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# Framing Foreign Aid: Chinese Propaganda and Domestic Support for Checkbook Diplomacy

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## Abstract

Foreign aid has become increasingly contested in many democratic donor countries, yet China has expanded its overseas development engagement over the past decade. This divergence raises questions about domestic support for foreign aid in authoritarian donor states and the role of state-managed information in shaping public opinion. Focusing on China, this study examines citizens' attitudes toward foreign aid and the mechanisms through which official media narratives influence those attitudes. We combine a pre-registered survey experiment with 2,959 respondents and a systematic content analysis of foreign aid coverage in People's Daily from 2015 to 2021. Text analysis identifies three dominant state media frames, including economic benefits, political gains, and humanitarian concerns, that portray foreign aid as advancing both national interests and global responsibility. Survey evidence indicates high baseline support for foreign aid among Chinese respondents, while experimental results show no average framing effects, likely due to extensive pre-treatment exposure to historical and contemporary foreign aid narratives. These findings suggest that sustained state propaganda shapes baseline attitudes and attenuates the marginal impact of short-term persuasion, contributing to debates on foreign aid politics and authoritarian opinion formation.

**Keywords:** *Foreign Aid, Authoritarian Propaganda, China*

**Short Title:** *Framing Foreign Aid*

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## 1 Introduction

In many Western donor countries, foreign aid has become increasingly politicized, as public skepticism and electoral pressures constrain governments' capacity to sustain international development commitments (Torres-Raposo et al. 2025). For the first time in nearly three decades, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States reduced their official development assistance (ODA) in 2024, with further declines across many OECD donors continuing into 2025 (OECD 2025). These reductions, as well as the dramatic dismantling of USAID, are not best understood as abrupt or idiosyncratic policy reversals. Rather, they reflect the cumulative effects of long-standing domestic opposition to international institutions, multilateral cooperation, and the perceived distributive consequences of globalization in an era of nativism and deglobalization (Heinrich et al. 2021; Koru and Mutz 2025; Milner and Tingley 2013a, 2015). Public opinion in donor countries consistently overestimates aid spending and portrays foreign assistance as competing with domestic welfare priorities, rendering aid budgets especially vulnerable to retrenchment (Gilens 2001; Kobayashi et al. 2021; Scotto et al. 2017).

Against this backdrop, China has pursued a markedly different trajectory, expanding its foreign aid and global development engagement. This expansion was particularly visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, when China increased the provision of medical assistance, including vaccines and protective equipment, to countries worldwide (Dreher et al. 2021; Fuchs et al. 2025; Horn et al. 2021). While existing research documents the scope and strategic motivations of China's overseas assistance, far less is known about how such outward-oriented spending is received domestically and how the regime manages its potential political costs. This contrast raises two central questions: To what extent does the Chinese public support foreign aid and overseas development engagement, and through what mechanisms does the Chinese government shape domestic opinion and mitigate potential backlash?

We argue that China's state-managed information environment plays a central role in sustaining domestic support for foreign aid. Unlike in democracies, where citizens are exposed to competing narratives and partisan contestation over aid, China's media system is highly centralized and

subject to extensive state control. Historical narratives portray foreign aid as enhancing China’s international standing and advancing solidarity with Africa and the broader Global South (Dreher et al. 2022a). As a result, Chinese citizens exhibit comparatively high baseline support for overseas development engagement.

We further examine how contemporary state media portray foreign aid and how such portrayals relate to public opinion. Analysis of official media reveals three dominant framing strategies. Economic benefit frames present aid as facilitating export growth, supporting Chinese firms abroad, and generating domestic employment. Political gain frames emphasize aid’s contribution to China’s global influence, geopolitical competition with Western countries, and recognition from recipient states. Humanitarian frames depict foreign aid as an expression of empathy, moral responsibility, and shared developmental experience. Together, these frames construct a favorable informational environment surrounding China’s foreign aid, boosting domestic support.

To evaluate these arguments, we employ a mixed-methods research design combining a pre-registered survey experiment with 2,959 participants and a comprehensive content analysis of foreign aid coverage in *People’s Daily* between 2015 and 2021. The survey experiment measures baseline support for foreign aid and estimates the causal effects of exposure to foreign aid propaganda framing. The media content analysis documents the prevalence and content of foreign aid propaganda and informs the construction of experimental vignettes.

