

A multilevel analysis of public support for development across the EU 1995-2012

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Introduction

This paper is motivated by a simple question: what drives individual-level support for development assistance? Among development agencies and donor countries, there has been long-standing concern with levels of public support for development assistance (DFID, 1997, 1999; Fransman & Lecomte, 2004; McDonnell, Henri-Bernard, & Wegimont, 2003; Smillie, 1999), and recent events—chief amongst these the economic downturn—have combined to generate a higher public, political and media profile for foreign aid debates. In the UK, the centre-right Coalition Government's decision to 'ring-fence' the aid budget while other agencies experienced significant cuts, sparked a wider debate over maintaining international commitments in a time of 'austerity' and whether 'charity begins at home'. Across a number of donor countries including Australia, Iceland, Ireland the UK and in the United States, 'we cant afford it' debates have taken place amongst academics, policymakers, journalists and the public.

It has long been argued that public support for aid, even if high, is actually quite shallow. Smillie (1998, p. 23) famously described it as 'a mile wide and an inch deep'. Indeed, survey data in the UK, for example, suggests some decline in public support in the UK, e.g. respondents supporting government action to reduce poverty in poor countries fell from 50 per cent in 2007 to 35 per cent in February 2010 (DFID, 2010; Henson & Lindstrom, 2013).

The recent crisis comes on the heels of economic good times in donor countries and something of a golden age for foreign aid in the 2000s, following the 2005 G8 Gleneagles Agreements on increasing aid and debt relief. This period also saw strong public support for aid to developing countries. Data from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) shows that support for development has been consistently high, averaging over 80% from 1983 to 2004 (Zimmerman, 2008). Meanwhile, a recent survey of European Union member states found that 85% of Europeans think it is important to help people in developing countries, down only 3% from 2009 (Eurobarometer, 2012). And recent data UK and the US shows that

while public support for development has dampened as a result of the economic crisis, it still enjoys a sizeable majority of support in both countries.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Figure 1 shows the levels of public support for development assistance—as measured by those who felt that it was quite important or very important to help people in poor countries—for the 9 years between 1995 and 2012 that the question was put to EU citizens (purple columns, right hand y axis). As is apparent, support tends to run pretty high, between 76 and 95 per cent. The data suggests that support was highest in the mid-1990s, before dipping at the end of the decade, rising again in the mid 2000s and then dipping again with the onset of the global financial crisis and economic recession. This fits with other longitudinal survey data such as presented in Darnton (2011) which narrates a boost in support around the 2005 Make Poverty History Campaign and a low but steady drop off in more recent years.

The figure also shows the key economic variables averaged across all the current 27 members of the EU. They all tell a familiar story. Average income levels (green line, left hand y axis) have steadily risen (note this measure is in constant 2005 prices, so the increase is in real terms) with a sharp dip in 2008-09. Unemployment was steadily falling, but experienced a sharp uptick in 2007 and has continued to climb. We also plot average government debt over time, which was also falling, but bank bailouts and the economic downturn have triggered a return to higher levels of indebtedness. Taken together, these three indicators point to the increasingly difficult economic conditions faced in Europe and beyond; the conditions, which it is widely assumed, serve to depress support for aid downwards. Our aggregate measures do seem to suggest *some* co-movement of support and the economy, but it's also noticeable that support remains reasonably robust (Eurobarometer, 2012). In this paper we drill down to see how much the economic context drives individuals' support for development.

Our contribution

To our knowledge, there is no single, longitudinal study of individual level support for aid. This gap stands in contrast to a growing, but inconclusive literature detailing the economic and political determinants of donor countries' aid efforts (Chong & Gradstein, 2008; Milner & Tingley, 2010) and more recently aid efforts in response to economic downturn (Ahmed, Marcoux, Russell, & Tierney, 2011). Moreover, the relative dearth of work on individual-level support for aid (Henson & Lindstrom, 2013; Paxton & Knack, 2012; van Heerde & Hudson, 2010) is all the more surprising given the prominent role public support is seen to play in domestic political debates on increasing/reforming aid (Collier, 2007; Hudson & VanHeerde-Hudson, 2012; Stern, 1998). The received wisdom has become, in the words of the World Bank: 'During severe economic downturns such as the world is experiencing, public attitudes toward aid will determine whether or not donor governments will be able to generate support from voters and taxpayers for more aid'(Paxton & Knack, 2009).

To answer our question, we use both individual-level survey data (Eurobarometer, 9 waves) and country-level data to model support for development aid across European Union member states (1995-2012; N= 42,627) to assess how different economic, political and social contexts affect individual attitudes. Our multilevel model allows us to tease out the interaction of factors at the *individual* and the *societal* level to see how they come together in shaping support for aid. There is considerable merit in understanding what drives individual-level support overtime and across countries and whether factors are accentuated or not by changing economic and political conditions.

