basis of what we call, “global governance” has increased or not, and how it has changed. Tentatively, we name them “global governance values,” which include, for example, human rights, economic development, and “peace and security,” just as enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter.⁹ Although not stated in Article 1 of the UN Charter as the organization’s primary purpose, we added democracy on the list to reflect the fact that since the 1990s, democracy promotion has been incorporated into the organization’s important agenda. The extent of support for these values, especially human rights and humanitarian issues, would also be intertwined with how other fundamental international norms, such as sovereignty

2 Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson, “Rethinking Global Governance? Complexity, Authority, Power, Change,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2014): 207–15.

3 Klaus Dingwerth and Philipp Pattberg, “Global Governance as a Perspective on World Politics,” *Global Governance* 12 (2006): 199.

4 Nina Tannenwald, “The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use,” *International Organization* 53, no. 3 (1999): 433–68.

5 Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle against Apartheid* (Cornell University Press, 1999).

6 Adam Bower, “Norms without the Great Powers: International Law, Nested Social Structures, and the Ban on Antipersonnel Mines,” *International Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (2015): 347–73.

7 For the most notable example, see Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Free Press, 1992).

8 For example, see Andrei P. Tsygankov, “Russia’s International Assertiveness: What Does It Mean for the West?” *Problems of Post-Communism* 55, no. 2 (2008): 38–55; Alastair Iain Johnston, “How New and Assertive Is China’s New Assertiveness?” *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013): 7–48.

9 Article 1 of the UN Charter refers to the following purposes of the organization: “to maintain international peace and security,” “to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples...,” “to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion....”

and non-intervention into domestic affairs, are understood by major powers.

With its universal membership, the United Nations has been expected to play a leadership role in global governance.¹⁰ While a great deal of previous research into the UN has focused on the Security Council's authorization and member states' voting behavior,¹¹ less attention has been paid to the speeches made by state leaders and their delegates in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). A main reason for this may be that the UNGA has been seen as merely a "talk shop," and speeches do not convey costly signals. However, the UNGA General Debate provides all countries a unique opportunity to promulgate their foreign policy preferences with low external constraints and pressure.¹² Therefore, the General Debate speeches are valuable for us to understand how states perceive global governance values. Although scholars have conducted qualitative discourse analysis on the UN speeches and documents,¹³ most of these studies have suffered from a scarcity of standardized measures.¹⁴

To overcome the methodological hurdles of qualitative discourse analysis, we applied automated content analysis models to the UN General Assembly Debates to examine the different interests and perceptions of major powers about global governance. The General Assembly is the deliberative body in which member states express their support for particular values and can elaborate general norms and standards. And it also provides an arena where parties to a specific conflict can appeal to a broader audience.¹⁵ While some research has been carried out on the growing importance and power of non-state actors in global governance,¹⁶ the critical role played by great powers in the creation and acceptance of global norms cannot be ignored.¹⁷ We analyzed major powers' attitudes and perceptions towards

10 Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance* (Oxford University Press, 1995); Thomas G. Weiss, "Governance, Good Governance and Global Governance: Conceptual and Actual Challenges," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000): 795–814.

11 For example, see Erik Voeten, "Clashes in the Assembly," *International Organization* 54, no. 2 (2000): 185–215; Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy, Power, and the Symbolic Life of the UN Security Council," *Global Governance* 8 (2002): 35; Peter Ferdinand, "Foreign Policy Convergence in Pacific Asia: The Evidence from Voting in the UN General Assembly," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 16, no. 4 (2014): 662–79; Naoko Matsumura and Atsushi Tago, "Negative Surprise in UN Security Council Authorization: Do the UK and French Vetoes Influence the General Public's Support of US Military Action?" *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 3 (2019): 395–409.

12 The general debate is held at the beginning of each session of the General Assembly. According to the UN website, "(o)ften Member States are represented by their Heads of State or Government during the general debate" and "(t)he general debate provides an opportunity for Member States to raise any topic and statements often reflect issues of importance to the Member State." <https://ask.un.org/faq/154658>.

13 Stanley D. Brunn, "The Worldviews of Small States: A Content Analysis of 1995 UN Speeches," *Geopolitics* 4, no. 1 (1999): 17–33; Vrushali Patil, "Contending Masculinities: The Gendered (Re) Negotiation of Colonial Hierarchy in the United Nations Debates on Decolonization," *Theory and Society* 38, no. 2 (2009): 195–215; Nadine Puechguirbal, "Discourses on Gender, Patriarchy and Resolution 1325: A Textual Analysis of UN Documents," *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 2 (2010): 172–87.

14 For instance, Brunn gives a series of criteria to measure a state's worldviews such as official maps and propaganda cartography, however, those measures can hardly be used into other studies. See Brunn, "The Worldviews of Small States."

15 M.J. Peterson, *The UN General Assembly* (Routledge, 2006), 41.

16 For example, Weiss, "Governance, Good Governance and Global Governance"; Anna Holzscheiter, "Discourse as Capability: Non-State Actors' Capital in Global Governance," *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005): 723–46; Steven Bernstein and Benjamin Cashore, "Can Non-State Global Governance Be Legitimate? An Analytical Framework," *Regulation & Governance* 1, no. 4 (2007): 347–71.

17 Renee De Nevers, "Imposing International Norms: Great Powers and Norm Enforcement," *International Studies Review* 9, no. 1 (2007): 53–80; Xiaoyu Pu, "Socialisation as a Two-Way Process: Emerging Powers and the Diffusion of International Norms," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 4 (2012): 341–67.

global governance values by looking at their perceptions of key values—peace and security, human rights, democracy, and economic development through international cooperation. These values are set as the core purposes of the United Nations. Do major powers support them in words? How has their support for such norms changed over time? Moreover, how do the major powers' attitudes toward such values diverge from each other?

