

Putting Money to Mouths: Rewarding and Punishing Human Rights Behaviors

Darren Hawkins, Jay Goodliffe

Abstract:

Do foreign aid donors reward recipients for good human rights and democracy records? In contrast to previous studies, we argue that donor states are interested in reproduction, influencing recipient states to adopt domestic practices similar to their own. This theory of donor behavior produces different hypotheses than those previously tested. In particular, we expect that aid donors will reward changes in a recipient's level of democracy or respect for human rights that bring the recipient closer to the donor. Once recipients become more similar to donors, however, donor states allocate their resources away from those similar states. This is because donors prefer to utilize scarce resources to reward recipients who are actively changing in ways that bring them closer to donors. We find that recipients who change to become more like donors receive significant increases in aid while recipients who are already similar to donors receive large decreases in aid.

Keywords: Foreign Aid; Human Rights; Networks; Dependence


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Darren Hawkins

Brigham Young University

Correspondence to:


dhawkins@byu.edu 

Darren Hawkins is Professor of Political Science at Brigham Young University and a Research Fellow with the Politics, Economics and Development Labs. He has published in the *Journal of Politics*, *International Organization*, the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Comparative Politics* and other journals on human rights and democracy issues in the international arena.

Jay Goodliffe

Brigham Young University

Correspondence to:



goodliffe@byu.edu 

Jay Goodliffe is Associate Professor of Political Science at Brigham Young University and a Research Fellow in the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy. His current research interests include international human rights treaties, democracy, and US federal campaigns and elections. His research has appeared in *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *International Studies Quarterly*, and other journals. He received his PhD from the University of Rochester in 1998.

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AidData:

info@aiddata.org 
www.aiddata.org 

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1. Introduction

President Jimmy Carter's Presidential Directive 30 in 1978 established for the first time that "it shall be a major objective of U.S. foreign policy to promote the observance of human rights throughout the world."¹ Since then, every official National Security Strategy of the United States—beginning in 1987 with the first one—has made the promotion of human rights abroad an important element of US policy. President Ronald Reagan added the promotion of democracy to the list of goals, resurrecting an old theme in U.S. foreign affairs, and subsequent national security strategy documents have followed suit.² Nor was the United States alone; other developed countries also endorsed the promotion of human rights and democracy as important foreign policy goals in the 1980s (Forsythe 2000). Even countries like Japan—known for a narrowly self-interested approach to foreign affairs—began to talk about promoting human rights in the 1980s and then adopted an official government document in 1992 linking foreign aid to human rights and democracy in recipient countries (Yokota and Aoi 2000, 135). At least in their rhetoric, wealthy countries frequently tie foreign development to the promotion of human rights and democracy.

It is easy to be cynical about these claims and to cite many cases where wealthy democracies are pouring development aid into countries with poor human rights records. At the same time, it is also simple to identify cases where developing countries have been rewarded by improvements in human rights and democracy, as when President Barack Obama visited Myanmar in November 2012 with promises of substantial aid money in exchange for human rights improvements.³ Wealthy-country claims have driven a long list of scholars to investigate these questions: Do donor states actually use development aid to penalize and reward recipient states for their human rights policies and practices? If so, why?

Existing studies of foreign aid have found decidedly mixed results on this question (see Nielsen 2013, 791-792 for a review). Some have found virtually no relationship between donor aid and recipient human rights practices (Carleton and Stohl 1987; McCormick and Mitchell 1988). These scholars tend to argue that states have too many priorities for them to worry much about human rights in other countries. Others have found a relationship, but have also found that relationship is limited to particular states, times or circumstances (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Svensson 1999; Lebovic and Voeten 2009; Lai 2003; Nielsen 2013). The reason why donors might behave this way is also unresolved. Scholars identify three possible motivations for tying aid to recipient human rights performance: human rights ideals, domestic human rights lobbies, and avoiding unwanted externalities (e.g., conflict, refugees) from recipient states.

¹ <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/pddirectives/pd30.pdf>

² <http://nssarchive.us/>

³ *Wall Street Journal* Nov. 19, 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323353204578126592329167294>.

In this paper, we wish to suggest an alternative motivation for donor states to tie aid to human rights: a desire for reproduction. We argue that all states desire others to be like them; that is, to adopt domestic institutions and policies similar to their own. Reproduction serves the interests of relatively wealthy states by providing greater stability and predictability and by increasing the probability that others will cooperate with them. This argument suggests specific hypotheses that are different than many that have been tested so far. In particular, we expect that aid donors will reward changes in a recipient's level of democracy or respect for human rights that bring the recipient closer to the donor. Once recipients become more similar to donors, however, donor states are likely to allocate their scarce resources away from those similar states. This is because donors prefer to utilize their scarce resources to reward recipients who are actively changing in ways that please donors. Hence, donors will increase their aid to states who are changing their human rights and democracy practices in ways that make them more similar to the donors and donors will decrease the amount of aid that similar recipients receive so that they can allocate scarce resources to those who are changing. We expect that this behavior will be widespread rather than limited to the largest or most traditional donors. Other scholars have not tested these dynamics but rather have examined whether recipient states with better human rights records are rewarded by Western aid donors.

We find substantial evidence for our hypothesis that donors reward countries that become more similar to them in human rights practices and democracy. The changes in aid are substantively large, similar in scope to variables such as trade and population that are frequently seen as important predictors of aid. More strikingly, we also find evidence that recipients with human rights and democracy records that are already similar to those of donor states actually receive less aid when compared to states with less-similar rights records, presumably because donors are re-allocating aid away from successful cases to those who are in the process of change. While previous scholars have focused on levels of human rights and democracy, our results suggest that donors care more about the direction states are moving, with decreases in aid once they arrive.

2. State Reproduction Using Foreign Aid

A number of studies have examined whether Western donor states provide more aid to recipients who respect human rights and democracy. Their findings vary widely though scholars tend to be skeptical of the claims made by Western states that they punish human rights abusers by reducing aid. Neumayer (2003a; 2003b; 2003c) set the general tone by arguing that “human rights play at best a rather limited role in the allocation of aid” (2003b, 510). In particular, he found that civil and political rights—but not personal integrity rights—influence whether a recipient receives aid from bilateral donors, but neither type of rights influences the level of aid received (2003a). While one might suspect that human rights concerns were

less relevant during the Cold War, he also found that not much changed after the end of the Cold War (2003b). Even countries reputedly dedicated to human rights, like Scandinavian countries and Canada, do not behave differently from the typical donors who essentially ignore human rights records in recipients (2003a). In the same vein, Svensson (1999) found that most donors do not take the levels of democracy in recipients into account. But he also found that Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands and Canada do in fact allocate more aid to recipients with higher levels of democracy. At the same time, some donors (France and Italy) tend to give so heavily to authoritarian ex-colonies that they essentially reward the absence of democracy.

Nielsen (2013, 791) argued that previous analyses were not nuanced enough because donor states apply aid sanctions selectively rather than broadly or bluntly. In particular, he found that donors sanction rights-abusing countries when those countries are not close to them politically, when their abuses might create negative spillover effects for the donors, and when violations are well-known in donors. In a similar vein, Lebovic and Voeten (2009) found that multilateral aid organizations (but not individual states utilizing bilateral aid) are more willing to impose aid sanctions on countries publicly shamed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). This is because multilateral donor organizations can trust the high quality of the information and because the UNCHR offers political cover to take action against repression.

Existing scholarship identifies three possible motives for using aid to reward (punish) human rights respecters (abusers). First, some scholars argue that some states have principled commitments to improving human rights abroad (Sikkink 1993; Lumsdaine 1993). This argument fits well within a constructivist perspective to international relations in which state interests are shaped by shared values and understandings (Finnemore 1996). Unfortunately, the evidence reviewed above suggests little support for this argument. Nielsen (2013) explicitly tests this constructivist argument by measuring donors' commitments to international human rights agreements and domestic protection of rights, but finds no evidence that those states sanction human rights violators by reducing foreign aid.

Second, some scholars focus on domestic politics in donor countries to argue that interest groups that value human rights abroad influence the foreign policies of important donor states. Schoultz (1981) used careful process-tracing to show how human rights groups in the United States in the 1970s first convinced Congress to tie foreign aid to human rights through legislative acts. Such groups utilize advocacy network tactics of information, shame and persuasion to promote their principled ideas (Keck and Sikkink 1998). It is also possible that voters, as the ultimate principals of those democratic countries that allocate foreign aid, prefer that aid be tied to human rights because publics generally prefer that aid be used to actually improve people's lives (Milner 2006, 110). Legislators seeking reelection respond to those preferences,

suggesting that principled ideas might be adopted for more self-interested motives. While it seems plausible that pro-human-rights interest groups have influenced foreign policy legislation and rhetoric in donor states, they have less influence on whether the money is actually committed and allocated. We are unaware of any direct test of this argument, but the same countries with principled commitments to human rights are likely to be the same ones with influential human rights lobbies. Hence, the same evidence surveyed above suggests little support for this argument. At the same time, Nielsen (2013, 797-799) found that extensive news coverage of violations in a recipient country can reduce aid, a finding that potentially lends some support to this argument.⁴

Third, it is possible that states withdraw aid from human rights abusers because those abuses create unwanted consequences for donor states or their allies (Nielsen 2013, 793). Such consequences can include refugee flows and regional instability. A cutoff of aid could serve as a warning to the government to improve the situation or even larger sanctions might ensue. Of course, donors might also have incentives to increase aid as a method of stabilizing the situation. Nielsen finds some evidence that refugee flows generate aid reductions, but further tests are needed for this relatively new hypothesis.