We approach the paper from a set of linked priors informed by existing research. We argue that as a policy issue, development aid is characterized by low salience, low knowledge and strong opinions. For the average citizen, development assistance specifically, and global poverty more generally, are not issues they think about much (Darnton, 2009; Hudson & VanHeerde-Hudson, 2012; van Heerde & Hudson, 2010). For example, data from the 2005 British Election Study asked, what is the most important issue facing Britain today'? Neither global poverty, foreign aid, or

development assistance were available from the closed-ended list of response options, and when respondents were presented with a similar open-ended question fewer than 10 of the nearly 5,000 respondents cited issues relating to global poverty. Using annual polling data from DFID in the UK Andrew Darnton (2011) argues that these provide an appropriate measure of the UK public's engagement with global poverty. The proportion of respondents who express that they are 'very concerned' with global poverty has tended to remain around the 25 per cent mark (Darnton, 2007). As pointed out by Henson and Lindstrom (2013, p. 68) this means that no more than a quarter of the population demonstrate an 'appreciable and concrete commitment to poverty alleviation'.

Darnton's (2009, p. 9) review of the UK evidence leads him to conclude that 'the public as a whole remains uninterested in and ill-informed about global poverty.' The average citizen knows very little about development assistance and has exaggerated perceptions of aid budgets (Hudson & VanHeerde-Hudson, 2012). For example, US citizens estimated, on average (median) that 25% of the federal budget goes to foreign aid, when the actual figure is less than 1% (World Public Opinion, 2010). In the UK, in 2012, roughly 1 in 5 people think the government is planning to spend more than 20% of its national budget on international aid (ONE, 2012). But low knowledge and low salience does not stop the public from having strong (Henson, Lindstrom, Haddad, & Mulmi, 2010; Prather, 2011) and reasonably stable opinions about development (Milner & Tingley, 2013). Recent evidence from Henson and Lindstrom show that, 'while people can conjure up ideas of why poverty exists, they know very little about the confluence of factors that actually drive poverty and/or the daily lives of the poor' (Henson et al., 2010).

Finally, while it has been shown that low political knowledge is connected to 'incorrect' policy preferences (Gilens, 2001), this is not to say that policy opinions are without any basis. Instead, other heuristic short-cuts come into play (Holsti, 1992; Hudson & VanHeerde-Hudson, 2012; Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991; Sniderman, Fletcher, Russell, & Tetlock, 1996). As Paxton and Knack summarise, 'citizens use information shortcuts to allow opinions on politics even when they lack expert

knowledge' (Paxton & Knack, 2012, p. 174). The most important of these heuristic shortcuts is political ideology.

The question for us is, if aid is characterized by low knowledge and low salience but strong opinions, what motivates such opinion? In this paper, we test the general proposition that political and ideological convictions provide a critical heuristic in low-information, low-salience policy domains such as aid. The role of left-right dimension has been used to explain states' aid efforts (Lumsdaine, 1993; Noël & Thérien, 1995; Thérien & Noël, 2000), demonstrating that a national culture of redistribution and government activism boosts support for aid. Countries with a commitment to domestic redistribution, through welfare expenditure, externalise this 'moral vision' and also tend to support international development assistance. At the same time, individual-level factors operate within a changing social, political and economic context. We test the proposition that the recent economic downturn depresses support for aid. The evidence for this is mixed at best, but there are some suggestions that aggregate support dips slightly (though less than ODA) in downturns (DFID, 2010; International Development Committee, 2009) and survey respondents cite economic conditions as a reason against aid giving (Otter, 2003; Smillie, 1998). In the next section, we flesh out these propositions with the aid of the extant literature to develop our hypotheses.

Literature Review

There is a small but growing literature that examines individual-level support for foreign aid and international development (Bauhr, Charron, & Nasiritousi, 2013; Chong & Gradstein, 2008; Diven & Constantelos, 2009; Henson & Lindstrom, 2013; Milner & Tingley, 2008; Noël, Thérien, & Dallaire, 2004; Paxton & Knack, 2008, 2012; Prather, 2011; van Heerde & Hudson, 2010). There is also another literature that looks at the links between public support and development assistance more generally (Busby, 2007; Lumsdaine, 1993; McDonnell et al., 2003; Noël & Thérien, 2002; Otter, 2003; Stern, 1998), as well as an older public opinion and foreign policy literature (Holsti, 1996; Wittkopf, 1990). We draw on these in order to identify our variables of interest and our hypotheses.

