
Providing Foreign Aid: Need, Self-Interest, or Something Else?

An INTERNATIONAL STUDIES QUARTERLY ONLINE symposium

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Published Online, 27 June 2017

v1.0

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INTRODUCTION

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The study of development assistance or foreign aid often examines whether it is effective or not or why aid is allocated in the first place. A debate over aid efficacy between the aid enthusiasts, such as Jeffrey Sachs, and the aid skeptics, like William Easterly, continues without signs of abating. One way possibly out of this spiral is better evidence. The following symposium attempts to humbly add to this effort.¹

Recent studies of humanitarian foreign aid allocation suggest donors are strategic in their decisions regarding where to provide assistance ([Drury et al. 2005](#), [Moyo 2009](#)). The ISQ article, [“Is US Humanitarian Aid Based Primarily on Need or Self-Interest?”](#) by Rob Kevlihan, Karl DeRouen Jr and Glen Biglaiser (KDB)(2014) offers evidence suggesting that at least in the US case, aid may be allocated based on need alone.

Why does the US give humanitarian aid? The cynic, or realist, claims that the US, or any similarly placed state in the international system provides financial assistance in the face of some form of human disaster when the donor receives a benefit. That benefit could be security or some other self-interest, but the humanitarian needs of the recipient country are not the primary consideration. KDB among others suggest that need may be a driving force, especially in the US case. This impact, KDB suggest, is conditional on the time period under consideration. They find that aid follows the US National Security strategy of 2002 and 2010 and humanitarian concern is an important driver blending realist and more hopeful assessments of the distribution of aid.

Do these results maintain when the data are subjected to replication by outside aid experts? The standard in academic is to simply not answer this question. Many journals do not publish replications, even though implications from research on foreign aid among other topics needs to have solid empirical footing. Taxpayer money is used and lives are affected. Part of the goal of this symposium is to address this weakness by replicating KDB’s results by two separate first-rate scholars, Sarah Bush from Temple University and Matthew Winters from the University of Illinois, that specialize in this research domain.

Each scholar takes the results from the paper seriously and subjects these data to new tests as well as prods the limits of the inferences from the data.

Sarah Bush, in her post, first lauds KDB for extending the study of foreign aid into the humanitarian aid sector, which is relatively unexplored.² She offers an extension that takes corruption into consideration. In short, corruption in the recipient country could cause selection effects where less corrupt countries are more likely to receive aid. She tests this possibility using multiple corruption measures and examines how this might support or invalidate the central claims of KDB.

¹ Another important approach, spearheaded by groups, such as [Experiments in Governance and Politics \(EGAP\)](#), uses field experiments to identify the causal influence of interventions like aid on governance in locations around the globe.

² See [AidData.org](#) for foreign aid broken out by sector and readily available for empirical analysis.

In Matt Winters contribution, he offers a simpler empirical strategy than KDB to investigate country differences as many of KDB's variables of interest are slow-moving over time. He also subjects the tests to an interaction, which may be closer to some of the beliefs about how aid operates. Finally, he offers an alternative strategic interest story that might account for the empirical evidence.³

In the final contribution, KDB respond to the pieces by Bush and Winter and suggest avenues for future research.

³ All of the materials for replicating the results of the symposium are available at the ISQ dataverse.

THINKING ABOUT EFFECTIVENESS IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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Scholars of world politics have recently devoted considerable effort to understanding the causes and consequences of foreign assistance. One of the main questions in this growing literature is whether foreign aid is driven primarily by developing countries' needs or donor countries' self interests. A number of well-cited articles (e.g. [Alesina & Dollar, 2000](#); [Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2009](#)) make the case that donor countries' strategic interests significantly shape their aid strategies—a finding that encourages skepticism about aid's likelihood of reducing poverty (e.g. [Easterly, 2006](#)).