These investigations have introduced important nuances into the arguments about aid and human rights and have shown that donors do sometimes punish human rights abuses in recipient states. We have mounting evidence that some donors do care about human rights in particular circumstances, yet our understanding of donor actions and motives is still incomplete.

We suggest a different motive for donor states to tie aid to human rights and democracy: reproduction, or the desire of relatively powerful states to influence others to become more like them in their domestic institutions and policies. We conceptualize the motive as reproduction rather than duplication because powerful states often settle for reasonably close facsimiles in other countries, or at least a facsimile that is closer to it than to a rival state. Even a casual glance at history suggests that reproduction behavior occurs in important cases, even if it is also possible to think of examples where great powers do not even try to reproduce themselves. World War II brought a sharp contest of ideologies with victorious powers setting up, if only temporarily at times, governments that looked like their own. During the Cold War, both superpowers sought to establish friendly regimes imbued with similar values and institutions. Often, these regimes were only marginally closer to one superpower in institutional form than another, but it is difficult to deny that superpowers sought to instill some institutional similarities. As President Kennedy reportedly said in reference to the Dominican Republic: “There are three possibilities in descending order of preference: a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime, or a Castro regime. We

⁴ See also Payaslian 1996 (quoted in Nielsen 2013).

ought to aim at the first, but we really can't renounce the second until we are sure we can avoid the third" (Rabe 1996, 55).

After 1990, Western states worked to spread liberal ideas around the world and a large literature on diffusion and socialization has developed to evaluate the effects of these efforts (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999; Jacoby 2006; Simmons, Dobbin and Garrett 2006). Curiously, scholars of all theoretical stripes—from realists to constructivists—have noted the tendency for states to seek reproduction. Waltz (1979, 200) suggested that state exporting of their ideologies and institutions is routine: "Like some earlier great powers, we [the United States] can identify the presumed duty of the rich and powerful to help others with our own beliefs ... England claimed to bear the white man's burden; France had its *mission civilisatrice* . . . For countries at the top, this is predictable." Owen (2010, 10), citing constructivist approaches, identified the same phenomenon: "The most obvious fact is that forcible regime promotion is a fairly common practice of statecraft in the modern international system." Both Waltz and Owen are referring to the forcible imposition of particular domestic institutions on other countries, but as Owen (2010, 10) observes, "Non-forcible regime promotion . . . has probably been even more common." Foreign aid is one important tool for the non-forcible promotion of particular domestic institutions.

Reproduction serves the interests of relatively powerful states by providing greater stability and predictability and by increasing the probability of international cooperation for those states. Relatively powerful states often prefer predictability and the related good of stability because they wish to preserve the status quo (Ikenberry 2001, 50-51). They enjoy their power and do not want to expend it unnecessarily. If other states share their institutions and values, they have a better understanding of those states' interests and behavior. They must then expend fewer resources keeping a watchful eye on those states and in planning for unwanted contingencies. At times, relatively powerful states even utilize force to impose particular domestic institutions on others because "domestic institutional promotion can alter the balance of international power" and allow long-lasting influence in those states (Owen 2002, 375-377). This behavior is not confined to the largest powers or to democracies; Owen finds that a wide variety of mid-size powers—Syria, South Africa, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Egypt, and others--have also engaged in the imposition of domestic institutions. Lo, Hashimoto and Reiter (2008, 717) find that "periods of peace following wars last longer when the war ends in foreign-imposed regime change." Others have found, however, that democratic states who intervene militarily rarely promote democracy and in fact often erode it (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006). Utilizing force to impose domestic institutions is of course quite costly, so it seems likely that powerful states will more frequently utilize other means, like foreign aid, to promote their preferred domestic institutions and achieve their goals of influence on others and stability.

Scholars have found that states with similar domestic institutions are more likely to cooperate with each other (Leeds 1999). Most of this research focuses on democracy or its absence, but both democracy and

human rights concern the fundamental nature of the relationship between the state and its citizens, and the two are correlated. Lai and Reiter (2000) find that similar domestic institutions can produce cooperation even in security issues, which are particularly important forms of cooperation because they affect core state interests of survival. Democracies are more likely to cooperate with other democracies because their commitments are credible and they prefer partners whose commitments are also credible; otherwise, democratic leaders may be held accountable for the failure of others to follow through on their commitments (Leeds 1999, 997-998). Authoritarian regimes cannot make credible commitments in the same way, but enjoy policy flexibility. Hence, the possibility of rewards and the flexibility to abandon commitments lead authoritarian regimes to cooperate with each other (1999, 980). Drawing on a range of disparate theoretical approaches, Lai and Reiter (2000) expected that only democratic dyads would be more likely to form security alliances than other types of dyads (e.g., autocrat-autocrat or autocrat-democrat), but found instead that autocratic dyads (and all dyads of states who share similar domestic institutions) are equally likely to form security alliances as democratic dyads. Haas (2005) argued that ideological differences among states increase perceived threats to leaders' domestic power and to state security interests. This then provides an incentive for leaders to narrow the ideological difference between them and others. Hence, states looking for security partners have an interest in reproduction to facilitate cooperation and to avoid threats.

Reproduction can serve the interests of powerful states in other ways. Outside of the security area, Mansfield, Milner and Rosendorff (2000) have found that democratic dyads are more likely to liberalize trade with each other than are autocratic-democratic dyads. Moreover, autocratic dyads tend to trade as freely with each other as do democratic dyads, suggesting that cooperation depends on similar domestic institutions, not on democratic institutions. Shared ideologies and practices can prevent the diffusion of unwanted ideas from neighboring societies, a real concern in a world where diffusion is frequent and often based on geographical pathways (Simmons, Dobbin and Garrett 2006). Another strategic advantage to reproduction is that it enables states to hide behind each other when they are accused of unsavory practices. It is easier to justify one's unwanted behavior when it is practiced by some others, a phenomenon that Simmons (2009, 88) labels "social camouflage."

Hypothesis 1. Donor states will reward (punish) recipients who alter their human rights policies and practices to become more similar (dissimilar) to the donor.

Note that we are not making an argument for isomorphism, understood as a near-universal adoption of particular ideas and practices. A number of "world society" sociologists and political scientists have noted the tendency for states across the globe to adopt the same forms, functions, policies and institutions. They commonly assign this isomorphism to the "logic of appropriateness," where states emulate the

behavior of others in a process that does not involve rational calculation of costs and benefits but a more organic process of adopting common cognitive scripts (Meyer et al. 1997). International organizations and nongovernmental organizations constitute the primary transmission mechanisms in this theoretical approach (Torfason and Ingram 2010; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). In contrast, we believe states have strategic reasons to promote particular policies and institutions and we are skeptical as to whether they will succeed in remaking the entire world in their own image. The diversity of ideas and institutions is simply too high and domestic institutions that do not emerge indigenously are often too unstable.

We also do not want to claim that reproduction is the most important interest of a state or that it is costless. States have a large number of interests and limited resources. When deciding how to allocate foreign aid, donors face many competing priorities including maintaining stability in the recipient, aiding development, ameliorating poverty, and cementing security alliances, among other considerations. Donors are limited in aid resources and must make choices between a wide variety of possible recipients. As some recipients become quite similar in their human rights policies and practices, donors are likely to shift their attention to different states that are more dissimilar but moving in the right direction. We thus expect some reallocation of aid away from similar states and toward changing states. While such a strategy risks backsliding among similar states, it is relatively costless to punish backsliding states with even larger decreases in aid. Moreover, many countries reach a point where domestic policies and practices become relatively institutionalized and are unlikely to change much. As they do, the gains that donors can reap by paying off new converts are large compared to the ongoing benefits of a stable relationship.

Hypothesis 2: Donors will decrease aid to countries that have similar human rights policies and practices.

Previous studies have focused on the level of respect for human rights in recipient countries as an important predictor of foreign aid (Nielsen 2013; Neumayer 2003a,b,c; Poe 1992). Our theoretical reasoning suggests that donors do not care as much about the level of human rights as they do about the direction in which states are moving. We suspect this is one of the reasons why previous studies have had difficulty establishing a relationship between the level of respect for human rights and foreign aid.

Other studies have offered theoretical reasoning that call into question a reproduction motive. Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2007; 2009) argued that donor states desire policy concessions from recipients and allocate aid based on the cost of those concessions. Policy concessions are less costly when recipient governments have fewer domestic supporters to pay off for their acquiescence in the concession (when their winning coalitions are smaller). According to these authors, then, donors should be more likely to give foreign aid to authoritarian-style governments because the policy concessions are cheaper. While

this logic is plausible and some evidence supports it, this approach does not consider the possibility that the desired policy concessions involve reforming domestic political institutions and hence the size of the winning coalition. Our approach suggests reasons why donors might desire such outcomes. In pursuing reproduction, donors might lose client governments where policy concessions are relatively cheap, but they are likely to gain policies that are more similar to their own and to achieve other goals through domestic institutional reform.