Using a large language model (LLM) to classify propaganda articles, we show that foreign aid constitutes only a small share of official media coverage, consistent with the sensitivity of the topic. Nevertheless, topic modeling indicates that most foreign aid narratives map closely onto the three framing strategies identified above. Articles emphasize economic benefits through discussions of infrastructure projects, development finance, and multilateral banking, political benefits through coverage of diplomacy, China-Africa cooperation, and global governance, and humanitarian benefits through reporting on disaster relief, emergency assistance, and public health interventions.

Survey results indicate high baseline support for foreign aid among Chinese respondents. Approximately 79% report that Chinese foreign aid benefits both China and recipient countries. While many

respondents overestimate China's aid spending, these misperceptions are not significantly associated with opposition to aid. Regression analyses further suggest that self-reported exposure to foreign news is positively associated with baseline support for Chinese foreign aid, offering associational evidence that pre-treatment exposure to state propaganda on foreign aid is linked to more favorable attitudes among Chinese citizens.

Nevertheless, casual evidence from the experiment shows no average treatment effects of framing exposure on support for foreign aid. We interpret this null finding not as evidence that foreign aid propaganda is ineffective, but rather as a result of respondents having already experienced extensive pre-treatment exposure to historical and contemporary foreign aid narratives. In such an environment, additional framing interventions generate limited marginal opinion change. Consistent with this interpretation, framing effects are larger among respondents with lower prior exposure to foreign aid messaging and negligible among frequent consumers of such information.

This project contributes to the literature on foreign aid and public opinion in three ways. First, existing research on public opinion on foreign aid has overwhelmingly focused on democratic donor countries, where electoral accountability, partisan competition, and ideological cleavages shape citizens' attitudes toward international assistance. In such contexts, scholars show that support for foreign aid emerges from a combination of domestic political economy considerations, identity-based preferences, and elite framing strategies (Hurst et al. 2017; Milner and Tingley 2013b; Paxton and Knack 2012; Winters et al. 2025). By contrast, far less attention has been paid to public opinion in autocratic donor states, where aid policy is often assumed to be insulated from popular pressures. Yet a growing body of work on authoritarian politics suggests that public opinion can still matter in non-democracies, particularly when policies are salient, fiscally costly, or symbolically tied to regime legitimacy, nationalism, and claims of benevolent governance (Chen et al. 2016; Truex 2016; Williamson and Magaloni 2020; Yang and Williamson 2026). Our study provides some of the first systematic evidence on public opinion toward foreign aid in China and investigates the factors that shape these attitudes. Our findings indicate that foreign aid enjoys relatively high support in China, a context characterized by a state-managed information environment, in contrast to the typically moderate or low levels of public backing observed in democratic settings with freer information

flows.

Second, more specific to public opinion in China. The nature and scope of the rapidly expanding Chinese foreign aid as well as Chinese citizens' views on aid are still largely opaque and difficult to decipher. There are still no systemic official data on Chinese foreign aid, and scholars have to rely on media reports, government websites, and records from recipient countries and non-governmental organization to estimate Chinese foreign aid (Brautigam 2009; Fuchs et al. 2025; Regilme and Hodzi 2021). The lack of transparency is attributed to the fears of domestic resentment from millions of Chinese still living in poverty and competition for more aid from recipient countries (Zhang 2020). Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of research on the determinants of Chinese public opinion on foreign aid. Observational studies demonstrate leftist socialist ideology and strong national identity are consistent predictors of pro-foreign aid attitudes among Chinese citizens while showing mixed findings about how age, gender, income or education is related to public opinion on foreign aid (Cheng and Smyth 2016; Wang and Cooper 2023). To the authors' knowledge, Strange (2023) offers the only causal evidence on aid opinion in China so far, showing that aid visibility in recipient countries significantly increase Chinese citizens' support for aid, as visibility determines how much influence Chinese aid carries. This study complements the existing studies by providing both observational and causal evidence that demonstrates the influence of foreign aid propaganda in shaping public support.