While much of the existing literature explores these dynamics in the context of development or economic aid, [Rob Kevlihan, Karl DeRouen, Jr., and Glen Biglaiser](#) (KDB hereafter) have done so in the context of humanitarian assistance—an important innovation. In a nutshell, KDB find that U.S. humanitarian need is a consistent predictor of whether countries receive humanitarian aid and, after September 11th, how much humanitarian aid they receive. In contrast, they do not find that U.S. self interests drive the selection of countries for humanitarian aid, although those factors are important influencers on the amount of aid countries receive post-9/11.

Although KDB consider a large number of factors that may shape U.S. government decision-making on humanitarian assistance, one possibility that they do not explicitly account for is that donors' expectations about aid effectiveness may shape their aid allocation decisions. Previous scholars have argued that humanitarianism has two discourses or variants—one that emphasizes recipients' needs and one that emphasizes the “root causes of suffering” ([Barnett, 2005](#); [Büthe et al, 2012](#)). The latter discourse can be found in some reports disseminated by USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), which is the USAID unit responsible for humanitarian aid. For example, [an overview](#) of OFDA's programs in West Africa in 2012 stated that they sought to “increase resilience to future shocks by addressing the root causes of recurrent emergencies in the region.” Some of the private actors on which the U.S. government relies to implement humanitarian aid also are committed to this type of aid strategy ([Barnett, 2005](#); [Rieff, 2002](#)).

Corruption in recipient countries is often posited to be a key characteristic that can undermine the efficacy of foreign aid. Corrupt governments are typically thought to be more likely to capture aid and to divert it to other purposes. Although humanitarian aid can be delivered by bypassing recipient governments in favor of private actors and multilateral organizations ([Dietrich, 2013](#)), it still requires the cooperation (if not support) of the recipient government. As such, we might expect the U.S. government to be more likely to select countries to receive humanitarian assistance when the recipient countries are less corrupt—or to be more generous with aid once those countries have been selected.

To test that hypothesis, I begin by replicating KDB's findings. For simplicity and also because of the availability of data on corruption, I limit my analysis to the replication of Tables 3 and 5 from KDB's article, which focus on aid selection and allocation, respectively,

within the 2002-2009 period. Before adding the corruption indicators, I am able to successfully replicate all of the main reported results by KDB.

I then introduce a measure of the level of corruption in the recipient country in each set of models. The first indicator of corruption comes from the [Worldwide Governance Indicators](#), a project of the World Bank. [This measure](#) combines a “large number of enterprise, citizen, and survey respondents” to understand “perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as ‘capture’ of the state by elites and private interests.”

The second indicator of corruption comes from [Transparency International’s](#) Corruption Perceptions Index. [This measure](#) combines “surveys and assessments of corruption,” focusing on “how corrupt a country’s public sector is perceived to be.” Higher values for both the World Bank and Transparency International measures indicate higher levels of corruption.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Log total damage	0.00796* (0.00217)			0.007124* (0.00260)		
Log total dead		0.00268* (0.00091)			0.00256* (0.00091)	
Log # affected			0.00415 (0.00199)			0.00715 (0.00400)
Democracy	-0.0115 (0.00942)	-0.0124 (0.00951)	-0.0117 (0.00918)	-0.0122 (0.00945)	-0.0129 (0.00955)	-0.0122 (0.00911)
Affinity	0.0084 (0.0119)	0.0081 (0.0119)	0.0081 (0.0119)	0.0081 (0.0119)	0.0081 (0.0119)	0.0081 (0.0119)
Log bilateral trade	-0.0000 (0.00231)	-0.0000 (0.00231)	-0.0000 (0.00231)	0.00128 (0.00231)	-0.0000 (0.00231)	0.000142 (0.00227)
Log GDP growth	0.000000** (0.00000)	0.000000** (0.00000)	0.000000** (0.00000)	0.000000** (0.00000)	0.000000** (0.00000)	0.000000** (0.00000)
Log INR	-0.0000 (0.00000)	-0.0000 (0.00000)	-0.0000 (0.00000)			
GDP/Capita				-12.9671 (2.02912)	-11.9715 (2.00002)	-12.2217 (2.01218)
Years since end	0.0000 (0.00000)	0.0000 (0.00000)	0.0000 (0.00000)	0.0000 (0.00000)	0.0000 (0.00000)	0.0000 (0.00000)
Corruption	0.1771 (0.0817)	0.1741 (0.0837)	0.1781 (0.0817)	0.1741 (0.0817)	0.1771 (0.0817)	0.1171 (0.0897)
Spline1	0.000005 (0.000005)	0.000004 (0.000005)	-0.000001 (0.000005)	-0.000005 (0.000007)	-0.000004 (0.000007)	-0.000001 (0.000007)
Spline2	-0.00002* (0.00002)	-0.000014 (0.00002)	-0.000014 (0.00002)	-0.000014* (0.00002)	-0.000014 (0.00002)	-0.000014 (0.00002)
Spline3	0.000000 (0.000000)	0.000000 (0.000000)	0.000000 (0.000000)	0.000000 (0.000000)	0.000000 (0.000000)	0.000000 (0.000000)
Constant	0.225 (0.248)	0.212 (0.248)	0.263 (0.242)	0.206 (0.241)	0.229 (0.242)	0.251 (0.237)
R ²	074	074	074	072	072	072