To answer these puzzles, we investigated political leaders' perceptions through their speeches in the UNGA. We select countries as major powers based on two criteria—the relative position in the international system and the ratio of financial contribution to the UN, which are the most critical factors affecting a state's ability to wield influence at the United Nations.¹⁸ First, we pick the five permanent members of the Security Council. Second, we select the UN's top five financial contributors—the United States, Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom—until 2018. It makes the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, Russia, Japan, and Germany become our investigation targets.

We will focus on the post-Cold War period when the constraints of bipolarity ended to control the influence of the international power structure on major powers' perceptions. We divide the period after the Cold War's demise into the three periods (1991-2000, 2001-2010, and 2011-2020) to observe perception changes among periods. This period division corresponds to major international development junctures, such as the Cold War's demise, the September 11 attacks and subsequent international wars, and the rapid rise of emerging powers.

The remaining part of the paper proceeds as follows: the second section discusses the existing literature on the discourse of global governance and generates a set of hypotheses from international relations theories that are closely related to our research questions; our research methodology is explained in the third section; the fourth section presents the findings of the research; the final section concludes with a summary of the results and their implications for the studies of international relations.

2. Contending Discourses of Global Governance

Western democracies have openly expressed their support for human rights norms and criticized human rights abuses in other countries. According to the European Council, one of the EU's top priorities in the UNGA is "to defend and promote universal values." The promotion and protection of human rights are at the core of the EU's actions.¹⁹ European states' emphasis on human rights in the UN has been long ingrained in their self-images as well.²⁰ Likewise, in many cases, the US has been a

18 Courtney B. Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations: The Global Dance* (Lynne Rienner, 2006), 24–25.

19 "EU priorities at the United Nations and the 73rd United Nations General Assembly (September 2018 – September 2019)," Council of the European Union, June 25, 2018. <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10056-2018-INIT/en/pdf> (accessed on June 28, 2021).

20 Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2

promoter of human rights in the UN, for instance, by playing a pivotal role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. US citizens' support for fundamental freedoms is higher than the world average,²¹ even though their government's practices have cast a shadow on their ideals. Moreover, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the promotion of democracy and political rights has become an essential element of the EU and the US foreign policy.²² Our first hypothesis concerns the US and European views on global governance. We expect these countries to deliver a more significant number of speeches on human rights and democracy than China and Russia, which are more authoritarian states. And we also predict that the US and European governments put more stress on human rights than Japan, which is a liberal democratic country but not an eloquent advocate of human rights.²³

Hypothesis 1. The US and major European powers emphasize the importance of human rights and democracy among global governance values.

Since the turn of the century, China has increased its influence globally, and gradually it expanded its presence in multilateral organizations.²⁴ China regards the UN as a forum in which it can engage in global affairs. Due to the increase of its economic power, since 2019, China has become the second-largest contributor to the UN's regular budget.²⁵ It is also the second-largest contributor to the peacekeeping budget and provides more peacekeeping personnel than the other four permanent UN Security Council members.²⁶ China launched the Belt and Road Initiative in the Eurasia region to obtain a stable market and natural resources, potentially providing public goods through investments for infrastructure in those areas.²⁷ However, the Chinese government's basic posture has been unchanging in the UNGA. Even after becoming the second-largest financial contributor of the UN, the Chinese government, based on its own experience as a developing country, has emphasized the importance of state sovereignty and stressed that the UN should be a venue for international development cooperation for the developing countries. Therefore, China

(2002): 235-258; Bardo Fassbender, "The Better Peoples of the United Nations? Europe's Practice and the United Nations," *European Journal of International Law* 15, no. 5 (2004): 857-84.

21 "U.S. Opinion on Human Rights," Council on Foreign Affairs, September 4, 2009. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-opinion-human-rights> (accessed on June 28, 2021).

22 Sandra Lavenex and Frank Schimmelfennig, "EU Democracy Promotion in the Neighbourhood: From Leverage to Governance?" *Democratization* 18, no. 4 (2011): 885-909; Tanja A. Börzel, "The Noble West and the Dirty Rest? Western Democracy Promoters and Illiberal Regional Powers." *Democratization* 22, no. 3 (2015): 519-535.

23 Kaoru Korusu and Rikki Kersten, "Japan as an Active Agent for Global Norms: The Political Dynamism Behind the Acceptance and Promotion of 'Human Security'," *Asia-Pacific Review* 18, no. 2 (2011): 115-137.

24 Alastair Iain Johnston, *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 33-39; Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones, "China Challenges Global Governance? Chinese International Development Finance and the AIIB." *International Affairs* 94, no. 3 (2018): 573-593.

25 "China rises to 2nd largest contributor to UN budget," *Xinhuanet*, December 24, 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/24/c_137695776.htm (accessed on June 28, 2021).

26 China Power Team, "Is China contributing to the United Nations' mission?" CSIS-China Power, March 7, 2016. <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-un-mission/> (accessed on June 28, 2021).

27 Yiping Huang, "Understanding China's Belt & Road Initiative: Motivation, Framework and Assessment." *China Economic Review* 40 (2016): 314-321.

has repeatedly articulated that the South-South development cooperation should be promoted without external intervention in other member states' internal affairs.

Hypothesis 2. China emphasizes economic development throughout all the periods.