Political ideology is our primary explanatory variable of interest. Based on our arguments above—about the low salience of and low levels of knowledge around development assistance—we contend that individuals’ political and ideological predispositions will strongly influence their support for foreign aid. In this section we discuss the literature on public opinion and foreign policy, on political ideology, and extant studies of attitudes to development assistance. Given the nature of our research question and the cross-national nature of our individual-level survey data we identify (1) individual-level drivers for support, and (2) contextual factors which influence support.

Other individual-level drivers of support for development assistance

Previous studies have examined the extent to which an individual’s support is driven by economic or political self-interest on the one hand or moral, charitable, altruistic, or welfare concerns and values on the other (Lumsdaine, 1993; Milner & Tingley, 2008, 2010) (Darnton & Kirk, 2011; Henson & Lindstrom, 2013; Paxton & Knack, 2012; Prather, 2011; van Heerde & Hudson, 2010), their economic and financial situation (Chong & Gradstein, 2008; Henson & Lindstrom, 2013; Paxton & Knack, 2012), religiosity (Henson & Lindstrom, 2013; Paxton & Knack, 2012), class (Milner & Tingley, 2008), education (Henson & Lindstrom, 2013; Paxton & Knack, 2012; Prather, 2011; van Heerde & Hudson, 2010), political interest (Paxton & Knack, 2012; Prather, 2011), xenophobia (Prather, 2011), views on corruption and waste (Bauhr et al., 2013; Henson & Lindstrom, 2013), trust in government (Chong & Gradstein, 2008; Paxton & Knack, 2012; Prather, 2011), identity as a global citizen (Harper, Wagstaff, Newton, & Harrison, 1990; Henson & Lindstrom, 2013), or estimates of budgetary trade offs (Henson & Lindstrom, 2013; Prather, 2011). These studies control for a standard set of socio-demographic variables: age, sex/gender, education, marital status, and whether or not they have children.

A key finding from the literature is that attitudes are far better predictors than socio-demographic variables. For example, Henson and Lindstrom (2013) demonstrate that socio-demographic variables matter less than attitudinal ones. Prather (2011) also explicitly argues that socio-demographic do not appear to be good predictors

for support, that political and policy variables are much more important. It's worth stating explicitly that our dataset doesn't allow us to test the relative importance of self-interested versus moral reasons to support aid or individuals' trust in government, even if we wanted to.¹ These items do not exist (consistently) within the Eurobarometer. Our data allows us to examine the relative influence of age, sex/gender, education, employment status, marital status, number of children, and whether the respondent is a national of the country or an immigrant. We set out our theoretical expectations for each of these immediately below. However, in line with our discussion of political ideology above, we expect our measure of left-right placement to be the primary cleavage in determining support at the individual level.

Public opinion, political ideology, and foreign policy²

The post-WWII Almond-Lippmann consensus—associated with authors such as Bailey (1948) Almond (1950), Lippmann (1955), Converse (1964/1970)—was that public opinion on foreign policy issues is volatile because it lacks structure and coherence (Holsti, 1992, 1996). The reason public opinion was volatile was because of the low levels of knowledge about international issues, a consequence of a largely uninterested public. Gabriel Almond (1950), in *The American People and Foreign Policy*, wrote of the 'superficial and fluctuating' (1950, p. 53) nature of public opinion; calling it volatile, unpredictable, and ultimately settling on 'the instability of mass moods' (1950, p. 85). By 'moodishness' Almond meant that people were generally indifferent to foreign policy, except in times of crisis when they shifted to apprehension or anger, but it always remained a mood rather than well-grounded attitudes. Thus, he maintained there was no intellectual foundation to public opinion

¹ We don't have a measure of individual self-interest that runs through the 9 waves of data, so we do not and cannot directly test the importance of this. But other work has consistently found that strategic self-interest is either not significant or negatively correlated with support (van Heerde & Hudson, 2010) (Prather, 2011). Milner and Tingley (Milner & Tingley, 2013) find that more conservative voters respond more positively to self-interested aid and liberals (in the US) respond more positively to aid guided by recipient need.

² We note that much of this work is based on US research. For exceptions that explore European attitudes, see (Inglehart, 1970) (Reif, Inglehart, & Rabier, 1991) (Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993) (Gabel & Palmer, 1995) (Olsen, 2001) (Hooghe, 2003) (Arzheimer, 2009). And most of this work is on support for European integration. Nevertheless, although there may well be national idiosyncrasies due to the size of the US, a history of isolationism, or a liberal anti-government culture (Paxton & Knack, 2012; Prather, 2011), the underlying claim that individuals attitudes towards foreign policy issues are consistent.

about foreign policy issues: opinion is unstructured and incoherent. Because attitudes were superficial they were 'bound to be unstable since they are not anchored in a set of explicit values and means calculations or traditional compulsions.' Converse (1970) famously called these 'non-attitudes'. However, Almond (1950) also argued that the moods were predictable: they were related to the business cycle. During times of economic recession the public was more likely to display isolationist tendencies and oppose internationalist adventurism (Almond, 1950).³ We return to this point in our discussion of the contextual drivers of support below.