Table 1. Generalized Estimating Equations Three-Stage Cross-Sectional Regression: Prediction of Aid, 1970s, 2002-2009. Notes: INR, initial mortality rate; Standard errors are in parentheses. Regression without using spline is reported in State space model with (AR) option. The pooled variable is within aid. Fixedly diagnosed according to cluster. All independent variables lagged 1 year. * p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01, two-tailed.

As Table 1 shows, including the World Bank’s Control of Corruption indicator does not change the results about the factors that lead to aid selection from KDB in any significant ways. Several indicators of humanitarian need (battle deaths, natural-disaster-related damage and dead) and one indicator of U.S. self interest (affinity) are still significantly related to aid selection. Corruption is positively related to aid selection, but large standard errors prevent me from establishing that relationship with confidence in all models except Model 1. The results are generally similar when I use the Corruption Perceptions Index instead.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Log kdb change	0.00001 (0.00016)					
Log total dead		-0.00006 (0.00008)				
Log #afford			0.00005 (0.00007)			
Atenas	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)
Democracy	-0.00011 (0.00040)	-0.00011 (0.00040)	-0.00012 (0.00040)	-0.00011 (0.00040)	-0.00010 (0.00040)	-0.00017 (0.00040)
Log IMR	-0.00094 (0.00049)	-0.00092 (0.00049)	-0.00094 (0.00049)	-0.00094 (0.00049)	-0.00094 (0.00049)	-0.00094 (0.00049)
Log battle deaths	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)
Log battle deaths	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)
Log IMR count	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)	0.00000 (0.00016)
Log total damage count				-0.00000 (0.00016)		
IMR * total				0.00000 (0.00016)		
Log total dead count					-0.00001 (0.00009)	
IMR * total					0.00000 (0.00016)	
Log total dead count						0.00000 (0.00016)
IMR * total						0.00000 (0.00016)
Constant	-0.00002 (0.00042)	-0.00048 (0.00042)	-0.00018 (0.00042)	-0.00010 (0.00042)	-0.00002 (0.00042)	-0.00002 (0.00042)
Constant	0.00445 (0.00197)	0.00445 (0.00197)	0.00445 (0.00197)	0.00445 (0.00197)	0.00445 (0.00197)	0.00445 (0.00197)
N	201	201	201	201	201	201

Table 2. Fixed-Effects Time-Series Cross-Sectional Regression: Determinants of Changes in Humanitarian Aid, 2001-2009. Note: IMR, infant mortality rate. Regressions include dummy variables for ARI. Standard errors are in parentheses. Dependent variable is change in US humanitarian aid in constant dollars (2005 \$) and log transformed (logged 1 year, 1 year, 0.7 year, 0.5 year, 0.3 year, 0.1 year).