Due to its economic success with constitutional constraints on military capability, Japan has implemented its international cooperation policy by mainly relying on official economic development assistance (ODA) policy until the 2010s. However, Japan has slowly made itself equipped with other policy tools, including the Self Defense Forces (SDF) participation in UN-led peacekeeping activities and involvement in peacebuilding initiatives such as in Cambodia, East Timor, and Afghanistan. Due to its historical relationship with the East Asian countries, Japan has long stayed away from asserting so-called "universal values" such as human rights and democracy. However, its stance started to be challenged gradually. For instance, in the late 1980s and 1990s, as was seen in governments' reaction to the Tiananmen incident, the Western governments took a concerted action applying economic sanctions or conditionalities to human rights practice. The Japanese government was persuaded to participate in Western countries' concerted action, thereby using economic sanctions, though only limited in scale. By the 2010s, Japan took the initiative for introducing the phrase "universal value" into the official document.

Hypothesis 3. Japan's main value focus is on economic development over all the periods. However, security and human rights values will gain importance gradually.

In the post-Cold War era, the UN has become a vital platform to promulgate international norms.²⁸ The evolution of international norms can be divided into three stages: norm emergence, norm cascade, and internalization.²⁹ Our last hypothesis is deductively derived from a simplified sociological institutionalism model and a part of social constructivism. As Meyer states: "States and other organizations tend prominently to reflect institutionalized models in standardized ways."³⁰ According to this theory, "institutionalized models are likely to have strong diffusive or wave-like effects on the orientations and behavior of all sorts of participants in organizational life, whether or not they are incorporated into formal policies."³¹

Hypothesis 4. The major powers' acceptance of global governance values has increased from an overall perspective.

28 Michael N. Barnett, "Bringing in the New World Order: Liberalism, Legitimacy, and the United Nations." *World Politics* 49, no. 4 (1997): 526-551.

29 Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887-917.

30 John W. Meyer, "Reflections on Institutional Theories of Organizations," in *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, ed. Royston Greenwood, Christine Oliver, Roy Suddaby, and Kerstin Sahlin (Sage Publications, 2008), 800.

31 Ibid.

In addition, we will briefly examine competing explanations of the hypotheses. Some of the seven major powers might not support global governance values or decrease their support level because of their domestic conditions such as more authoritarian tendencies, economic constraints, or external conditions such as security considerations.

3. Research Design

3.1. Data

To test the above hypotheses, we analyzed the speeches delivered by the head of governments. Of course, to capture top leaders' perceptions about fundamental values of global governance, other data such as diplomatic records and speeches at parliaments should be taken into consideration. However, the speech dataset of the UNGA General Debate is just recently created, and therefore we will start from this point.³² The UN General Debate corpus contains all the full texts of the General Debate speeches addressed by the leaders or their representatives of all the member states from 1970 to 2020, which is useful to probe the temporal changes of state preferences.³³ We use a subset of the UNGD corpus for our analysis. To be specific, we extracted the speeches made by major powers—the United States, China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, and Germany—from 1991 to 2020. We selected 210 speeches in total.

3.2. Content Analysis

Our research will investigate the similarities and divergences in the UN speeches of major powers, mainly relying on quantitative text analysis. We utilize the text-as-data approach for several reasons. First, although analyzing member states' voting behavior would serve as a basis for understanding their preferences, it does not explain actors' motives and perceptions that lead to their voting behavior. In this study, we attempt to uncover the member states' intentions behind their behaviors. Second, technically speaking, among the total number of resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly, only less than 30 percent is put to the vote; the rest are adopted by consensus.³⁴ Therefore, reaching conclusions solely based on an analysis of voting behavior has its limitations. Third, with the rapid development of natural language process technology, collecting and analyzing large-scale textual data

32 Slava Jankin Mikhaylov, Alexander Baturo, and Niheer Dasandi, "United Nations General Debate Corpus", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0TJX8Y>, Harvard Dataverse, V6.

33 Although a large percentage of the speeches are delivered in the leaders' native language, all statements are transcribed and translated into English based on the rules of the Assembly. For speeches made in a language other than English, the UNGD corpus used the official English version provided by the UN. Existing research has shown that translating multi-language data into a single language can be an effective strategy for automated text analysis. See Christopher Lucas, Richard A. Nielsen, Margaret E. Roberts, Brandon M. Stewart, Alex Storer, and Dustin Tingley, "Computer-Assisted Text Analysis for Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 23, no. 2 (2015): 254-277. Considering the UN speeches are translated by professional UN staffs rather than machines, we can expect that translation of languages does not generate big problems for our analysis.

34 Peterson, *The UN General Assembly*.

automatically by computers has been methodologically possible recently.³⁵

Automated content analysis has been used in many fields of political science, such as party ideology,³⁶ electoral reform,³⁷ and policy agenda.³⁸ So far, however, the application of this method in IR is still limited. We conducted both quantitative and qualitative content analysis on the major powers' post-Cold War speeches in the UN General Debates. On the one hand, quantitative content analysis is employed to systematically discover major countries' narrative structures and detect their attitudes towards global governance's core values. On the other hand, the qualitative content analysis is performed to excavate the speeches more deeply by manually analyzing some meaningful samples.

3.2.1. Semi-Supervised Topic Classification

We use automated topic classification techniques to reveal the structures of significance in the UNGD data. Many methods have been used for the task of text classification. Topic models are kinds of unsupervised machine learning methods employed by researchers to discover topics in documents. For example, Grimmer introduced a Bayesian hierarchical topic model to estimate the expressed priorities in the texts and applied it to a collection of over 24,000 press releases from the US senators. He validated his model through a series of evaluations and showed that the model would be useful in studying congressional communication.³⁹ Roberts, Stewart, and Airoidi developed a structural topic model that incorporates document-level covariates to the model so that researchers can capture the effect of covariates on the predicted topics. They demonstrated their model by examining the variation in different news sources on China's rise.⁴⁰ However, there is no guarantee that the topics generated by topic models are understandable and interpretable⁴¹ because topic models are driven by statistical probabilities rather than social science theories.