Last, findings of this research also contribute to the debate on the effectiveness of authoritarian propaganda. Despite the perceived effectiveness of authoritarian in the public discourse, scholarly evidence has been mixed, with some studies document effective persuasion effect and others show null or backfire effects (Bleck and Michelitch 2017; Chang 2021; Chen 2019, 2024; Huang 2018; Knight and Tribin 2019; Shen and Yin 2025). Focusing on foreign aid, a domain rarely examined in propaganda research, we show that a one-time exposure to a propaganda vignette has minimal impact on public opinion regarding foreign aid, highlighting the importance of cumulative exposure and informational context in authoritarian persuasion. Our experiment further finds that the moderating effect of state media labeling is inconsistent and statistically insignificant, providing little evidence that media source labels as propaganda cues meaningfully alter the persuasiveness of

propaganda content.

## 2 Donor Public Opinion and Foreign Aid

### 2.1 Economic and Material Determinants

A substantial literature establishes that donor public opinion is not a mere epiphenomenon of elite foreign policy decision-making but an independent constraint shaping both the volume of aid governments provide and the institutional forms through which they deliver it.

A robust body of research documents that citizens in democratic donor countries dramatically overestimate foreign aid's share of national budgets (Gilens 2001; Scotto et al. 2017). These inflated beliefs generate a perception that aid diverts scarce domestic resources from public welfare programs at a scale far larger than actual expenditures warrant. In the United States, aid averaged approximately 0.5 percent of the federal budget through the 1990s (Milner and Tingley 2010). Gilens (2001) demonstrates through survey experiments that correcting these misperceptions by providing accurate budget information reduces opposition to aid by thirteen to seventeen percentage points, underscoring the informational rather than purely interest-based foundations of much anti-aid sentiment. Institutional delegation represents the primary elite response to this excess skepticism. Milner et al. (2006) argues that democratic governments channel aid through multilateral institutions partly to address public distrust of bilateral aid, which is perceived as politically captured or strategically self-serving. By routing aid through organizations such as the World Bank or the European Union, governments signal rule-based allocation and programmatic restraint. The means of delivery, bilateral versus multilateral, are therefore shaped not only by efficiency considerations but by anticipated domestic political reactions, with trust in aid institutions becoming a primary determinant of public acceptance.

Beyond misperception, aid preferences also reflect systematic material interests rooted in the domestic distributional consequences of aid transfers. Milner and Tingley (2010) develop this argument most rigorously, drawing on the Heckscher-Ohlin and Stolper-Samuelson frameworks. Foreign economic aid is analytically equivalent to an international capital transfer: because poor

recipient countries have a higher marginal propensity to consume capital-intensive imports, such transfers raise world prices for capital-intensive goods, benefiting owners of capital in the donor country while reducing the real incomes of unskilled labor. Using nearly twenty-five years of U.S. House votes on foreign aid (1979-2003), they find a strong positive relationship between district skill levels and support for economic aid, a one-standard-deviation increase in skill level raises the probability of a pro-aid vote by approximately eight percentage points on high-focus economic aid votes, while this effect attenuates for food aid and disappears for military aid. Individual-level survey data from the World Values Survey across OECD countries corroborate these legislative findings (Chong and Gradstein 2008; Milner and Tingley 2010), suggesting that legislators respond to genuine constituent preferences rather than merely to organized pressure.

## **2.2 Identity, Ideology, and Historical Solidarity**

The economic approach explains why certain domestic groups systematically support or oppose foreign aid as a function of their material stakes. What it does not explain is why the public supports aid to particular recipients more than others, holding material factors constant, or why citizens sometimes support aid programs their economic position would predict they oppose. A second body of literature addresses these questions through shared identity, political ideology, and historical solidarity.