Moreover, and as Table 2 shows, including the Control of Corruption indicator does not significantly alter KDB's results about the factors that lead to aid allocation. Again, several indicators of humanitarian need (infant mortality rates, battle deaths) and one indicator of U.S. self interest (affinity) remain linked to aid selection. And again, corruption is not a significant factor, although in this case the sign of the coefficient estimate is negative. Most of the results are similar when I use the Corruption Perceptions Index instead, although in this case infant mortality rates and affinity cease to significant predictors of aid.

These analyses suggest that likely aid effectiveness—at least as measured by recipient governments' levels of corruption—is not a major factor that affects the allocation of U.S. humanitarian assistance. One explanation for that null finding may be ambivalence or disagreement among the humanitarian community about the appropriateness of allocating aid with an eye towards effectiveness (Barnett, 2005; Büthe et al, 2012). Another may be ambiguity about the factors that determine aid effectiveness. My own forthcoming book on democracy assistance suggests that there can often be a great deal of uncertainty among aid bureaucrats and professionals about the best ways to achieve aid's stated goals (Bush, 2015). An interesting extension of this research agenda might explore the extent to which need, self-interest, and concerns about aid effectiveness shape humanitarian assistance by other donors. New data on complex humanitarian emergencies may also be helpful in this regard (e.g. Everett n.d.).

GIVING STRATEGIC INTERESTS ANOTHER CHANCE ... AND STILL FINDING EVIDENCE FOR NEED-BASED AID ALLOCATION

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In a [2005 *Journal of Politics* article](#) on U.S. humanitarian assistance, A. Cooper Drury, Richard Stuart Olson, and Douglas A. Van Belle (DOV) described the United States' strategic interests – as compared to the levels of need in disaster-afflicted countries – as the “overriding determinant” of the allocation of international relief from the United States. In their [International Studies Quarterly article](#), Rob Kevlihan, Karl DeRouen, Jr., and Glen Biglaiser (KDB) question whether this is really true, studying the behavior of the same institution studied by DOV, the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) within USAID. KDB use alternative measures of recipient-country need for humanitarian assistance and a different structure for the data in their analysis.

KDB find that measures of need explain OFDA allocation patterns fairly well and that proxies for U.S. strategic interests are either weak predictors of aid allocation or else predict in unexpected directions. The authors ultimately conclude that the United States is generally living up to its commitments in the 2002 and 2010 National Security Strategy to provide humanitarian assistance “based on needs alone.”

In analyzing OFDA aid allocation over a 21-year period, the authors face a number of decisions about how to model the data statistically. As many scholars of international political economy would do, they structure the data as country-year observations and make use of country fixed effects in order to estimate the influence of particular factors using within-country variation. One concern is that this set-up does not give the strategic interest variables a fair opportunity to demonstrate their influence. I use simpler cross-sectional models to analyze the authors' data, and I replicate their substantive findings. In addition, I explore the possibility of strategic interests influencing the levels of aid using interaction models that the authors did not include in the original article.

My concern with the analysis in the article is that the effects of strategic variables are estimated off of the (perhaps quite small) set of cases where those variables change within a country. Fixed effects models cannot tell us whether countries that are long-term allies or trading partners of the United States get more or less humanitarian assistance because those variables do not change for such countries. When variables of interest are slow-moving, a preferable statistical strategy might be to explicitly model the country-specific effects (either in a multi-level model or a two-stage model).

I choose a simpler strategy here to reanalyze the data and collapse the data for each potential recipient country into a pre-9/11 observation and a post-9/11 observation. I take the sum of all OFDA assistance that each country received in each time period and use the sum of the disaster and conflict measures and the mean of the democracy, affinity, trade, and level-of-development measures from the original article in order to explain variation in the

patterns of U.S. assistance. Like KDB, I estimate separate models for the selection and amount stages, although I drop all of the cases where no aid was given from the amount equations (which the authors seem not to have done in the original article).