Supervised learning methods are also used to classify documents into categories. King, Pan, and Roberts used a supervised classifier called ReadMe to categorize millions of Chinese social media posts into 85 topic areas and compared the changes of topic proportion before and after the Chinese government's censorship.

35 Justin Grimmer and Brandon M. Stewart, "Text as Data: The Promise and Pitfalls of Automatic Content Analysis Methods for Political Texts," *Political Analysis* 21, no. 3 (2013): 267–97; John Wilkerson and Andreu Casas, "Large-Scale Computerized Text Analysis in Political Science: Opportunities and Challenges," *Annual Review of Political Science* 20 (2017): 529–44.

36 Michael Laver, Kenneth Benoit, and John Garry, "Extracting Policy Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 2 (2003): 311–31; Sven-Oliver Proksch and Jonathan B. Slapin, "Position Taking in European Parliament Speeches," *British Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 3 (2010): 587–611.

37 Amy Catalinac, *Electoral Reform and National Security in Japan: From Pork to Foreign Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2016); Bjørn Høyland and Martin G. Søyland, "Electoral Reform and Parliamentary Debates," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2019): 593–615.

38 Justin Grimmer, "A Bayesian Hierarchical Topic Model for Political Texts: Measuring Expressed Agendas in Senate Press Releases," *Political Analysis* 18, no. 1 (2010): 1–35; Kevin M. Quinn et al., "How to Analyze Political Attention with Minimal Assumptions and Costs," *American Journal of Political Science* 54, no. 1 (2010): 209–28.

39 Grimmer, "A Bayesian Hierarchical Topic Model for Political Texts".

40 Margaret E. Roberts, Brandon M. Stewart, and Edoardo M. Airoidi, "A Model of Text for Experimentation in the Social Sciences," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 111, no. 515 (2016): 988–1003.

41 Edoardo M. Airoidi and Jonathan M. Bischof, "Improving and Evaluating Topic Models and Other Models of Text," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 111, no. 516 (2016): 1381–1403.

They found that topics related to mobilization of collective actions were more likely to be censored, but criticism against the government was often allowed.⁴² Workman collected all the rules promulgated by the federal bureaucracy from 1983-2008 and manually coded 40,000 of them according to the Policy Agenda Project coding scheme. He used the hand-coded data training and automated text-coding machine and predicted the topics of all the regulations.⁴³ Although researchers can set topics basing on the content of texts and theories when training a supervised model, an extensive training set is usually prohibitively expensive for resource-strapped researchers.

For the balance of cost and performance, we use a semi-supervised model called Newsmap to conduct the UN speeches' topic classification. Newsmap is created to classify short news summaries according to their geographic focus, but it can also organize documents into pre-defined topics.⁴⁴ The model only requires a small dictionary containing the topics and some seed words related to each topic, instead of a large human coding training set. Based on the previous studies on global governance and the United Nations⁴⁵ and the UN General Debates' content, we set six topics to classify the major powers' speeches, which are peace and security, development, human rights, democracy, United Nations, and greetings.⁴⁶ We add "greetings" as a category to capture the opening remarks and salutations though it is not of our interests. Also, we create the "UN" category because a large number of speeches focus on the United Nations per se.

3.2.2. Sentiment Analysis

Political discourse is more than just factual information—the sentiment contained in the texts is of equal importance.⁴⁷ With the rapid development of natural language processing techniques, an increasing number of political communication studies are using automated sentiment analysis to investigate how the tone or sentiment of news coverage, political speeches, and advertisements affects people's decision-making process.⁴⁸ In this study, we use the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary⁴⁹ to measure the

42 Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 2 (2013): 326–43.

43 Samuel Workman, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy in the US Government: How Congress and Federal Agencies Process Information and Solve Problems* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

44 Kohei Watanabe, "Conspiracist Propaganda: How Russia Promotes Anti-Establishment Sentiment Online," in *ECPR General Conference, Hamburg, 2018*; Kohei Watanabe, "Newsmap: A Semi-Supervised Approach to Geographical News Classification," *Digital Journalism* 6, no. 3 (2018): 294–309.

45 For example, see Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations*; Thomas G. Weiss and Ramesh Thakur, *Global Governance and the UN: An Unfinished Journey* (Indiana University Press, 2010).

46 More technical details can be found in Kohei Watanabe and Yuan Zhou, "Theory-Driven Analysis of Large Corpora: Semisupervised Topic Classification of the UN Speeches," *Social Science Computer Review* (forthcoming).

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

48 For example, see Andrea Lawlor, "Local and National Accounts of Immigration Framing in a Cross-National Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no. 6 (2015): 918–41; Andrea Ceron et al., "Every Tweet Counts? How Sentiment Analysis of Social Media Can Improve Our Knowledge of Citizens' Political Preferences with an Application to Italy and France," *New Media & Society* 16, no. 2 (2014): 340–58; Bjorn Burscher, Rens Vliegthart, and Claes H. de Vreese, "Frames Beyond Words: Applying Cluster and Sentiment Analysis to News Coverage of the Nuclear Power Issue," *Social Science Computer Review* 34, no. 5 (2016): 530–45.