Over the past few decades the Almond-Lippmann consensus has given way to the view that public opinion on foreign policies does display structural consistency (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1987; Maggiotto & Wittkopf, 1981; 1990). This is partially a result of more extensive research, but also partly reflects changes in world. The gap between domestic and foreign policy issues has closed. The consequence is that partisan and ideological attitudes drive opinions on foreign issues in the same way as they do on domestic ones (Russett & Hanson, 1975; Wittkopf, 1990). Essentially, individuals use heuristics or judgemental shortcuts 'to strive for consistency, if not at the level of specific issues, then at any rate at the level of values' (Holsti, 1992; Sniderman et al., 1996, p. 228). Now it is more commonly accepted and demonstrated that attitudes to foreign policy issues, and aid more specifically, are structured and coherent (Page & Shapiro, 1992) (Milner & Tingley, 2013), *even* if they're not be well-informed (Noël & Thérien, 2002).

Kegley and Wittkopf (1982, pp. 93) confirm that it is 'political ideology [that] sharply differentiates Americans' attitudes toward their nation's foreign policy goals.' Maggiotto and Wittkopf (1981) refer to the liberal-conservative fault. Linzer (2011) reviews the literature on left-right political placement before empirically assessing the universalism of the left-scale political spectrum. His findings suggest that the left-right scale is not universal, and is only valid in Western European and Anglo

³ Almond (1950, p. 76) further argued that individuals' attention tended to remain on 'immediate, private concerns' and only when crises or threats became more proximate did attention turn from private or domestic issues to international ones.

democracies. In these established and advanced democracies the left-right scale is primary dimension to measure and scale political parties and individuals' political positions. The dimension acts as a device to organise political ideas into a coherent structure. And while there is not 'complete consensus' there is a remarkable consistency in the way in which the terms are understood and used: 'the Left is associated with a belief that government should regulate the economy to promote equality and provide for the general welfare. The Right places a greater value on personal responsibility, and generally opposes government manipulation of economic forces' (Linzer 2011, p. 5).

Political ideology and support for development

In short, political ideology matters—this is at the level of political parties, political institutions and public opinion. Studies have confirmed that the ideological position of the elected political parties and the strength of partisanship in donor countries affect the volume and type of aid given (Chong & Gradstein, 2008; Thérien & Noël, 2000; Tingley, 2010). Other studies have examined the impact of welfare states on donor effort, demonstrating that countries with more inclusive welfare states tend to give more aid (Noël & Thérien, 1995). One recent study looks at legislative debates in order to unpack the way in which governments frame aid (e.g. obligation, self-interest, security, humanitarianism) and finds that frames vary considerably across countries, and different frames shape aid volumes, distribution, and modalities, but through a complex and contingent process that depends upon national traditions, experiences, and communicative salience (van der Veen, 2011). Finally, a series of recent studies suggest that political ideology provides the necessary short cut for respondents to form structured and strongly held views on development assistance.

For example, Noël, Thérien and Dallaire(2004), in examining Canadian public opinion on development assistance, argued that it was important to get past 'monolithic' views of what the public think. They conclude that the clearest division is along a left-right split with liberals more favourable and conservatives less favourable towards development assistance, so much so that they talk about 'two publics'.

Further, they (2004, p. 31) argue that: 'for most citizens, politics at home and politics abroad are far from being watertight compartments. Attitudes on foreign affairs basically reflect the same values that shape domestic politics. Public opinion should thus be understood from a perspective that accounts for this interconnection' (see also Noël and Thérien(20022008)).

This is a consistent finding across different studies of support for foreign aid: that partisan and ideological divides are aligned with support for development, with conservatives less likely to support development aid than liberals (Milner & Tingley, 2008, 2013; Noël & Thérien, 2008; Noël et al., 2004). For example, Noël *et al.* (2004) find that those on the left are much more likely to approve higher aid expenditures (32%) than in the centre (17%) and the right (15%). The results for partisan positions are even more striking, with support among left party identifiers running at 40%, compared to right wing parties at around 10%.