Cultural, religious, and ethnic bonds generate aid support orthogonal to both distributional interests and left-right ideology. Neumayer (2003) and Hernandez and Vadlamannati (2017) show that Arab donors systematically allocate more aid to Muslim-majority recipients, while Werker et al. (2009) demonstrates that these allocation effects are robust to controls for strategic and economic determinants, implying that aid to coreligionist recipients is legible to domestic publics as an expression of community solidarity rather than a purely instrumental transfer. Racial identity operates through a more troubling pathway. Baker (2015) demonstrates through survey experiments that white Americans express greater support for aid to black African recipients than to equally poor European recipients, not from perceptions of greater need but from racialized paternalism that attributes lower agency to black recipients. This has direct implications for public communication, as framing

strategies that emphasize recipient vulnerability may raise donor support while simultaneously encoding assumptions that undermine the relational foundations of aid effectiveness.

Beyond culture, political ideology constitutes one of the most extensively analyzed non-material determinant of aid preferences. Left-leaning orientations favor government intervention to address distributional inequality and extend this commitment internationally, construing foreign aid as redistribution toward the global poor (Lumsdaine 1993; Milner and Tingley 2010). Right-leaning orientations, which prioritize market allocation and view taxation as distortionary, generate correspondingly greater opposition (Prather 2024). Milner and Tingley (2010) find that district-level ideology is a strong negative predictor of economic aid support and that the ideological cleavage over economic aid is the inverse of that over military aid. The effect of legislator ideology holds when adjusting for district endowment variables, demonstrating the independent influence of ideology beyond material interest.

Historical legacies of colonial experience and post-colonial solidarity constitute a third non-material determinant, though one whose mass-level effects are more contested. Chinese official narratives frame aid explicitly in terms of South-South cooperation, invoking shared histories of colonial resistance and developmental solidarity (Mawdsley 2012). Regarding perceptions of aid to Palestine among publics in Muslim-majority donor countries, religious and historical ties generate forms of solidarity that are qualitatively durable and less conditional on performance-based information (Petersen 2012). The symbolic centrality of Palestine in pan-Islamic identity narratives, along with the framing of Palestinian suffering as a collective civilizational injustice rather than a discrete humanitarian emergency, generates expressive rather than instrumental support. Such support is resistant to dampening through misperception correction or negative performance information because these preferences are not grounded in updatable beliefs about costs and consequences.

### **2.3 Aid and Public Opinion in Autocratic Donor Contexts**

The frameworks reviewed above were developed primarily for democratic donors, where material interests and ideological preferences translate into aid policy through electoral accountability. This is a significant limitation given that a substantial share of contemporary global aid originates

from non-democratic states, most prominently China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In autocratic systems, the feedback loop between public opinion and aid policy operates differently: in the absence of competitive elections, public opinion cannot constrain aid policy directly but enters elite calculations through bureaucratic and factional channels and through regime sensitivity to social stability (Weeks 2008). Huang (2015a) demonstrates for China that citizens evaluate their government partly through comparative economic benchmarks with foreign countries and that perceptions of foreign economic conditions influence regime approval, while King et al. (2017) show that authoritarian governments retain greater capacity to manage public perceptions through strategic information control. Whether the distributional and ideological logics documented in democratic contexts translate to autocratic settings, and through what mechanisms, remains an open empirical question that the existing literature has not yet systematically addressed.

China provides a particularly well-suited case for advancing this inquiry. As one of the world's largest non-democratic aid donor, China accounts for a substantial and growing share of global development finance, yet its foreign aid policy is formulated in the absence of competitive electoral accountability. These features make China a theoretically revealing case for examining how authoritarian regimes deploy foreign aid while maintaining domestic support.

### **3 Foreign Aid and Public Opinion Management in China**

#### **3.1 Historical Foreign Aid Propaganda: Socialist Ideology, National Identity and South-South Solidarity**

China's foreign aid programs predate the economic takeoff in the reform era, and its origins are inseparable from the ideological project of the Maoist state. Understanding this history matters for two reasons: it explains the institutional precedents and normative vocabulary that continue to structure Chinese official discourse on aid, and it reveals the domestic propaganda apparatus through which Chinese publics were socialized to interpret foreign assistance as an expression of national identity and revolutionary obligation rather than as a cost imposed on Chinese taxpayers.