49 Young and Soroka, "Affective News".

changes in tones on democracy and human rights in the UN speeches. The sentiment scores are calculated by subtracting the number of negative words from the number of positive words. We also analyzed the positive words and negative words related to the topics to explore how major powers frame international norms.

4. Results

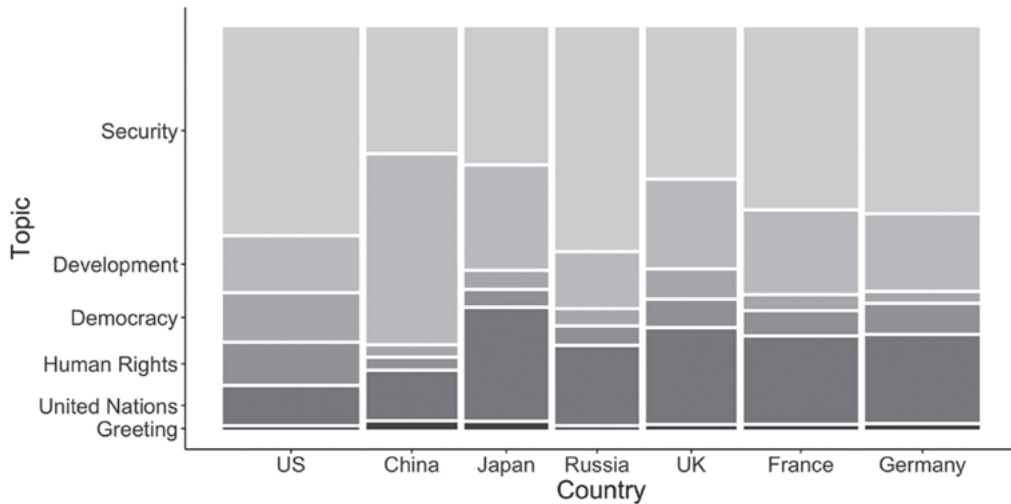
4.1. Topic Structures of Major Powers' Speeches

Following the work on discourse analysis in IR,⁵⁰ we classified the UN speeches into 6 topics to examine the signification structure. Figure 1 shows the predicted topic proportions of each country. It has been a relatively common understanding that the UN's principles and norms reflect the American preference for an ordered world.⁵¹ Our results show that the global governance values we have discussed are not treated equally in the US discourses. The US emphasized more on democracy and human rights than any other major powers, which is consistent with our H1. Nonetheless, it should also be noted that security issues are allocated the largest proportion in the US representatives' speech. A possible explanation for this might be that despite the UN's imperfections, especially in the US policymakers' eyes, it is a multilateral organization with universal membership. Besides, the UN Security Council is the only forum that can legitimize a country's military action. The large proportion of speech on peace and security shows that the US attempts to spread its narratives of security threats such as "War on Terror" in the UNGA to legitimize its use of force in international affairs.⁵²

50 Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 225-254; Anna Holzscheiter, "Between Communicative Interaction and Structures of Signification: Discourse Theory and Analysis in International Relations," *International Studies Perspectives* 15, no. 2 (2014): 142-162; Tom Lundborg and Nick Vaughan-Williams, "New Materialisms, Discourse Analysis, and International Relations: A Radical Intertextual Approach," *Review of International Studies* (2015): 3-25.

51 Shashi Tharoor, "Why America Still Needs the United Nations," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 5 (2003): 67-80.

52 Inis L. Claude argues that the UN General Assembly functions as an agency to confer collective legitimacy to states. See Inis L. Claude, "Collective Legitimization as a Political Function of the United Nations," *International Organization* 20, no. 3 (1966): 367-379.

Figure 1. The Structures of the Signification of Major Powers' Speeches from 1991-2020

Previous studies on EU voting behavior in the UN General Assembly have found that the European integration led to a voting cohesion of the member states.⁵³ Our results show that the three European major powers' topic structures have strong similarities to each other. It does not necessarily mean that the three countries "speak with one voice," but suggests that they speak in the same volume on the same topic in the UNGA General Debates. Although Europe was argued to be a "normative power"⁵⁴ or a "liberal power,"⁵⁵ our results suggest that the United Kingdom, France, and Germany do not talk about democracy or human rights significantly more frequently than other major powers. So-called "Western values" are not much emphasized by major European countries in the UNGA speeches, thereby denies our H1 partially. Similar to most of the other countries discussed here, they all put a high priority on security issues. It might be a bias caused by the UNGA general debate's characteristics since the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the UNGA are more essential venues for actual discussions on human rights and democracy.

Among the seven major powers, China's prominent feature is that approximately half of its speech is on the topic of development. This result follows our H2. We surmise that this is because China describes itself as a developing country and because China's priority has been to become a modern and powerful nation-state. Moreover, China's rapid economic development has served favorably to its public

53 Paul Luif, *EU Cohesion in the UN General Assembly* (European Union Institute for Security Studies Paris, 2003); Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations*; Madeleine O. Hosli et al., "Voting Cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly: The Case of the European Union," in *ECPR Fifth Pan-European Conference*, Porto, 2010.

54 Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 235–58.

55 Wolfgang Wagner, "Liberal Power Europe," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 55, no. 6 (2017): 1398–1414.

diplomacy.⁵⁶ In other words, China emphasizes economic development in the UNGA to use the UN General Assembly as a platform to trumpet its economic development and attract the other developing countries in the world.