Other studies of public opinion and foreign aid have confirmed that ideology, using the left-right scale, is a significant determinant of support for economic aid. Lumsdaine(1993) argues that individuals (and states) externalise domestic redistributive values, i.e. domestic support for welfare translates into support for international development assistance. Paxton and Knack (2012) find significant effects for left-right placement: a one standard deviation shift to the political right (equivalent to approximately 2 units in the 1 to 10 scale) is associated with a 0.8 decrease in support for aid. As such, we propose that left-right placement is a good predictor of support for aid. This gives rise to our first hypothesis:

H1: The further left an individual places themselves on the left-right political spectrum the more likely it is that they will feel development assistance is important.

Socio-demographic variables

Previous research has found that sex/gender is related to support for development assistance, specifically being female (DFID, 2010; Paxton & Knack, 2012; van Heerde & Hudson, 2010). However, Prather (2011), Henson and Lindstrom(2013) and Chong

and Gradstein (2008) all found it to be insignificant. We argue that women's caring orientation/role make them more likely to be concerned about poverty in developing countries and consequently more likely to support aid.

H2: Women are more likely to feel that it is important to help poor countries.

Education has long been associated with greater support for internationalist policies (Holsti, 1996). More specifically, those with a college-level education and those with professional occupations tend to be more internationalist (Wittkopf, 1990). Meanwhile, Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006) find support for the idea that education not only captures skill, but also exposure to economic ideas and information is key to shaping attitudes on trade and globalization. Milner and Tingley (Milner & Tingley, 2013) follow this line of enquiry and suggest using education as a proxy for economic endowments, arguing that those with higher education are more likely to benefit from international engagement. Those with less education are less likely to support trade liberalisation and foreign aid. Prather's (2011) findings from her Cooperative Congressional Election Study survey questions suggest that education is not a significant predictor of support for economic aid. She also uses education as a measure of economic endowment in order to test the hypothesis that the economically endowed support foreign aid because they believe they benefit from it. Her results suggest not. Henson and Lindstrom (2013) also find no evidence of support for aid. We follow Paxton and Knack (2012) in viewing education as a proxy for exposure to greater levels of information and understanding. Previous work has found that greater levels of knowledge are correlated with greater support for development efforts (Diven & Constantelos, 2009; Henson et al., 2010).

Recent evidence suggests that younger people tend to be more supportive of development aid (DFID, 2010; van Heerde & Hudson, 2010). Prather (2011) argues that as people get older they become fiscally more conservative. Henson and Lindstrom (2013) confirm that age is the *one* significant socio-demographic factor in their model that is significant, and with the expected sign: people support development efforts less as they get older.

As Henson and Lindstrom (2013) suggest, it's plausible that having children increases parent's exposure to development related information from their taught curriculum and increases awareness of global interdependencies thereby increasing support for international development efforts. Ultimately, in their analysis, it turns out to be an insignificant predictor of support. Similar results are shown by Prather (2011) and Paxton and Knack(2012).

Maggiotto and Wittkopf (1981, p. 626) confirm that in addition to political philosophy and education, geography matters in helping predict attitudes towards international involvement. We think this interesting and worthy of further study. There is a more general tendency to see development issues as an urban or metropolitan concern. For example, a recent poll on the behalf of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was deliberately limited to urban populations on the grounds that that's where their target groups of 'interested citizens', 'influentials' and 'government decision makers' resided (Intermedia, 2012).

Contextual drivers of support for development assistance

At the country-level, our primary explanatory variable of interest is the prevailing economic conditions.⁴ Charity begins at home. This is a view that comes out in Henson *et al.*'s (2010) qualitative work. It is also supported by their more recent quantitative work (Henson & Lindstrom, 2013), which finds a strong, positive, significant relationship between support for cuts in development aid and the extent to which people agreed with the statement that it was more important for the UK government to tackle poverty at home than in other parts of the world.

The folklore explanation is that hardening economic conditions—such as lower income and higher unemployment—matter for political support. For example, studies of public opinion and European integration have found a significant positive correlation between economic conditions and support for European integration (Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Gabel & Whitten, 1997; Mahler, Taylor, & Wozniak, 2000). The logic is that an economic downturn

⁴ Though see Stern (1998) for a contrary view.

results in falling support because economic hardship makes people more self-interested and they care less about others, especially when ‘they’ are benefitting from their taxes, and moves opinion against redistributive policies as individuals increasingly resent their money going to the disadvantaged elsewhere in difficult times (Durr, 1993).

The importance of the economy is assumed across most studies of public opinion. However Singer (2011) has demonstrated that while this is often true, it’s not true all of the time. The economic context *is* salient for voters (1) during periods of economic recession or volatility, absent other crises, and (2) in particular to those citizens who are more vulnerable to economic change. Thus, despite this qualification, we expect bad economic conditions to depress support for helping poor people in poor countries.