Dreher et al. (2022b) periodize China's evolution as a development financier into four stages, of which the first two, which are the early years from 1949 to 1959 and the revolutionary foreign policy era from 1960 to 1977, are foundational. During these phases, aid was a central component of a revolutionary foreign policy whose ideological coherence required visible solidarity with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements across the developing world, rather than an instrument of commercial interest or geopolitical leverage in the contemporary sense. The 1955 Bandung Conference was the constitutive moment: China articulated its Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and positioned itself not as a great power extending charity downward but as a peer nation that had itself undergone colonial humiliation, now standing alongside newly independent states in a shared anti-imperial project (Dreher et al. 2022b; Lee 2010; Mawdsley 2012). This framing established the normative grammar through which Chinese aid would subsequently be justified to both domestic and foreign audiences: China was morally obligated to stand with fellow victims of imperialism.

Following the Sino-Soviet split after 1960, China competed vigorously with both superpowers for influence in the decolonizing world, using foreign aid as the primary instrument (Brautigam 2009; Dreher et al. 2022b). In 1963-64, Premier Zhou Enlai visited ten African countries and announced what became the Eight Principles of Foreign Economic and Technological Assistance, including equality and mutual benefit, no conditions or privileges, support for recipient self-reliance, no special treatment for Chinese experts, explicitly designed to distinguish Chinese aid from Western conditionality and Soviet paternalism (Dreher et al. 2022b). These principles were simultaneously domestic statements encoding a normative self-understanding that Chinese publics were socialized to accept. The flagship project of this era was the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA), a 1,860-kilometer line linking Zambia's copper belt to Dar es Salaam, backed after World Bank and UN rejection with a zero-interest Chinese loan of RMB 980 million and constructed between 1970 and 1975 with approximately 50,000 Chinese workers deployed (Dreher et al. 2022b; Monson 2009). TAZARA was not framed domestically as a commercial investment or charitable act but as the practical expression of revolutionary friendship, with Chinese workers portrayed as bearing sacrifice alongside African brothers in a joint anti-imperialist enterprise (Monson 2009; Yu 1975).

This propaganda was produced under conditions of real material sacrifice. Foreign aid consumed

between 5.9 and 6.9 percent of total government expenditure during the early-to-mid 1970s, at a time when the Chinese economy was severely strained by the Cultural Revolution (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2019; Dreher et al. 2022b). When senior party official Wang Jiaxiang proposed in 1962 that aid be reduced in light of domestic economic conditions, Mao denounced this as betraying China's obligations to peoples across Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Dreher et al. 2022b). The scale of aid therefore signaled to domestic audiences that the revolutionary state was willing to incur genuine costs on behalf of ideological commitment, and that Chinese citizens' own sacrifices were part of a global struggle in which China played a vanguard role. State media, Cultural Revolution posters, and mass imagery consistently depicted the Global South through the dual archetypes of the "friend" and the "revolutionary hero," portraying the China-Third World relationship as mutual struggle rather than patronage (Cheng 2011; Monson 2009). Chairman Mao's reported acknowledgment after China's 1971 UN Security Council admission: "It is our African brothers who have carried us into the UN." This statement was a domestically significant inversion of the standard donor-recipient hierarchy, reinforcing the reciprocal rather than charitable framing of Chinese aid (Rudyak 2023).

Several properties of this history bear directly on contemporary Chinese public opinion. First, the Maoist era established a durable normative vocabulary, such as solidarity, mutual benefit, non-conditionality, and shared anti-imperial struggle, which continues to structure official discourse and to which Chinese publics have been repeatedly exposed (Dreher et al. 2022b; Mawdsley 2012). Second, the experience of real domestic sacrifice in support of foreign aid during the revolutionary period created a historical reference point for evaluating contemporary commitments. Citizens who have absorbed this narrative carry a schema in which foreign assistance is associated with national identity and responsibility (Cheng and Smyth 2016; Wang and Cooper 2023). Third, and most important, the Maoist propaganda apparatus constructed a specific understanding of aid recipients as fellow members of a global community sharing China's experience of colonial subordination. Thus, foreign aid propaganda in the Maoist revolutionary era has laid the historical foundation of socialist ideology, national identity, and South-South solidarity as frames for contemporary Chinese public opinion, fostering support for foreign aid programs that lasts beyond the revolutionary era and remains influential nowadays.