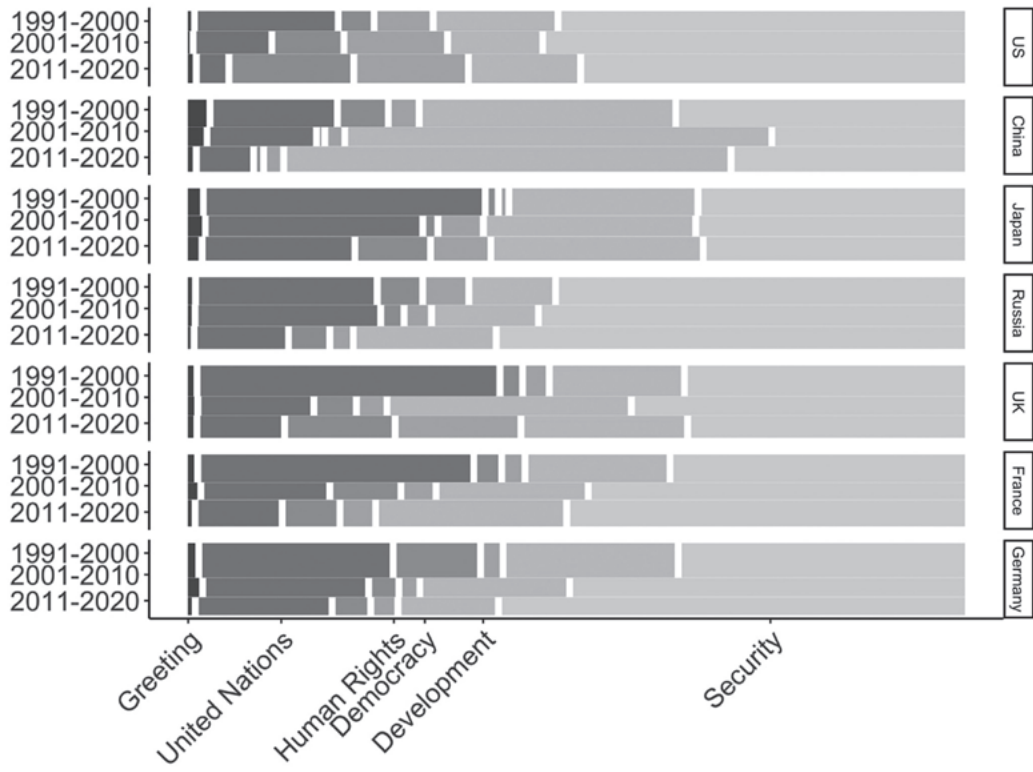
Although China and Russia are marked with similarities such as the authoritarian political structure and some convergence in their strategic interests,⁵⁷ our results revealed that Russia and China's discourse in the UN General Assembly had entirely different topic structures. While China's primary concern is development, Russia talked least on economic development among the major powers. Also, Russia spends the most significant portion of words on security among major powers.

Figure 2 displays the topic structures of major powers' speeches in three periods. This graph is quite revealing in several ways. First, France and Germany paid more attention to security issues after 2000. This is because terrorism has become an increasingly severe concern for European countries in the wake of 9/11.⁵⁸ The former French Minister of Foreign Affairs Philippe Douste-Blazy stated at the 60th UNGA General Debate that "terrorism is now at the top of the list of human rights violations." In the 68th Debate 2013, the former Deputy Prime Minister of the UK Nicholas Clegg said, "we are all affected by the scourge of terrorism." The two European countries called for international cooperation on counter-terrorism in the UN General Debates almost every year after 9/11.

56 Yiwei Wang, "Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 257–73.

57 Rajan Menon, "The Strategic Convergence between Russia and China," *Survival* 39, no. 2 (1997): 101–25.

58 Petter Nesser, "Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007: Planned, Prepared, and Executed Terrorist Attacks," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 10 (2008): 924–46.

Figure 2. The Temporal Changes of Major Powers' Speech Topics

Second, democracy and human rights have become more and more salient issues in the US discourse. The US government routinely uses human rights narratives to legitimize its foreign policy.⁵⁹ The US highlights human rights as a concrete concept and associates human rights with international affairs' specific phenomena. For instance, in the 2007 General Debate, George W. Bush accused Belarus, North Korea, Syria, and Iran, saying "brutal regimes deny their people the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration." A dichotomy between democracy and dictatorship often marks the democracy discourse of the US. In the 2000 General Debate, the former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said: "In any country, at any time, dictatorship is an imposition. Democracy is a choice." Moreover, in 2003, President Bush said: "Iraq as a dictatorship had great power to destabilize the Middle East. Iraq as a democracy will have great power to inspire the Middle East."

Third, Among the topics on global governance, similar to other major countries except for the Chinese case, the Japanese representatives spoke about

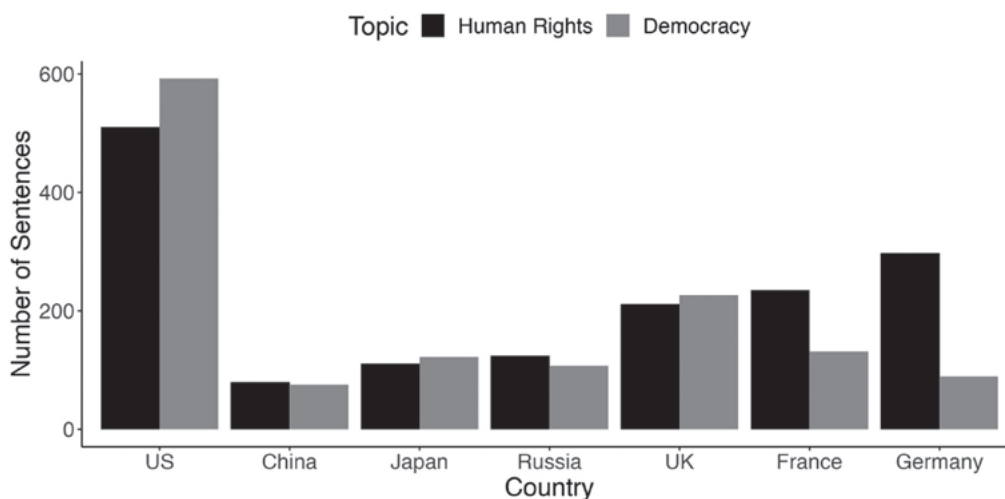
59 Julie A. Mertus, *Bait and Switch: Human Rights and US Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2008).