H3a: Higher levels of national income—as measured by GDP per capita—are positively related to support for aid.

H3b: Higher unemployment rates will depress support for helping poor countries.

Other country-level predictors of support for development aid

A couple of well-known studies have found a significant correlation between a government’s domestic welfare spending and commitment to international development (Lumsdaine, 1993; Noël & Thérien, 1995). Hence, a country’s efforts and commitment towards domestic and international redistribution are driven by an underlying culture in favour of redistribution.

With respect to public opinion, Stern (1998) found a positive relationship between levels of public support for development and donor aid levels. Paxton and Knack (2012) also note that countries with well established and generous aid programmes are more likely to express support for development assistance, and multilateral aid in particular (, 2009). This has a couple of potential implications for us. Either public opinion is driving both domestic welfare and aid spending, or higher levels of welfare

and aid spending and effort shapes public support for domestic and international redistribution.

Otter (2003) paints a significantly more mixed picture, finding positive relationship between public opinion and donor effort in Denmark (upwards) and the US (downwards), but a negative relationship in Australia and Japan, and a mixed picture in Canada. In none of these cases is it entirely clear whether high (low) public support leads to high (low) aid, or whether more generous aid programmes generate public support for aid, or whether both public support and aid levels are both driven by a third underlying factor. Nevertheless, we expect to find a positive relationship between aid spending, government expenditure more generally, and support for development aid.

A counter argument would be Wleizen's (1995) notion of a 'thermostat', which argues that public opinion responds to increased aid spending by decreasing support for spending, and vice versa. However in the case of aid, it may well be that the issue is not sufficiently salient, and the public is not responsive to changes in policy – see footnote 23 (, 1995, p. 998). Essentially, the thermostat is switched off when it comes to development assistance.

Paxton and Knack (2012) find that individuals who reside in countries that have more ex-colonies are more likely to support aid. They argue that this is a function of a greater awareness and a more sustained relationship with developing countries. Their results suggest a 10% increase in the number of colonies translates into a 2% increase in the odds of individuals supporting aid.

Data and methodology

Data for the paper come from four sources: 9 waves of Eurobarometer surveys of EU member states (see Table A1), the World Bank's World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2013), the OECD-DAC (OECD.Stat, 2013) and the ICOW Colonial History dataset (Hensel, 2009). In total the Eurobarometer provides data on 27 member states, but this varies across years given the expansion of the EU from 15 original

member states (see Table A1 for details).⁵ The Eurobarometer data provides measures of the respondent's position on the left-right scale and a host of socio-demographic variables. It does, however, lack consistent and useful attitudinal measures (e.g. trust in government, perceptions of corruption, etc.) that we might employ. Aggregate data for our state-level variables (detailed below) come from the World Bank, OECD-DAC and ICOW dataset.

The dataset we have constructed is repeated cross-sectional, time-series (CSTS) data, where each cross-section includes a new sample of respondents but drawn from the same set of higher-level units, i.e. EU countries in our case. Similar to Paxton and Knack (2012) we employ a multilevel model to analyse the data and, in our specific case, random intercept logit models to investigate the impact of individual and contextual effects on public support for foreign aid. Paxton and Knack's study combines two surveys, the *World Values Survey* (2006) and a Gallup International's *Voice of the People* survey (2002). We build on their 17 country, two-year pooled cross-sectional model by modelling support across 9 waves of data from 1995-2012.⁶

Our dependent variable taps individual-level support for development aid using the following question as our indicator: *'In your opinion, is it very important (=4), fairly important (=3), not very important (=2) or not at all important (=1) to help people in developing countries'*? The exact question wording varies slightly over the years, but the essence of the question remains focused on support and development assistance (see Table A3).⁷ We estimate two models, first with a binary dependent variable where 'very important' =1, else =0; and second an ordered logit model as shown above. To test our hypotheses we use a multilevel model in order to simultaneously estimate our individual and country-level explanatory variables. We nest our data in two levels, with individual-level data as level 1 and country-year as level 2.

⁵ See Table A in appendix.

⁶ One issue with extrapolating conclusions about change from cross-sectional variation is assuming that longitudinal and cross-sectional relationships are the same (Fairbrother, 2013).

⁷ For example, from 1995-2004 the question included country examples: *In your opinion, is it very important, fairly important, not very important or not at all important to help people in Africa, Latin America, Asia, etc. to develop?* Country examples were dropped in subsequent wording.