It is important to note that our theory does not require recipient compliance to donor desires. Donors reward recipients who become more like them, but we make no claims about why recipients change. To consider the most extreme situation, recipients may change for purely domestic reasons—though this seems unlikely given the research on regime change and human rights practices (Goodliffe and Hawkins forthcoming; Simmons 2009). Even in such cases, we would still expect donors to reward them for their change because donors will hope that correlation is causation—such is human nature—and because in the short run it is very difficult to know whether a donor might be having influence. Recipients who are thinking strategically and who care about aid may change to gain the rewards of more aid. They may change slowly so as to extract aid over a longer period of time, or they may change in ways that please some donors for a while and then change in ways that please other donors. Our theory accommodates all such recipient strategies and makes no claims about likely strategies.

Which donors will pursue reproduction? We expect enough donors to pursue it that this motive will be evident in a general analysis of all state donors. Moreover, the benefits of reproduction we articulated above are not limited to Western states or to powerful states—though such states may have greater capacity to influence others. We thus run our analysis on the following subsamples of donor states and expect to find similar results: all non-European states, European states, Nordic states, new donors and small donors. We expect authoritarian regimes to desire reproduction, as they are not immune to the logic we lay out above regarding its benefits. Unfortunately, we have only limited observations on three authoritarian donors (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) and thus cannot fully test this possibility.

We chose these groups because other scholars have analyzed them and because they can shed light on our hypotheses. In the case of Nordic states, a small literature has developed on whether they act differently on questions of human rights and democracy, with mixed results (Neumayer 2003a,b,c; Svensson 1999; Alesina and Dollar 2000). In recent years, scholars and analysts have paid some attention to “new donors,” or donors who are not members of the OECD but who are now reporting their data in various ways (Dreher, Fuchs and Nunnenkamp 2013; Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele 2011). These studies have generally found that new donors (some of whom have been giving foreign aid for

many years, but without providing public information) behave similarly to existing OECD donors. Our theoretical reasoning suggests that all states should desire reproduction and thus we should not see the differences other scholars have hypothesized or found. As some skepticism might exist about this proposition for non-European donors or small donors due to different values or capacity, we also include those groups in our analyses.

3. Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable is dyadic development aid (excluding military aid) from 1981-2006. We utilize a larger list of donor states than many studies of foreign aid because our hypotheses should apply to all donor states, not just the members of the OECD who are the most commonly analyzed, giving us over 480,000 observations. See Table 1 for a list of states in our analysis which donated aid. We utilize data from AidData, which includes a number of states beyond the OECD such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Chile and Brazil. We have less data on these states because fewer years are available and they donate to fewer recipients on average, but the information is the most comprehensive available and allows inferences to relatively unknown donors (Tierney et al., 2011). There are few human rights studies that treat dyadic aid as the dependent variable. Nielsen (2013) examines the use of dyadic aid reduction when human rights respect decreases in recipient states. Most other studies use aggregate aid flows from all OECD donor countries and a few multilateral organizations to state recipients (Lebovic and Voeten 2009). While this measure is useful and appropriate for the theoretical questions those scholars are asking, it still provides a limited view of aid patterns. By aggregating aid, these studies ignore differences among donor states. Dyadic aid allows us to engage in a more fine-grained analysis of the decisions of individual states and their particular relations with others. We operationalize aid by taking the natural logarithm of the aid per capita.⁵

4. Independent Variables

We measure four different types of human rights practices. For each set of practices, we examine their level in the recipient country, the similarity between that level and the level in the donor country, and the change over time in similarity (i.e., whether the two countries are becoming more similar or dissimilar). The first human rights practice concerns ratification of international human rights treaties. While several scholars suggest that states might reward and punish each other for those ratifications, we are aware of only one paper that has tested this hypothesis rigorously and it shows no relationship between aid and

⁵ We also examined the change in the level of aid as a dependent variable. The results are qualitatively similar, though the magnitudes are smaller, as expected. The change in the natural logarithm of aid per capita is roughly equivalent to the percentage change in aid per capita, which is similar to the interpretation we make of the level of the natural logarithm of aid per capita.

ratification (Nielsen and Simmons 2015). We count the number of human rights treaties in any given year that both donor and recipient states have ratified or not ratified. We examine seven such treaties and thus measure the similarity of international human rights commitments among the two states.⁶ Since some commitments became possible midway through our time range, we standardize this from 0 to 1. As an example, if both states have ratified the same four human rights treaties, the two states would receive *Treaty Commitment Similarity* score of 1. If both states have ratified two treaties when four were available, but only one of those is the same, they would receive a *Treaty Commitment Similarity* score of 0.50, with .25 for the treaty they have jointly ratified and .25 for the treaty they have jointly failed to ratify. We are interested not only in whether states reward countries that are similar, but in whether they reward states that become more similar. Thus, we use the change in the similarity score. Furthermore, we investigate different lengths of time of change, from a one-year change to a ten-year change.

The next two types of human rights practice concern physical integrity rights and empowerment rights, using data provided by Cingrinelli and Richards (CIRI). For each dyad, we calculate the absolute difference in a human rights score between the two countries. To make it a similarity score, we take the negative of this absolute difference, so that an increase in the score means that the countries in the dyad are less different (or more similar). We do this for both the Physical Integrity Index and the Empowerment Rights Index in the CIRI data. Like *Treaty Commitment Similarity*, we calculate the change in the *Physical Integrity Similarity* and *Empowerment Similarity* scores for one year to ten years. Finally, reasoning that states might care as much about overall levels of democracy as they do about human rights (if not more), we do the same thing for *Polity* scores.

Because we are worried about reverse causality, and because government decision-making concerning aid is usually not immediate, we lag the similarity scores by 1 year. Thus, when considering level of aid at time t (or change in aid from $t-1$ to t), a one-year change in the similarity scores measures how much similarity has changed between $t-2$ and $t-1$. The ten-year change in the similarity score measures how much similarity has changed between $t-11$ and $t-1$. We examine these time horizons (and the times in between) because we are interested in the effects of both short-term changes and long-term changes and have no theoretical reason to believe that states would care more about one time horizon or the other.

It is of course plausible that increasing aid produces changes in the human rights and democracy levels of recipient countries and some evidence supports this (Finkel, Pérez-Liñán and Seligson 2007). If this is the case, then any correlation between increased human rights similarity at $t-1$ and aid at t is the result of anticipated rewards on the part of the recipient. If a recipient is anticipating rewards and changing

⁶ The treaties are CESC, CCPR, CERD, CEDAW, CAT, CRC, and CMW.

behavior, this circumstance does nothing to undermine our argument that donors desire and reward reproduction. In fact, it would provide additional evidence for our argument because donors would logically want some evidence of success to continue reproduction strategies. In our particular theoretical context, then, endogeneity is not a problem because if it exists, it would strengthen our argument. To be clear, we are not claiming that endogeneity in fact exists. We are just pointing out that, perhaps unusually, it is not a problem for our theoretical claims.

To summarize, we utilize four measures of human rights and democracy commitment and practices in recipient countries: human rights treaty ratification, physical integrity rights, empowerment rights, and Polity score. Hypothesis One examines movement over time in these scores in recipient countries to become more similar (or dissimilar) to donors in a given dyad. Hypothesis Two examines level of similarity between donor and recipient.

5. Control Variables

We control for several variables that prior studies have shown to be significant and that are backed up by solid theoretical reasoning. For measures of recipient characteristics, we include recipient need (measured by the natural log of GDP/capita), recipient economic growth (change in the natural log of GDP/capita), population (natural log), and geographic region (fixed effects using World Bank regions).⁷ Three dyad characteristics which measure strategic importance are also included: total trade between the donor and potential recipient, geographic distance (and distance squared) between the donor and potential recipient, and whether the donor had previously colonized the potential recipient. A dummy variable for the Cold War captures whether states behaved differently during the 1980s when international human rights norms were new and strategic concerns more easily trumped the promotion of rights. Similarly, a dummy variable for 9/11 controls whether states behaved differently after 2001.

Some analysts include a control for the total level of aid by all donors in any given year in an effort to capture global changes associated with economic downturns or social and political fashion. We include a cubic polynomial of time to pick up this factor.⁸

⁷ We also examined whether civil conflict in the recipient country affected aid flows. Civil conflict does not affect aid flows, and including it in the analysis does not change the results, except for reducing the number of observations because of missing data.

⁸ Including total level of aid instead of the time polynomial yields qualitatively similar results.

6. Findings

To examine the relationship between aid and human rights practices, we use a Tobit model, because aid is left-censored at zero (see Nielsen 2013 for a similar approach). The Tobit first allows us to estimate how the level of aid changes as human rights practices change.⁹ It also allows us to simultaneously estimate whether any aid is donated as human rights practices change. Standard errors are clustered on the dyad.¹⁰

To compare the substantive importance of the primary independent variables, which are on different scales, we increase each independent variable by two standard deviations (Gelman 2008) and calculate the change in level of aid, holding all of the other variables constant. Because our dependent variable is logged, we report the percentage change in level of aid.¹¹

Because we are examining several different models, we present the results graphically for ease of comparison. We graph the predicted percentage change in aid and its 95% confidence interval.¹² In all of the models, we include the **change** in similarity (between donor and potential recipient) for our four key variables: *Treaty Commitment*, *Physical Integrity Rights*, *Empowerment Rights*, and *Polity Score*. We also include the **level** of similarity (between donor and potential recipient) for the four key variables, and level of human rights of the donor, as measured by the four key variables. Finally, we include the control variables noted earlier.¹³

Figure 1 presents the results for Hypothesis 1: how much aid changes when a recipient is becoming more similar to the donor. We expect aid to increase when the recipient is becoming more similar to the donor. The first box shows the predicted percentage change as we alter *Treaty Commitment*, the second box *Physical Integrity Rights*, the third box *Empowerment Rights*, and the last box *Polity Score*. The scales are the same for all four boxes for ease of comparison. What differs across the displayed models is how long the change of similarity takes place: between 1 and 10 years.¹⁴ Consider the 1-year change results, which are the left-most dots and bars in each box (over the 1 on the horizontal axis). As the recipient becomes more similar to the donor in treaty commitment, the model predicts that aid will decrease, which goes against our hypothesis. However, this predicted decrease is not statistically different than zero.