*H1a: Chinese citizens are generally supportive of foreign aid.*

*H1b: Chinese citizens' support of foreign aid is positively associated with national identity.*

### **3.2 Contemporary Foreign Aid Propaganda: Framing**

While ideological propaganda from the revolutionary era boosted public support for foreign aid, citizens in contemporary China have become increasingly pragmatic and skeptical of overt ideological messages. Decades of grand ideological campaigns have produced what scholars describe as ideological fatigue: citizens recognize propaganda tropes but often interpret them cynically rather than internalizing them (Stockmann 2013; Zheng and Hu 2023). In response, the Chinese government and state media have increasingly experimented with new propaganda strategies designed to enhance persuasion and appeal in a more diverse and competitive media environment (Lu and Pan 2021; Wang 2024).

Framing is a widely recognized strategy for shaping how citizens interpret complex political issues. Rather than altering factual information, framing structures meaning by highlighting certain considerations while downplaying others (Chong and Druckman 2007; Entman 1993). Governments and political elites use frames to connect policies to broadly resonant values, such as economic prosperity, national pride, or moral responsibility, thereby influencing public evaluations and increasing persuasion.

In the context of foreign aid, framing can transform perceptions of aid from a costly fiscal transfer into an instrument of national interest or ethical obligation (Baker 2015; Tobin et al. 2022). For authoritarian regimes like China's, where information flows are tightly managed and public deliberation constrained, framing constitutes a central tool of discursive governance and public opinion management (Pan et al. 2022; Xia et al. 2022). Through framing, the regime legitimizes foreign aid domestically by emphasizing three dimensions: economic benefits, political gains, and humanitarian responsibilities.

### 3.2.1 Economic Benefit Frames

Unlike traditional OECD-DAC donors, China’s contemporary foreign aid is widely understood as embedded within a broader strategy of state-led overseas economic engagement. Chinese aid emphasizes infrastructure and productive-sector projects, many implemented by Chinese firms and tied to Chinese procurement, thereby linking development assistance to trade promotion and overseas market expansion (Brautigam 2009; Bräutigam 2011; Harchaoui et al. 2021). Recent research shows that aid-funded projects are associated with increased exports and revenue gains for Chinese state-owned enterprises, particularly those with large domestic employment footprints (Liu and Zhang 2025). Some studies suggest that Chinese aid targets resource-rich countries to extract foreign natural resources for domestic production (e.g., Reilly 2013; Zafar 2007, , but see Dreher and Fuchs 2015; Dreher et al. 2018 for counter-evidence).

These features provide a strong foundation for framing foreign aid in terms of domestic economic returns. State media can portray aid as promoting exports, supporting Chinese firms’ global expansion, and generating employment at home, recasting it as economically productive and a “win-win” rather than fiscally burdensome. We therefore expect Chinese state media to emphasize economic benefit frames and that exposure to such frames increases public support for foreign aid.

*H2: Exposure to economic benefit frames increases domestic support for Chinese foreign aid.*

### 3.2.2 Political Gain Frames

Despite its economic dimensions, Chinese foreign aid is primarily shaped by political and foreign policy considerations (Dreher et al. 2018; Hoeffler and Sterck 2022). Similar to Western donors, China disproportionately directs aid toward geopolitically aligned countries, including those that support Beijing’s positions in international institutions and adhere to the “One China” policy (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Dreher et al. 2009; Kuziemko and Werker 2006). To legitimize such politically salient allocations, the Chinese government and state media employ political gain frames

that emphasize the diplomatic and strategic values of foreign aid.

One prominent political gain frame is global leadership, a central theme of Chinese propaganda closely tied to the regime's broader project of legitimizing its rule through narratives of national rejuvenation and rising international status. Since the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, and with particular intensity under Xi Jinping, state media have emphasized China's transformation from a once-marginalized developing country into a "responsible major power" that actively contributes to global governance and development (Pei 2018; Zhao 2016). Concepts such as the "Chinese Dream" and a "community of shared future for mankind" portray China as morally principled and historically destined to shape a more equitable international order (Callahan 2016; Zhao 2018). Within this frame, foreign aid is presented as tangible evidence of China's leadership and its capacity to provide global public goods to the Global South and as a strategic investment in global governance. Framing aid in this way recasts overseas assistance as a symbol of global leadership, aligning foreign aid with narratives of national ascent.