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}LRSCALE + \beta_{2j}FEMALE + \beta_{3j}CHILDREN + \beta_{4j}AGE + \beta_{5j}EDUC + \beta_{6j}UNEMPLOYED + \beta_{7j}PROF + \beta_{8j}URBAN + \beta_{9j}ODA + \beta_{10j}LOGCOL + \beta_{11j}UNEMPLOYMENT + \beta_{12j}LOGGDPPC + \beta_{13j}GOVTDEBT + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Where Y_{ij} is respondent i in country-year j support for development assistance.

Level 1 Variables

The respondent's position on the *left-right scale* is measured on a 1-10 scale with 1 indicating left and 10 indicating right leaning ideology. *Gender* is a dummy variable where women = 1. We also modelled number of *children* (aged 15 years and younger). *Age* is a continuous variable measuring the respondent's age in years. Eurobarometer measures *education* as the age at which the respondent left full-time education (no full-time education =0; 1-11 years =1; 12-18 years =2; 19+ years and still studying = 3). *Urban* is a categorical variable measuring whether the respondent is from a rural (= 1), small town (= 2) or a large city (= 3). *Unemployed* is a dummy variable (= 1) for those in employment (self-employed or otherwise). *Professional* is a dummy variable capturing respondents in a profession (law, medicine, teaching).

Level 2 Variables: Country-Level Variables

We employ five country level variables. *Official development assistance* (ODA) is a continuous variable measured as a percentage of the country's gross national income (GNI). We code for the number of former *colonies* of a state, given that donors are more likely to give aid to former colonies and are more likely to be aware of development issues as a former colonial power. Given the distribution of the variable (0-60) we use the log of the number of former colonies. *Unemployment* is a continuous variable measured as a percent of the total workforce. *GDP* (log) per capita (purchasing power parity) is a continuous variable measured in constant 2005 US international dollars. Finally, we measure a country's annual central *government debt* as a percentage of GDP. Table 1 presents the range for each one of these contextual variables across the individual 27 states for the period 1995-2012. Plus we provide a pairwise correlations for these country level variables in Table A2 in the Appendix.

Results

Table 2 shows the results for the two models. Our first model estimates support for development assistance using a binary logit model where respondents who cited 'very important' were coded 1, else =0. The second model is an ordered logit model taking the full range of responses. For both models we estimate a random-intercept model. On balance, the level-1 variables perform better than the context (level-2) variables and there is a very good degree of consistency in the findings across the two models. We interpret model 1 below.

We find support for our first hypothesis regarding left-right ideological placement and support for aid. The more conservative respondents are, the less likely they are to support aid. More substantively, there is a 9% decrease in the odds of supporting aid the more conservative you are. We also find support for our second hypothesis regarding gender and support for aid. On average, there is a 22% increase in the odds of supporting aid for women. This is consistent with Paxton and Knack's (2011) findings and provides additional evidence of women's caring orientation.

Respondents who live in large cities are also more likely to support aid. We find significant negative effects for age, but the effect size is small, with less than a 1% decrease in the odds of supporting aid. We find more substantial effects for education and respondents working in professions. There is a 33% increase in the odds of supporting aid as education levels increase and if one is a professional (doctor, teacher, lawyer, etc.). Our findings are consistent to Paxton and Knack (2011) with respect to education, professionals and number of children. We find evidence of a relationship between education and professional employment and aid, and similarly, we do not find a relationship between number of children and support. To our knowledge, no existing studies of aid have shown a relationship here and we suggest this variable can be usefully dropped in future work.

[Insert Table 2 here]

The results from the level-2 variables suggest that context matters much less. The interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) for model 1 is .0775 which suggests that approximately 8% of the total variance in support for development assistance is a result of between country-year differences. This is similar to the ICC for Paxton and Knack (2011) who found an average of 10% for their study using World Values Survey and Gallup International data. While this is not an insignificant amount, it does suggest that the vast majority of explained variance comes from within country differences.

We find evidence in support of our hypothesis 3a of a relationship between GDP per capita and support where wealthier countries are more likely to support aid. Our finding here stands in contrast to that of Paxton and Knack's (2011) who find a negative relationship between GDP and support for foreign aid. Their model controls for socio-economic status at the individual level and finds that despite a positive relationship between income and psychological sense of financial security, at the country level, wealthier countries are less likely to support aid. They suggest that respondents living in wealthier countries 'leads them to oppose aid in favour of more domestic redistribution' (2011: 14). Our data do not allow us to control for income/economic well-being at the individual level, but we think our finding fits with general expectations about the wider role wealthier nations play in international affairs. This fits with our finding on government debt in model 2, where greater indebtedness is negatively related to support for aid.

Similar to Paxton and Knack (2011) we measure the relationship between aid and the number of former colonies a country has and like them we find no evidence of a relationship (model 1 and 2). In all of our models we find a small, but positive relationship between unemployment and support and this is shown in both models 1 and 2, albeit just outside traditional significance levels in model 1. This finding contradicts our hypothesis 3b.