⁹ The results are generally similar when using ordinary least squares, though the coefficients, as expected, are smaller in magnitude.

¹⁰ Robust and regular standard errors are smaller than the dyad-clustered standard errors. Thus, our results are conservative.

¹¹ Since we are deriving these changes from Tobit coefficients, these represent the change in the latent variable of aid per capita, though the variable is censored at zero. The effects would be smaller for the conditional and unconditional effects on the observed variable.

¹² We use the delta method to calculate confidence intervals.

¹³ The coefficients and standard errors for the 1-year change model are included in the data appendix. The results for all models are available on request.

¹⁴ Economic growth is also measured as a change in (logged) GDP/capita, which is measured with the same 1- to 10-year change.

However, the other three measures of change in human rights similarity support our hypothesis. For example, as the recipient becomes more similar to the donor in *Physical Integrity Rights*, aid per capita increases by about 17 percent. *Empowerment Rights* show a similar positive effect, though weaker: an increase of about 8 percent. And *Polity Score* is also positive: an increase of about 15 percent. The other predictions correspond to different lengths of time that changes take place. The effects on aid are all the same or stronger for 10-year changes in similarity. Even *Treaty Commitment* is now positive, as hypothesized, though it is still statistically insignificant. The predicted effects are similar whatever the timeframe that is used to measure change. Overall, as a recipient country changes more quickly to emulate the donor country, the donor country will send more aid to the recipient country. Since we are holding level of similarity and current practice/commitment to human rights constant (as well as other control variables), in practice this means that countries that are coming from further away toward the donor get higher levels of aid. We thus find strong support for Hypothesis 1.

In Figure 2, we display the effect of similarity of rights on aid. By Hypothesis 2, we expect more similar donor-recipient dyads to transmit less aid. We display the results while controlling for 1-year change in similarity (and the other key variables and control variables), but the results are similar for 2- to 10-year changes. A recipient country that is more similar to a donor country in its *Physical Integrity Rights* and *Empowerment Rights* (i.e. human rights records) and *Polity Score* when compared to other recipients receives less aid. Specifically, as *Physical Integrity Rights* similarity increases, aid per capita is reduced by 34 percent; as *Empowerment Rights* similarity increases, aid per capita is reduced by 23 percent. And as *Polity Score* similarity increases, aid per capita is reduced by 13 percent. Again, since we are holding the other variables constant, in practice this means that if two recipient countries are moving at the same rate towards a donor, the country that starts further away receives more aid. In contrast, a recipient country that is more similar to a donor country in the treaties it signs (i.e. its human rights *Treaty Commitment*) receives 14 percent more aid. Since countries rarely de-ratify treaties, in practice this means that a recipient country's aid level increases when the recipient country ratifies human rights treaties. Our results in this respect differ from those of Nielsen and Simmons (2015), who found no relationship between human rights treaty ratification and aid. Except for treaty ratification, we find support for Hypothesis 2.

Although we make no predictions concerning the relationship between level of human rights and aid, we include those in the model as control variables and as comparison to previous work. In Figure 3, we show that higher recipient *Physical Integrity Rights* (19 percent), *Empowerment Rights* (16 percent), and *Polity Score* (15 percent) lead to more aid, even controlling for similarity and change in similarity. *Treaty Commitment* has no effect.

Although not displayed graphically, our control variables also matter in the expected direction, which gives further support to the model, overall. Higher trade (last year) leads to higher aid (this year). Richer countries (GDP/capita) get less aid, but countries with greater economic growth get more aid. Aid increased during the Cold War and after 9/11. Aid has increased over time, even controlling for those time periods. Previous colonized states receive more aid from their colonizers. As the distance between donors and recipients increases from contiguous to about 6000 km, aid increases; as distance increases beyond 6000 km, aid decreases, controlling for other factors. Relative to other regions, Latin American and the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa receive more aid. Population size has no effect, which makes sense given that we are measuring aid/capita. The strongest variables are trade and recipient need, but then our key human rights variables are as strong or stronger than other control variables such as colonizer.

We have attempted to control for heterogeneity and correlated observations by using standard errors clustered on the dyad. We now examine the robustness of the results to other methods of modeling heterogeneity and non-independence. First, we include fixed effects for potential recipients. This controls for any unobserved recipient characteristics. Second, we include a lagged observed dependent variable. One reason to include this variable is that donor characteristics matter, in particular the amount of aid given the previous year, often taken to represent bureaucratic inertia in the donor country, though it could also measure a recipient country's strategic importance. Finally, we include random effects for the dyad, which control for the non-independence of observations across time for the same dyad. The results are in Figures 4-6.

Figure 4 presents the robustness results on change in similarity over the 1- and 10-year time periods. It shows the results from the original model, as well as the results from the other three models. In general, the model with fixed effects has results similar to the original model. The models with a lagged dependent variable and random effects have weaker effects, but they are still statistically significant. Figure 5 shows the results for level of similarity. Like Figure 4, it shows that the results for other models are generally similar to the original model, although the results for *Polity Score* similarity are not robust to dyad random effects. Figure 6 also shows that the results for levels of human rights are robust to other models (except for *Polity Score* in the dyad random effects or recipient fixed effects).

Our theoretical reasoning suggests that these results should apply to nearly all donors and not just long-time democratic European donors that are the subject of most analyses. Because some scholars have found differences between one group of countries and others, we ran the same analysis on various subsets of countries. We examine non-European countries separately as well as European countries. We

also examine Nordic countries separately.¹⁵ Some might suspect that the reproduction motive applies only to long-time donors or to the most powerful states, so we ran the analysis only for new donors,¹⁶ and only for “small” countries whose GDP (in 2013) was below \$300 billion.¹⁷ As more data becomes available for autocratic donors, and donors with poor or middling human rights records, we will be able to further test our theory of reproduction. The results for the included subsets are in Figures 7-9. Unlike previous figures, we allow the scales of the vertical axis to differ across variables.

Figure 7 presents the results for change in similarity of the human rights variables for these subsets of donors, as well as the original model for comparison. The results for change in *Physical Integrity Rights* similarity are similar for subsets except new donors. In contrast, the results for change in *Polity Score* similarity are only similar for non-European countries. Figure 8 presents the results for level of similarity. Contrary to our Hypothesis 2, Nordic countries and new donors increase aid for those countries that have similar *Physical Integrity Rights*. Perhaps new donors, in particular, do not follow the same logic as given in Hypotheses 1 and 2. However, most subsets of countries do follow that logic.

7. Case Study

To illustrate our results, we turn to a brief case study of US aid to Peru. After returning to democracy in 1978, Peru began a prolonged period of democratic backsliding and increasing rights abuse in 1992 when President Alberto Fujimori engaged in a “self-coup” by shuttering Congress and then altering Peruvian laws and institutions to center power in himself and in the presidency. In 1995, President Fujimori won an election that was widely viewed as lacking in basic democratic guarantees. In subsequent years he muzzled the media, presided over torture and extrajudicial killings, undermined the independence of the judiciary and engaged in widespread corruption. The United States maintained a relatively steady flow of aid from 1992-2000, ranging from a low of \$141 million in 1996 to a high of \$265 million in 1999, with an average of \$202 million per year.¹⁸ This aid level serves as a baseline for our analysis of the ensuing changes.

During this period, USAID documents demonstrate that policy makers were pleased with many aspects of Fujimori’s rule, but remained troubled by the absence of democracy and by the violation of human rights. An aid performance review from 1998 noted with satisfaction that, “The Fujimori government has restored

¹⁵ Our results are qualitatively similar if we exclude the United States, or if we exclude Nordic countries, or if only include long-time donors, or we only include “large” donors.

¹⁶ The new donor countries are Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Estonia, Hungary, India, Kuwait, Latvia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, and United Arab Emirates.

¹⁷ The small donor countries are Chile, Greece, Finland, Portugal, Ireland, Czech Republic, Kuwait, New Zealand, Hungary, Slovakia, Luxembourg, Latvia, Estonia, and Iceland.

¹⁸ The data is from <https://explorer.usaid.gov/aid-trends.html>, accessed 20 Aug. 2015. We utilized this data rather than the OECD data, as there is some evidence that the United States severely underreported aid to Peru to the OECD in the 1990s.

public order, virtually eliminated terrorism and made significant inroads against coca cultivation and narcotrafficking, stabilized and radically reformed the economy and reintegrated Peru into the global economy” (USAID 1998, 1). These accomplishments certainly speak to U.S. interests and so some would not find it surprising if little was subsequently said about human rights and democracy. Yet the document immediately turned to a critique of Peru on those issues: “The highest priority concern, however, is to promote Peru’s pursuit of open and democratic governance, without which there would be little domestic and foreign investor confidence in the Peruvian economy to sustain its development momentum. Democratic governance depends in turn on the GOP’s [government of Peru] need to be predictable and transparent. . . .” (USAID 1998, 1). The United States’ top strategic objective was to promote democracy, human rights, good governance, judicial institutions and other associated institutions.