security issues most often. And its portion slightly increased since the turn of the century as strategic rivalries in East Asia have become more evident. However, Japan has apparently emphasized developmental issues throughout the three decades, similar to China's orientation in the UNGA. Another noticeable feature is that the Japanese representatives talk progressively more about democracy and human rights since the turn of the century, supporting our H3. It contrasts with its attitude to democracy and human rights topics in the UNGA during the 1990s.

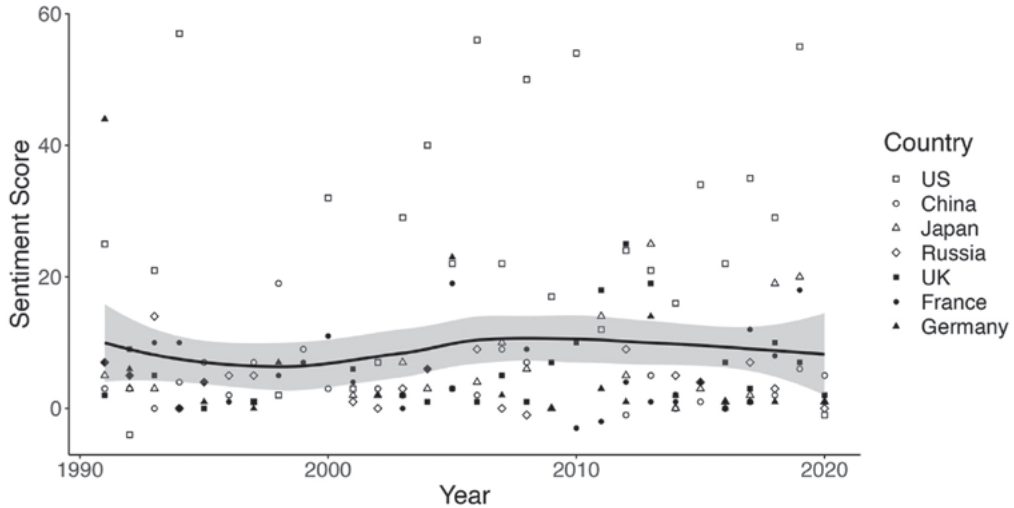
4.2 Major Powers' Sentiment towards Democracy and Human Rights

After investigating discourse structure, we extracted speeches on two topics—democracy and human rights—and conducted sentiment analysis to examine the major powers' support for democracy and human rights. Figure 3 shows the number of sentences classified into the two topics by country.

Figure 3. The Number of Sentences on Democracy and Human Rights



The major powers' sentiments towards democracy after the Cold War are presented in Figure 4. From this figure, the average sentiment to democracy of the seven countries remained positive and did not change much during the whole period. In other words, positive sentiment about democratic value does not show any swift upward trend, but just a slow and slight increase is seen since the 2000s. Therefore, we cannot conclude that our H4 is strongly confirmed.

Figure 4. Sentiment Analysis of the Speeches on Democracy

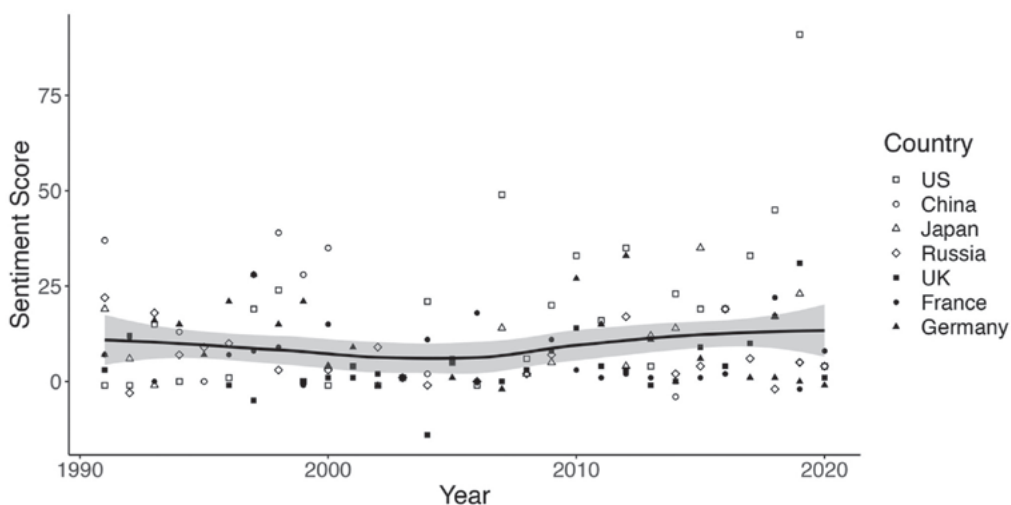
In the great majority of cases, there are more positive words than negative words on democracy. It is not surprising because most leaders would express a positive attitude to democracy in a formal speech, especially when faced with international audiences. One interesting finding is that the number of European countries' remarks on democracy is far lower than expected. Their expressed attitudes to democracy are not much different from Russia, Japan, and China. It is worth pointing out that, compared to domestic democracy, China highlighted the democratic relationship between nation-states. In the 1992 UN General Debate, the Foreign Minister of China Qian Qichen said: "countries should respect each other, treat each other as equals, and resolve their disputes through peaceful negotiations. Only when all countries undertake to observe these principles can there be genuine democracy in international relations."