All three disaster variables from the EM-DAT dataset and the measure of civil war battle deaths positively predict the likelihood of receiving humanitarian assistance from the United States. In the pre-9/11 period, these variables also strongly predict the amount of assistance that a country receives, whereas in the post-9/11 period, two of the three disaster variables are less consistently linked to the levels of aid. The affinity measure – based on U.N. voting similarity – has little predictive power, although the trade variable provides some evidence that U.S. trading partners receive more humanitarian assistance in the post-9/11 period, regardless of the severity of the disaster that they experience. In both periods, the measure of the infant mortality rate provides strong evidence that less developed countries receive more assistance, again controlling for the severity of the disaster.

	Pre-9/11						Post-9/11					
	(1) Selection (Logit)	(2) Amount (OLS)	(3) Selection (Logit)	(4) Amount (OLS)	(5) Selection (Logit)	(6) Amount (OLS)	(7) Selection (Logit)	(8) Amount (OLS)	(9) Selection (Logit)	(10) Amount (OLS)	(11) Selection (Logit)	(12) Amount (OLS)
Log(Damage)	0.05*** (0.02)		0.12** (0.05)		0.02** (0.01)			0.06 (0.05)				
Log(Dead)		0.07** (0.01)		0.22* (0.12)			0.08*** (0.01)				0.06 (0.10)	
Log(Affinity)			0.08*** (0.03)		0.07** (0.01)			0.15*** (0.01)				0.01* (0.02)
Log(Battle Deaths)	0.04** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.08*** (0.03)	0.26*** (0.07)	0.14*** (0.06)	0.18*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)
Mean Polity Score	0.08*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.05 (0.03)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Mean UN Voting Affinity	0.12 (0.12)	0.10 (0.10)	0.11 (0.11)	0.10 (0.10)	0.02 (0.02)	0.08 (0.08)	0.11 (0.11)	0.10 (0.10)	0.10 (0.10)	0.10 (0.10)	0.10 (0.10)	0.10 (0.10)
Log(Mean Trade)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.11 (0.11)	0.13 (0.13)	0.10 (0.10)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Log(Mean IRR)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Constant	-1.01 (0.28)	0.32 (0.25)	0.38 (0.23)	6.88*** (1.63)	6.88*** (1.63)	7.18*** (1.54)	-1.74 (0.29)	0.15 (0.23)	-0.27 (0.24)	1.17** (0.50)	-0.88** (0.34)	-0.88** (0.34)
Observations	125	125	125	98	98	98	134	134	134	104	104	104
R-squared	0.35	0.41	0.25	0.41	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.47	0.52	0.32	0.35	0.35

Note: standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01 ** p<0.05 * p<0.1

Table 1

The strategic variables in these models enter as linear terms. The models allow us to say how much U.N. voting similarity or a strong trading relationship contributes to disaster aid flows regardless of the extent of the disaster. Perhaps of more interest, however, is whether or not countries in which the U.S. is strategically interested get more humanitarian assistance than other countries that are experiencing disasters of similar size.