In late 2000, Peru took a turn toward democracy and respect for rights when Fujimori was forced from office after his close ally was caught on camera bribing an opposition congressman. Peru’s Freedom House rating improved from 9 to 4 between 1999 and 2001 (on a scale of 2-14, where low is better) and the United States rewarded Peru with \$337 million in aid in 2002, quite a bit higher than the previous high point during the Fujimori years. Aid levels remained quite high from 2002 to 2006—averaging \$292 million per year, or 45 percent higher than the Fujimori years—before declining again beginning in 2007. From 2007 to 2012, they vacillated between \$103 million and \$189 million with an average of \$142 million, or 30 percent lower than the Fujimori years.

What explains this pattern? In its strategic planning document for 2002-2006, USAID (2001, iv) was quite clear on its motives and continued its theme from the 1990s: “Our strategy focuses on the key lesson of the Fujimori years: a stronger democracy is essential for sustainable development in Peru.” While conceding that democracy would not guarantee economic progress, the USAID planners argued (2001, iv-v) that “in the long run citizens with more control over their destiny will make choices that improve the health, education, and economic opportunities of their families.” Moreover, US policymakers argued that promoting democracy and human rights would be helpful to other strategic interests such as furthering regional stability (Peru and Ecuador had just settled a very long-standing border dispute), decreasing coca production, and promoting US economic and commercial interests (USAID 2001, 10). So central was the promotion and stabilization of democratic gains that the document declared that all other strategic objectives “will promote democratic values and practices in their activities” (USAID 2001, 12).

In the ensuing years, the United States carefully tracked Peru’s progress with respect to democracy and human rights, as well as other policies and institutions it favors. In a 2006 operational plan, USAID (2006, 3) noted with approval that “Peru has pursued an ambitious program to consolidate democracy and promote a market-based economy. . . .” U.S. policy makers viewed decentralization as a key component

of successful democratic consolidation. They chronicled in some detail the ups and downs in the battle for democracy, proudly reporting that “our decentralization program contributed significantly to policy at the national level and to operations locally in the Mission’s priority regions” (2006, 4). The report lamented the defeat of one decentralization initiative, but also emphasized the importance of decentralization for strengthening democratic institutions and detailed other progress on this issue. In 2009, USAID (page 1) struck stronger notes of progress and partnership, labeling Peru a key ally in Latin America and proclaiming that the United States and Peru “share the same long-term vision of a stable, democratic, and prosperous Peru.”

By the time USAID completed its strategic document for 2012-16 in 2011, much had changed in Peru when compared with 2001. The United States (USAID 2011, xii) essentially declared victory and announced, in diplomatic terms of course, that it was reducing aid to Peru and moving on:

USAID has had an active, uninterrupted Mission presence in Peru for 50 years. Over that time, many successful programs have helped improve Peruvian democracy and governance, economic growth, health, education and natural resource management. Although development is a continuous process, there comes a time when direct bilateral assistance is no longer warranted, as a country makes the transition from donor recipient to development partner. Social and economic trends and progress over the past decade demonstrate that a gradual reduction in U.S. development programs is justified as development indicators continue to improve and/or as the GOP [Government of Peru] and other domestic actors sustain key programs previously supported by USAID or other development partners.

The document (2011, xiii) then identified a series of program closeouts in health, economic growth, democracy and governance and education. It praised Peru as a “vital partner for the United States—one with the political will to consolidate democracy and pursue equitable economic growth in a way that conserves the environment” (2011, 1). And it suggested (2011, 1) that “Peru serves as one of the strongest examples in Latin America of how a democratic, lower-income country can emerge from poverty through trade-led growth, responsible environmental stewardship and sound macroeconomic policies.”

The process-tracing evidence suggests, then, that the United States decreased aid to Peru in the late 2000s for multiple reasons, but one of the most important was Peru’s success in reproducing U.S.-style institutions. Those institutions are somewhat broader than we examined in this paper because they have to do with U.S.-approved macroeconomic policies, the adoption of free trade, good environmental

policies, etc. Future research might explore whether similarities in other issue areas—not just human rights and democracy—might also drive aid levels. Perhaps donors examine a range of issue areas as they seek for replication of domestic institutions, as suggested by this case study evidence.

The major competing hypothesis to our argument about reproduction is that the United States diminished aid because Peru achieved economic development and no longer needs aid. The documents certainly praise Peru's economic progress. To some extent, those two hypotheses might have equivalent observable implications: high levels of democracy and human rights frequently correlate with high levels of economic development. U.S. policymakers certainly appear to be articulating the view that development is holistic and that institutional progress cannot be separated from socioeconomic progress and good macroeconomic policies.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons to be skeptical that the United States has reduced aid because economic success has created low levels of need in Peru. In the portions of the strategic vision document quoted above, U.S. officials clearly overstate Peru's accomplishments, which they recognize in other areas of the document. With respect to quality of primary education, for example, the most recent strategic plan notes that Peru ranks 138th of 144 developing countries (USAID 2011, 7). A common theme noted by aid policy makers is the extremely high levels of inequality in Peru: "Peru also has the most unequal access to water and third most unequal access to electricity in Latin America. . . ." (2011, 7). Moreover, while Peru's economic situation has improved since 1990, so has that of many countries. Compared to other countries, Peru's relative standing has barely budged since 1990. Using per capita GDP data from the World Bank, Peru ranked 107th in the world in 1990, 103rd in 2000 and 100th in 2010.¹⁹ This upward progress is important, but unremarkable in magnitude when compared with the size of aid decreases around 2010 and with the rhetoric of U.S. policymakers, which praises Peru for huge progress. Nor can the reduction of aid be attributed to other important U.S. strategic objectives, such as achievements in the war on drugs, as Peru remains one of the world's largest cocaine producers (and is perhaps the world's largest producer). It seems more likely that the United States is shifting aid elsewhere because Peru has sufficiently replicated U.S. policies and institutions. US policy makers appear satisfied that Peru is firmly in the U.S. camp with respect to domestic institutions, and that Peru's progress is sustainable. Hence, the United States is shifting resources to other potential converts.

¹⁹ Data downloaded from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>, 21 August 2015.

8. Conclusions

We have argued that donor states are likely to use foreign aid as a tool to reproduce themselves, that is, to promote institutions and practices that are similar to their own in recipient countries. They do this by rewarding recipients who change their domestic institutions to become more like donor states. Because donors have limited resources, they are likely to shift aid money away from states with the most similar institutions and toward states that are in the process of changing. Donors thus prize new converts over old patrons, so to speak, essentially gambling that recipients with similar institutions will maintain them as donors shift their resources elsewhere. While our logic would apply to all sorts of domestic institutions and practices, we have focused on human rights and democracy. We find substantial support for our arguments. Recipients who change to become more like donors with respect to human rights and democracy receive statistically significant increases in aid. Those increases are substantively large, especially over a ten-year period of change, as one might suspect. Recipients whose human rights and democracy practices are similar to that of donors receive large decreases in aid. Recipients with high levels of respect for human rights and democracy also receive increases in aid..

While our argument is generally straightforward and intuitive, it has been widely missed in both the human rights and the foreign aid literatures. For the better part of 30 years, scholars have noticed donor-country rhetoric around human rights and democracy and inquired as to whether donor states put their money where their mouths are by actually allocating aid to those with better human rights records. Scholars have suggested that the motives include the principled commitments of donors or their domestic audiences and the fear of negative spillovers from abusive, undemocratic regimes. Findings have been quite mixed, with no stable, overarching patterns emerging from the literature.

Our approach helps explain these mixed results. Donors are not necessarily looking to reward those who protect human rights; rather, they seek to reward change toward their own institutions and practices. As a result, our variable for recipient change to become more like a given donor is consistently significant with respect to human rights and democracy practices. At the same time, donors substantially decrease aid to those whose levels of human rights and democracy practices are already similar to their own, presumably so they can allocate more resources to those who are changing. Taking account of both of those factors, donors do tend to reward better levels of human rights and democracy. . It is important that we found those results among a wider donor pool than others have often analyzed. Moreover, our analyses of subsets of countries showed that the results generally hold when looking just at traditional European donors, or looking at just those who are not. Nevertheless, our model does not appear to apply to all donors, as “new donors” do not fit the expected patterns and perhaps have priorities other than reproduction with their foreign aid.

Looking to future research, this theory of reproduction could be tested in a variety of other ways. As data on non-Western donor states improves, we could analyze whether the predictions hold for those donors. Relatively powerful states also have many tools available to them other than development aid to foster reproduction. It would be interesting to see if states utilize trade concessions, financial backing, or other resources such as oil or other natural resource pricing to promote reproduction. Finally, human rights and democracy are particularly important domestic institutions because they lie at the heart of state power and the relationship between a state and its citizens. But powerful states could be interested in reproducing themselves in other issue areas such as financial sector governance, corporatist relationships, domestic security institutions, or environmental rules, among others.