The significant and positive relationship between national unemployment rates and support for aid appears slightly surprising. But it's not altogether unprecedented.

Difficult economic times can lead—quite logically—to increased support for domestic government redistribution because individuals fear for their own economic security. In economic good times, with low unemployment, high job security, growth and incomes, people tend to believe more in individual responsibility and a limited government role. Blekesaune (2007) has sought to distinguish between the impact of changed personal circumstances (falling incomes, satisfaction) and contextual effects flowing from awareness of the circumstances of others. By examining 39 countries over three waves of the World Values Survey 1990-2000 he tests the extent to which individuals do change their public attitudes in line with individual and national economic conditions. He finds that economic downturns produce a greater demand for government action from both changes in personal circumstances *and* from country-level effects. Meanwhile, work on values and support for redistribution suggest that support will remain robust over economic cycles as it is not driven by rational calculations of self-interest, since individuals believe that social protection is a right (Jacoby, 1994). The question for us has been do these arguments work for thinking about a government's responsibilities to distant others, i.e. those who are not fellow citizens, as well as domestically. This suggests that there might be similar logics at work—see also (Noël & Thérien, 1995).

In comparing our level-1 and level-2 variables in model 1 and model 2, we see a great deal of consistency. Variables that were statistically significant in model 1 remain similarly signed and significant in model 2. The one exception is unemployed that was not significant in model 1 ($p = .156$) but is significant in model 2. The same can be said for our level-2 variables. ODA remains negative and insignificant, as does government debt and number of former colonies. GDP per capita is positive and statistically significant in model 2 as in model 1. Again, there is an exception—here with unemployment—which was outside traditional levels of significance in model 1 but becomes significant in model 2 ($p = .03$). The similarities of our models reinforces our thinking with regard to modelling those who cite 'very important' vs. 'fairly important'. That is to say, we agree with Prather that the response option 'somewhat important' is somewhat ambivalent and may reflect social desirability (Hudson & VanHeerde-Hudson, 2012; Prather, 2011). A better measure of support is

those who commit to the 'very important' category than 'quite' or 'somewhat' important.

Conclusions

We began by asking what drives individual-level support for development assistance? Our paper was specifically motivated by the conventional wisdom that the economic downturn is eroding support for economic development. As such we (1) exploited a multilevel approach to tease out the relative influence of individual level variables (whether socio-demographic factors or attitudes), and (2) turned to a larger and longer dataset than has been used before to see how changing economic conditions across countries and over time had influenced public support for development. This is important because of the belief in the political mainstream that 'During severe economic downturns such as the world is experiencing, public attitudes toward aid will determine whether or not donor governments will be able to generate support from voters and taxpayers for more aid' (Paxton & Knack, 2009). In sum, we find that individual level factors are far more important than the economic environment for predicting support for development assistance.

Although previous research has shown little consistent evidence of links between socio-demographic variables and support, we show here that these factors matter. Recent studies taking advantage of cross-national, time series data demonstrate the relationship between socio-demographics and aid (, 2012). In this paper we test the hypothesis that position on the left-right ideological scale is a significant predictor of support for aid; more specifically, the more conservative one is, the less likely they are to support aid. We also find support for our second hypothesis regarding gender and support for aid. This finding echoes that of previous studies and suggests future research into the link between opinion and aid policy should explore gender differences in greater detail. For policymakers, the evidence suggests that women are more inclined to support aid, and thus there may be better payoffs in targeting engagement activities towards women.

We also find evidence of a relationship between aid and a country's wealth and evidence counter to our hypothesis regarding national unemployment rates and support. We have offered some explanation towards this finding, but it too deserves additional investigation. It may well be that we have misspecified the link between macro objective economic conditions and individual support, because either individuals do not experience the national economic conditions since regional realities which might be quite different, so locally specific measures may be more appropriate. Or, because it is the subjective experience of the economy that counts not objective conditions, and so a measure of sentiment or confidence would be more appropriate (Gabel & Whitten, 1997).

Finally, the failure to find any link between existing aid levels (ODA) and support reinforces our thinking regarding the set of priors pertaining to low salience and information levels we set out at the beginning of the paper. Where respondent's lack policy (specific) information, they rely on other cues as heuristics (Gilens, 2001; Holsti, 1992; Hudson & VanHeerde-Hudson, 2012; Paxton & Knack, 2012; Sniderman et al., 1991; Sniderman et al., 1996). Which suggest that donor governments and aid agencies may well be a good deal less constrained that is commonly assumed.

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