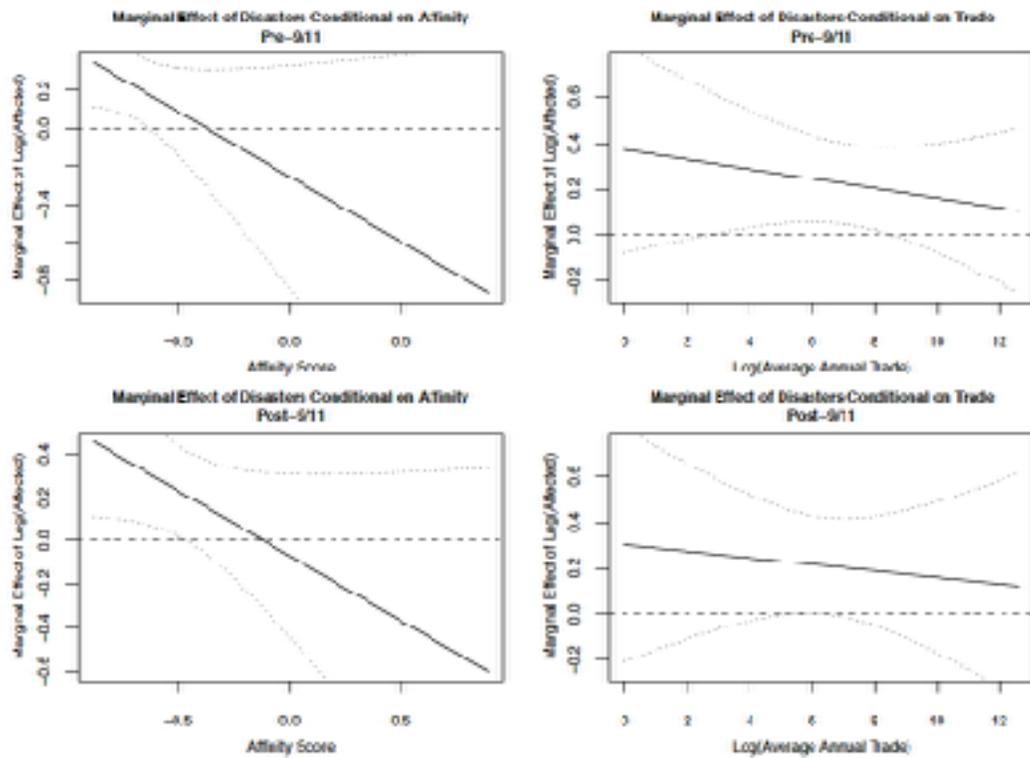


Figure 1

	Pre-9/11		Post-9/11	
	(1) Interaction with Affinity	(2) Interaction with Trade	(3) Interaction with Affinity	(4) Interaction with Trade
Log(Affected)	-0.25 (0.23)	0.34* (0.20)	-0.07 (0.21)	0.30 (0.24)
Log(Battle Deaths)	0.30*** (0.06)	0.31*** (0.06)	0.21*** (0.06)	0.21*** (0.06)
Mean Polity Score	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
Mean U.N. Voting Affinity	9.40** (4.70)	1.52 (1.70)	9.72** (4.52)	1.80 (1.44)
Log(Affected) * Mean U.N. Voting Affinity	0.89* (0.35)		0.80* (0.34)	
Log(Mean Trade)	-0.01 (0.13)	0.27 (0.39)	0.22* (0.13)	0.40 (0.12)
Log(Mean Trade) * Mean U.N. Voting Affinity		-0.02 (0.02)		-0.01 (0.03)
Log(Mean IMR)	1.25*** (0.44)	1.13*** (0.42)	1.79*** (0.46)	1.48*** (0.46)
Constant	12.31*** (2.64)	5.40* (2.71)	5.62** (2.17)	7.16 (3.28)
Observations	98	98	104	104
R squared	0.48	0.47	0.37	0.35

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 2

To examine this, I estimate models in which I interact the affinity and trade variables with the measure of how many people were affected by disasters, building on the interaction

models that KDB use in their article. I look only at the amounts of humanitarian assistance being given in countries to which the United States has decided to give assistance. As the plots of the marginal effects below show – and in line with the argument of the KDB paper – there is little evidence that the United States is more responsive to allies or trading partners when it comes to giving out humanitarian relief. In both cases, the marginal effect decreases as the variable measuring the recipient country’s connection to the United States goes up.