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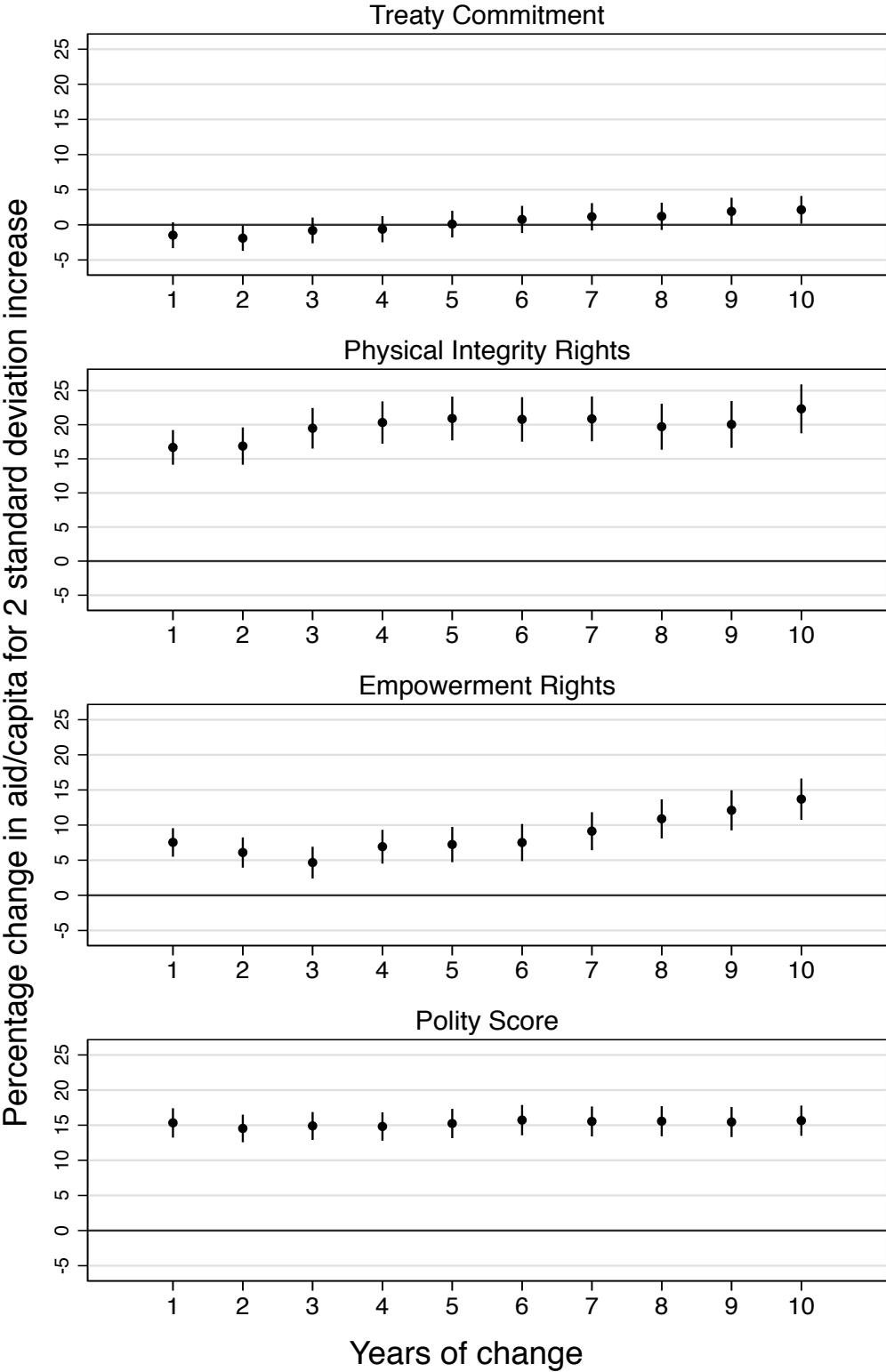
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Appendix 1. Figures

Figure 1

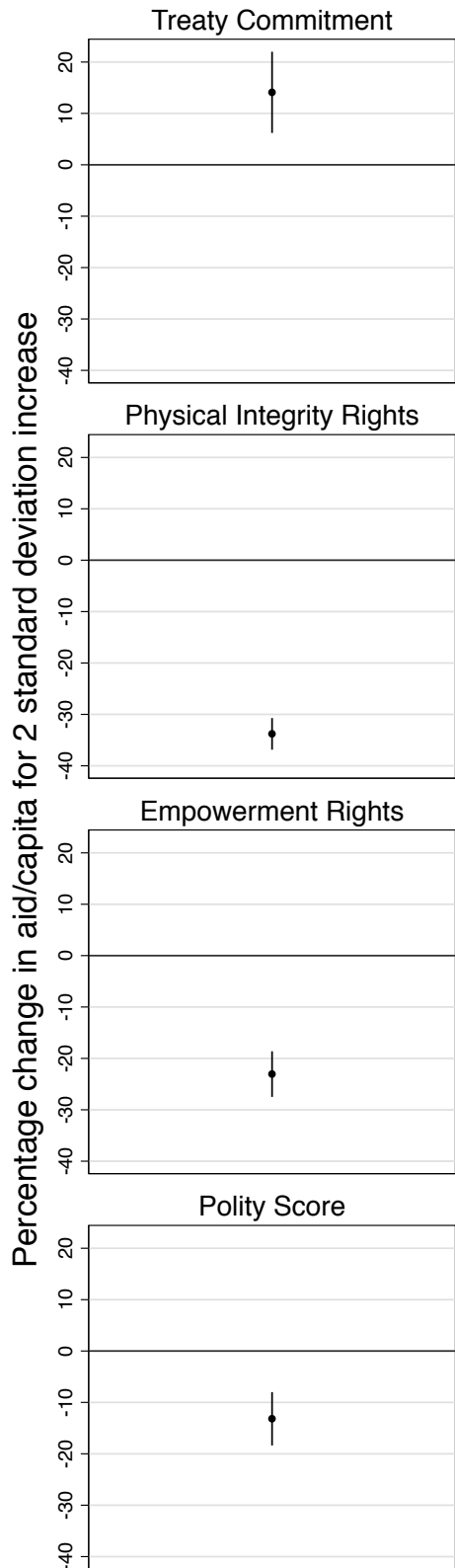
Effects of Changing Human Rights Similarity on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Figure 2

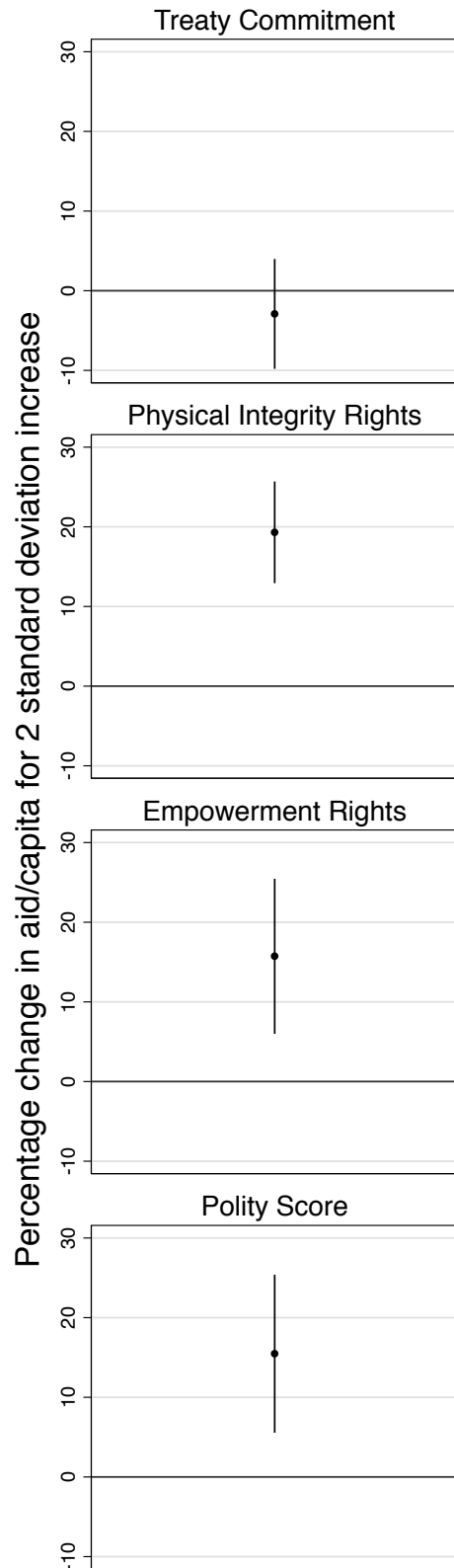
Effects of Level of Human Rights Similarity on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Figure 3