Only the United States spoke on democracy nearly every year and with a much more positive tone than other countries. The US tends to use democracy to frame any reasonable changes in international affairs. For instance, in the 2010 UNGA General Debate, President Obama said: "(India) peacefully threw off colonialism and established a thriving democracy of over a billion people"; "(Indonesia) binds together thousands of islands through the glue of representative government and civil society"; and "(Japan) found peace and extraordinary development through democracy." Moreover, when talking about the Arab Spring, which was depicted as a state of turbulence by Russia, Obama contended that "for the first time in decades, Tunisians, Egyptians, and Libyans voted for new leaders in elections that were credible, competitive and fair."

Figure 5 illustrates the major powers' sentiments on human rights. From the 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, there was a mild decline in the average

sentiment score. Also, there is a slight decline in score right after the 9.11 terrorist attacks with its lowest peak in 2003. The average sentiment towards human rights became slightly more positive after 2003. In total, there is no clear evidence that supports our H4 in terms of human rights so far.

Figure 5. Sentiment Analysis of the Speeches on Human Rights



One of the possible explanations for this is the change in the Chinese government's attitude. In the figure, China delivered very positive-tone speeches on human rights during the 1990s, but since 2000 China has not mentioned human rights anymore. It may be because the Chinese government has changed its strategies for responding to the criticism of human rights from Western countries. Specifically, China tried to promote its achievements on human rights, especially in terms of economic and social rights, in the 1990s. But eventually, around 2000, it chose to be silent on human rights issues. In the 1991 UNGA General Debate, China admitted that "the promotion of the universal attainment of human rights and fundamental freedoms is inextricably linked to the common interests of mankind." The Chinese representative, however, continued: "human rights have been used as a means of pushing power politics and interfering in affairs that are basically within the jurisdiction of other States; the concept of human rights has been fragmented and double standards have been followed; some have made efforts to glorify themselves and attack others on the question of human rights and set up their likes and dislikes as criteria of human rights in disregard of the international conventions and the specific conditions of other countries."

Contrastingly, the US used human rights as a foreign policy tool for criticizing other states' domestic affairs in the General Debate. In the 2007 General Debate,

President Bush denounced the human rights conditions in Belarus, North Korea, Syria, and Iran. He also referred to Myanmar's human rights conditions and said: "a military junta has imposed a 19-year reign of fear" and in Zimbabwe "ordinary citizens suffer under a tyrannical regime." However, President Trump brought the principle of sovereignty back in the US speech. In the 2017 General Debate, he said: "Strong sovereign nations let their people take ownership of the future and control their destiny. Strong, sovereign nations allow individuals to flourish in the fullness of the life intended by God."

5. Discussion

This study set out to examine whether the major powers' views on global governance have converged after the cold war. According to our content analysis, there is limited evidence that human rights and democratic values are increasingly common among major states. Rather, major powers have divergent value preferences. For instance, mainly China and Japan emphasize developmental values, and the US prefers democratic values more than other major countries.

Prior work has highlighted the importance of discourse in international politics. However, most of the existing methods have either been highly subjective or have been too resource-consuming to code the data. This study conducted automated text analysis on the major powers' UN General Debate speeches to discover their changing views on international norms. The major advantage of automated text analysis is that researchers can use this method to make an inference by mining large-scale texts without too much cost or time. We used only a small manually-coded dictionary and achieved topic classification with high accuracy, reaching over 70% in sentence classification. It should be noted that sentence-level text classification is an arduous task even for human coders. For instance, we can hardly classify sentences such as "in some areas the loss was very heavy" (from China's 1991 speech) into any topics without any context or background knowledge. Nonetheless, our results are consistent with the findings of an extensive range of existing IR studies and provide some new insights on the major powers' discourse of international norms. Moreover, because each topic's classification error can be offset by the errors of other topics, the accuracy of the estimated topic proportion is assumed to be higher than the accuracy of single sentence classification.

Compared to qualitative discourse analysis, quantitative text analysis is usually easier for scholars to replicate the research results. Researchers do not have to read all the text data manually, which is unreasonable for most scholars. Instead, they only need to import the data into statistical software and run the replication code. It makes discourse analysis more valid to the criticism of its lack of testable theories or systematic evidence.

However, automated content analysis cannot replace the necessity of human reading. As Grimmer and Stewart note: "quantitative methods augment humans,

not replace them.”⁶⁰ Our research uses an automated text analysis method to detect the topic structures and UN speeches’ sentiments. Once the topic structures and characteristics of sentiments are discovered, we search for explanations for the results by a careful reading of the texts. Another point we need to pay attention to is that the results generated by text analysis models should always be validated. We manually coded a test set containing 27 speeches made by different countries to validate our model, and the F1 score reached 0.72.

Our research has shown how the text-analysis method can facilitate IR study. We are aware that major powers’ speeches in other sessions, such as the General Assembly plenary meetings, should also be included in future research to answer our research questions. It is recommended that more extensive textual data be investigated to improve our knowledge of global governance.

Acknowledgement

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60 Grimmer and Stewart, “Text as Data,” 270.