A strategic interests story can be told here (e.g., that the U.S. is using humanitarian assistance to win over countries that vote against it in the U.N. or that are not strong trading partners), but it may be more straightforward to read the evidence in the way that KDB do and say that need seems to be the stronger predictive force in OFDA allocations, as compared to strategic interests.

THE AUTHORS RESPOND

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We appreciate the opportunity to have [our article](#) assessed and replicated by Matt Winters and Sarah Bush. This is an interesting new feature offered by *ISQ* and it is our pleasure to respond to these thoughtful reappraisals.

Winters comments largely regard our empirics. He suggests a simpler means of modeling using cross-national regression. He also expresses concerns with using some variables such as alliance and trade because they do not change much over time and, as a result, valuable do not fare well in time-series models. Alliances, for example, do not vary very much over time within each panel. However it must be noted that we only use alliance as a robustness check and our main results report foreign policy affinity measured with UN scores. This measure of foreign policy affinity varies considerably more than alliances.

Winters' idea for a two-stage model is certainly worth pursuing. It would also, as Winters notes, be worthwhile to run our outcome equations with observations with cases in which no aid was given omitted. Since we found no evidence of selection effects we did not see this as necessary.

We would like to reiterate (and Winters does not note this) that the earlier piece by [Drury, Olson and Van Belle \(2005\)](#) – an important study of humanitarian aid – only looked at natural disasters. Our study includes OFDA assistance for all humanitarian emergencies, including those created by conflict (with conflict related intensity gauged through the use of battle-related deaths) and as a consequence represents an original contribution. Indeed, we argue that conflict intensity is an important determinant of humanitarian aid.

The models run by Winters, interacting affinity and trade variables with the measure of how many people were affected by disasters, takes this line of inquiry into an interesting new direction.

Sarah Bush astutely notes our models do not explicitly account for U.S. expectations about aid effectiveness, an important concern as aid effectiveness may shape U.S. aid allocation decisions. Bush discusses the literature and the two divergent strands of humanitarianism: recipients' needs and root causes. In our defense, we do interact infant mortality rate and various measures of natural disaster. This gives some indication of whether change in aid varies according to the country's level of development and hence its ability to forestall disaster (e.g., epidemics).

Bush's point that humanitarian aid may in part be distributed through targeting based on the root causes of emergencies, rather than needs. The (relatively new) resilience agenda for West Africa, mentioned in Bush's post, highlights this trend in recent years. However, it is plausible that multiple issues may impact on decisions to distribute resilience type humanitarian aid funding, including past rather than current need (e.g. past frequency of food security crises / famines), U.S. self-interests (e.g., targeting countries where the risk of Islamist extremism is high) and perceived absorptive capacity and/or levels of corruption (with consequence favoring of some Sahel countries over others, for example). Similar

issues could potentially relate to OFDA assistance for disaster risk reduction (DDR), more generally. OFDA allocations on DDR type activities were not included in our study as our focus was explicitly on U.S. government responses to actual emergencies rather than to potential future emergencies.⁴

Her point regarding the potential ramifications of corruption on aid certainly highlights a promising project. While Bush's preliminary tests do not show a clear statistical link, it seems plausible that the U.S. would be more circumspect about giving aid to corrupt governments. In the case of humanitarian assistance, however, it is likely that concerns about corruption are mitigated by the largely non-governmental channels utilized by the U.S. government in the disbursement of humanitarian aid. Even if corruption turns out not to be a factor, that in itself is an important finding. Of course, the relevance of corruption on humanitarian aid decisions is likely to vary by donor country.

In conclusion, we greatly appreciate the comments of Winters and Bush and thank the editors of *ISQ* for offering this new and exciting blog enterprise that extends the intellectual discussion of this research in a meaningful way.

⁴ Amounts excluded were those identified by OFDA in their annual reports as allocations exclusively focused on disaster risk reduction (and as a consequence disclosed in their reports in a separate disaster risk reduction section); allocations that included a combination of emergency response and an element of disaster risk reduction but described as emergency relief were included.

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