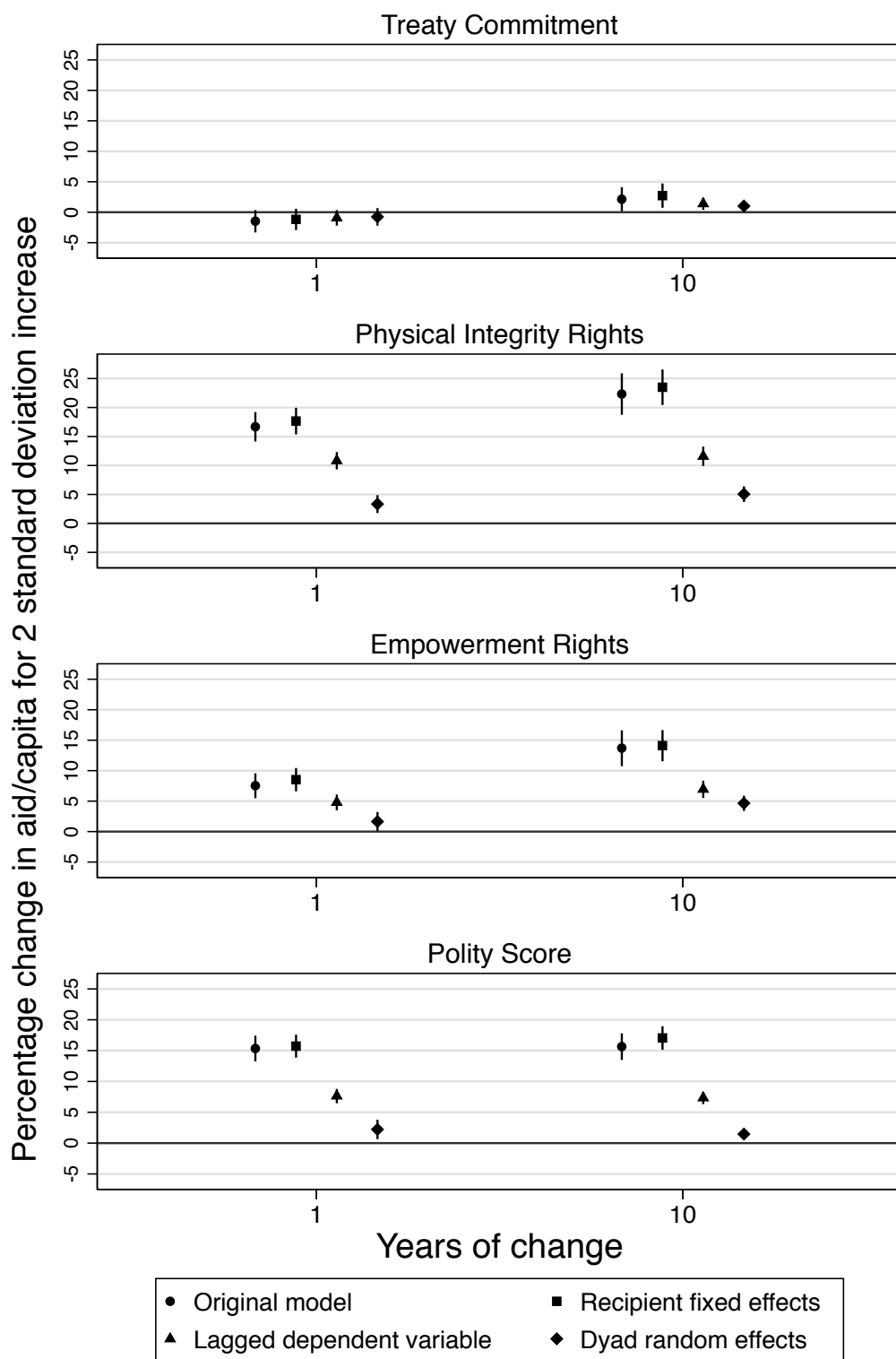
Effects of Human Rights Levels on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Figure 4

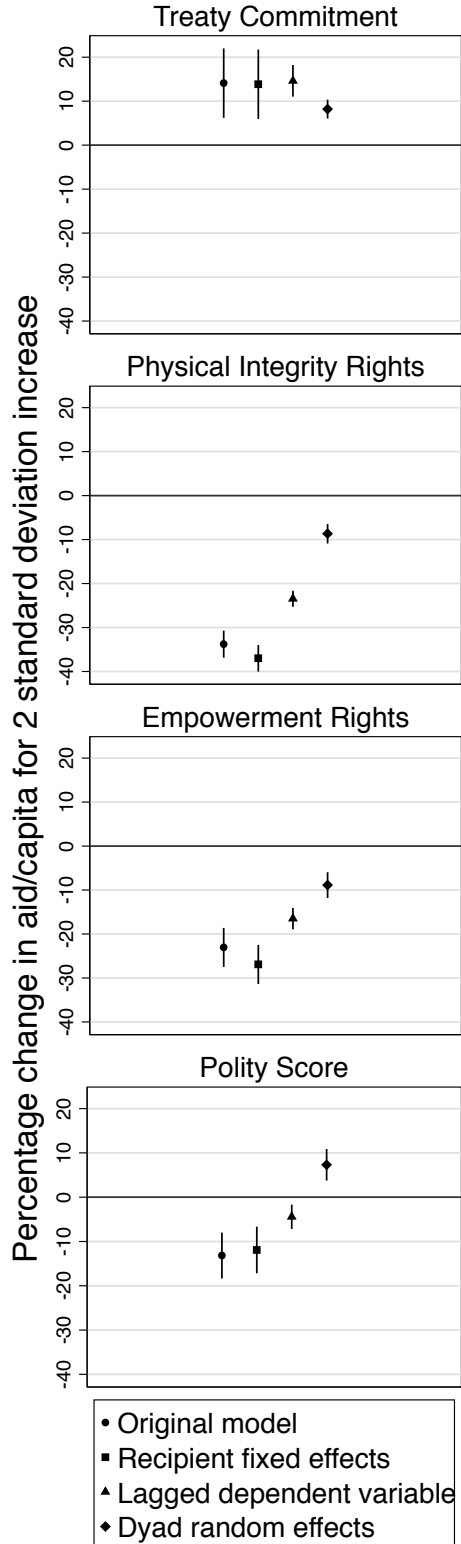
Alternative Models: Effects of Changing Human Rights Similarity on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Figure 5

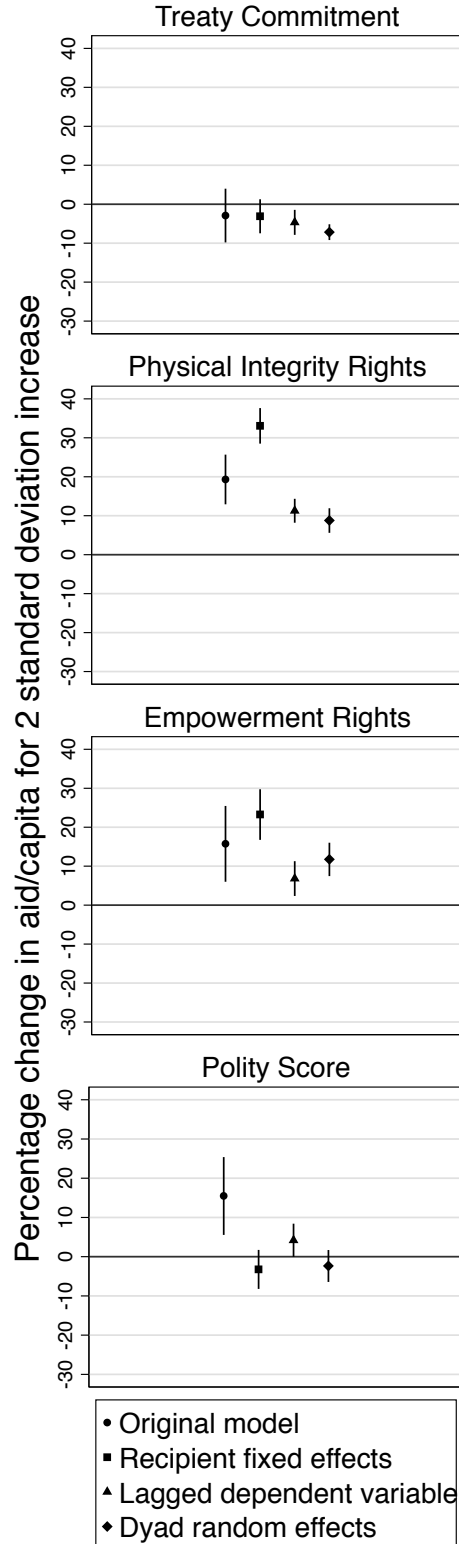
Alternative Models:
Effects of Level of Human
Rights Similarity on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Figure 6

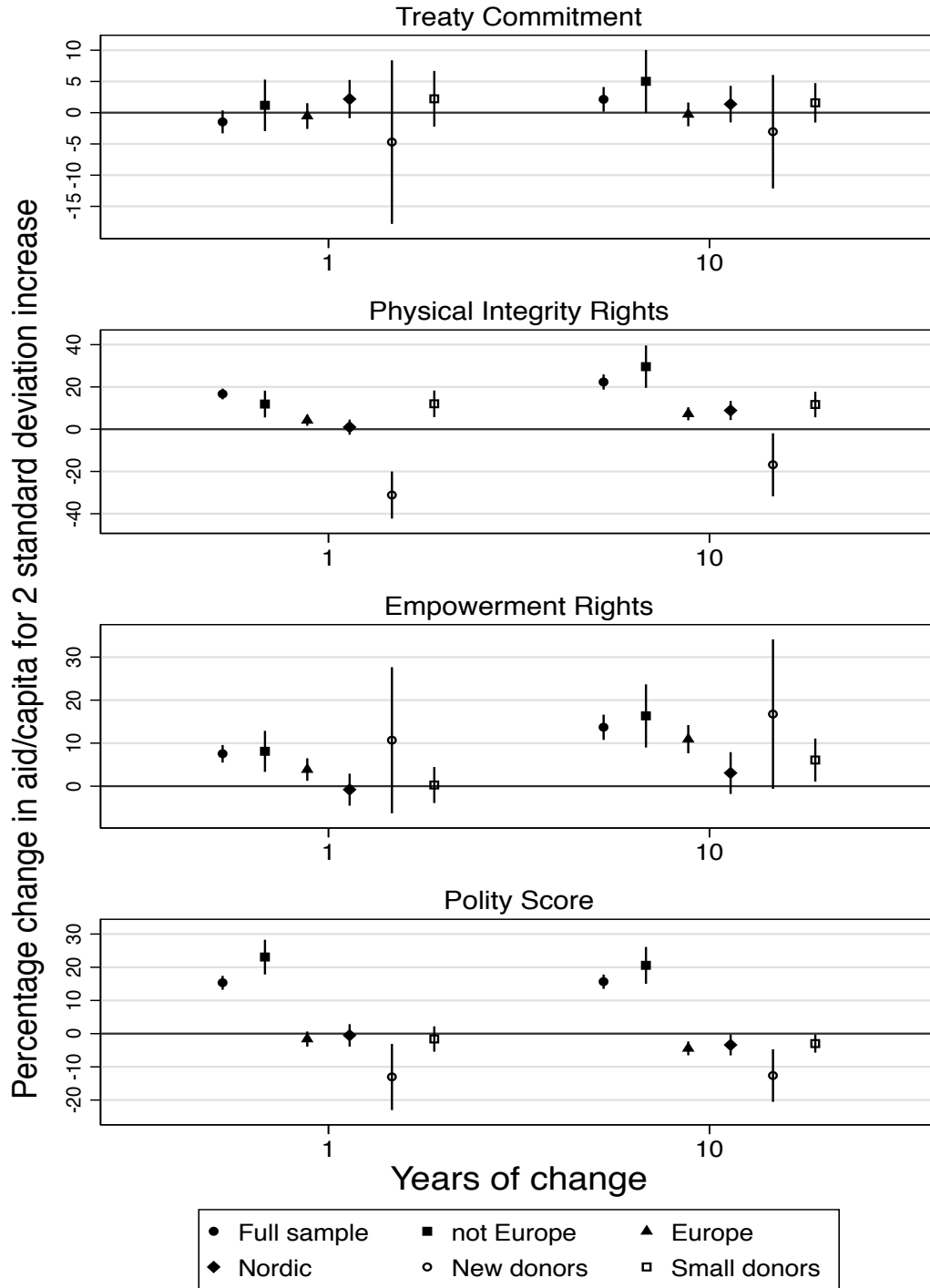
Alternative Models:
Effects of Human
Rights Levels on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Figure 7

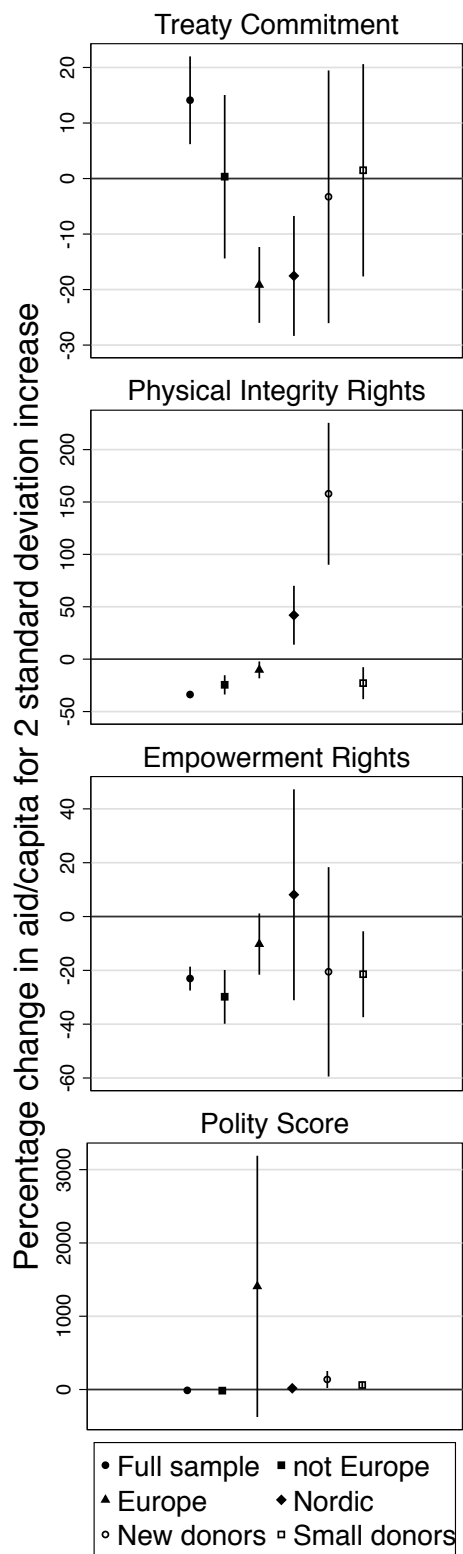
Subsets:
Effects of Changing Human Rights Similarity on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Figure 8

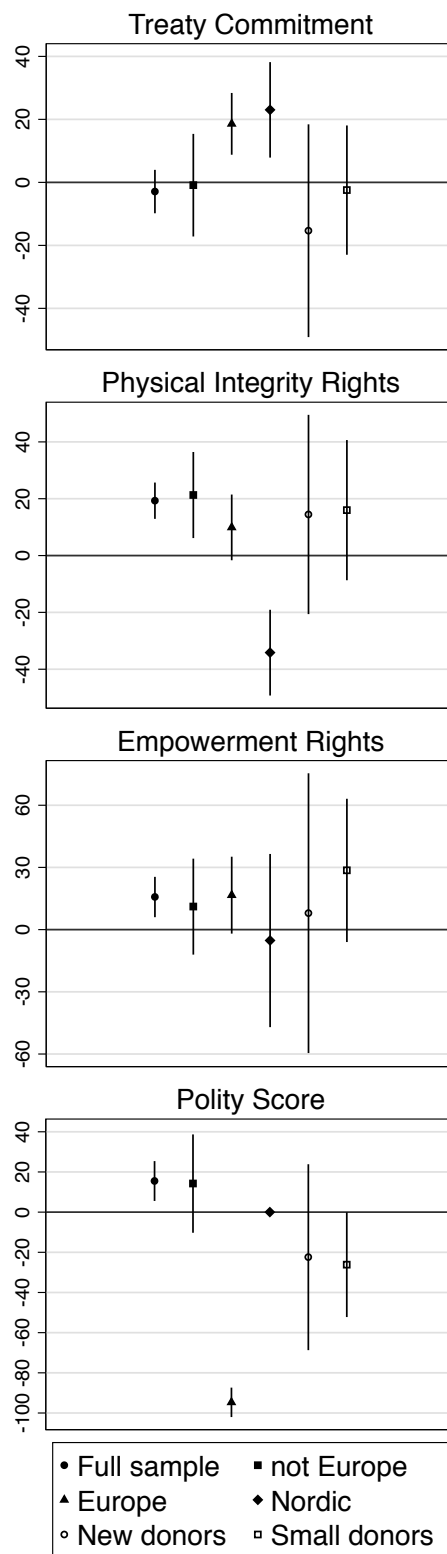
Subsets:
Effects of Level of Human Rights Similarity on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Figure 9

Subsets:
Effects of Human Rights Levels on Aid



Error bars are 95% confidence intervals

Table 1. List of states donating in dataset

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
German Federal Republic
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
India
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Kuwait
Latvia
Luxembourg
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Saudi Arabia
Slovakia
South Africa
South Korea
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Taiwan
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
United States of America

Appendix 2. Data

Table A. Explaining level of aid per capita

Independent Variable	
1-Year Change in Similarity of Donor and Potential Recipient's:	
Human Rights Commitment	-0.0669 (0.0426)
Physical Integrity Rights	0.0485** (0.00349)
Empowerment Rights	0.0193** (0.00257)
Polity	0.0335** (0.00217)
Similarity of Donor and Potential Recipient's:	
Human Rights Commitment	0.243** (0.0652)
Physical Integrity Rights	-0.105** (0.00601)
Empowerment Rights	-0.0368** (0.00413)
Polity	-0.0111** (0.00239)
Potential Recipient's:	
Human Rights Commitment	-0.0518 (0.0635)
Physical Integrity Rights	0.0381** (0.00589)
Empowerment Rights	0.0172** (0.00504)
Polity	0.00982** (0.00299)

Table A (continued). Explaining level of aid per capita

Independent Variable	
Trade Share	13.69** (0.745)
GDP/capita (logged)	-0.320** (0.0216)
Change in GDP/capita (logged)	0.441** (0.0601)
Population (logged)	0.0185 (0.0127)
Cold War	0.0738** (0.0191)
Post-9/11	0.0959** (0.0125)
Colonizer	1.587** (0.168)
Geographic Distance	0.000279** (1.80e-05)
Geographic Distance ²	-2.10e-08** (1.34e-09)
Number of Countries	170
Number of Dyads	28496
Observations	487298
- zeroes (left-censored)	455598
- greater than zero (uncensored)	31700
Pseudo R-squared	0.176
sigma	1.460

Notes: Dependent variable is logged dyadic aid per capita, 1983-2006.
Coefficients are tobit estimates; robust standard errors are clustered on the dyad.

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

Regional fixed effects (jointly significant), cubic polynomial on year (jointly significant), and a constant are included, but not reported.