A second political gain frame emphasizes geopolitical competition. Chinese official discourse consistently portrays international politics as a zero-sum struggle between competing powers and development models, frequently highlighting Western containment, interventionism, and ideological hostility (Lams 2018; Yu 2022). Such external threat narratives are routinely domesticated to mobilize public support and legitimize assertive domestic and foreign policies (Dong et al. 2024; Fu 2023; Liu and Shao 2024; Xu 2025). As discussed above, Chinese aid allocation is closely associated with recipients' strategic importance, political alignment, and diplomatic utility, including support in multilateral institutions and competition with Western donors (Dreher and Fuchs 2015; Dreher et al. 2018; Hoeffler and Sterck 2022). Within this geopolitical competition frame, state media portray foreign aid as a strategic instrument of great-power rivalry, one used to expand influence, secure diplomatic partners, and shape international norms, justifying aid expenditures as strategic necessity.

The third political gain frame, foreign praise, draws on a well-documented propaganda strategy in which external validation is mobilized to reinforce domestic political legitimacy. Chinese propaganda systematically amplifies favorable reactions from foreign leaders, recipient governments, international

organizations, and overseas media to signal that China’s policies are respected, effective, and morally justified on the global stage (Brady 2008; Repnikova 2017). In the absence of strong domestic accountability mechanisms, international recognition functions as a proxy for regime competence and global acceptance and strengthens national pride (Fang 2022). Applied to foreign aid, this frame highlights expressions of gratitude, partnership narratives, and favorable comparisons with Western donors while minimizing controversy or criticism. By foregrounding selectively curated foreign testimonials, the regime presents foreign aid as a source of soft power, international influence, and national prestige.

Together, these political gain frames connect foreign aid to China’s international status, strategic competition, and global recognition, offering domestic audiences a coherent justification for sustained overseas assistance.

*H3: Exposure to political gain frames increases domestic support for Chinese foreign aid.*

### **3.2.3 Humanitarian Frames**

While economic and political interests dominate discussions of Chinese foreign aid, foreign aid by definition is developmental assistance, and humanitarian and developmental considerations are crucial for China’s assistance. Chinese aid is oriented toward poorer countries (Dreher et al. 2018; Hoeffler and Sterck 2022), and China has consistently provided aid for disaster relief, medical assistance, and post-conflict reconstruction, particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia, including emergency food aid, hospital construction, and the long-term deployment of medical teams (Grépin et al. 2014; Kobierecka and Kobierecki 2021; Lin 2021; Liu et al. 2014).

Building on humanitarian and developmental practices, humanitarian frames portray foreign aid as an expression of humanitarianism, empathy, and shared developmental experience, while emphasizing the visible and immediate benefits delivered to recipient countries in areas such as infrastructure, agriculture, education, and healthcare (Jiang et al. 2016). As stated in the white paper entitled *China’s International Development Cooperation in the New Era*, “Since its founding in 1949, the

People’s Republic of China has always demonstrated a spirit of internationalism and humanitarianism following and supporting other developing countries’ efforts to improve their people’s lives and achieve development.”<sup>1</sup> This framing stands in sharp contrast to portrayals of Western aid as conditional, politicized, and self-interested, thereby constructing Chinese aid as morally superior and as more respectful of recipient countries’ sovereignty (Woods 2008). Through this humanitarian framing, state media transform foreign aid expenditures into performances of virtue, aligning external generosity with domestic values of solidarity, empathy, and humanitarianism. We therefore expect humanitarian frames to increase public support for Chinese foreign aid.

*H4: Exposure to the humanitarian frames increases domestic support for Chinese foreign aid.*

### **3.3 The Limits of Authoritarian Persuasion**

Although pro-regime framing is central to authoritarian legitimation, a growing body of research cautions against assuming that state propaganda is uniformly persuasive. Studies across a wide range of authoritarian and hybrid regimes document limited, null, or even negative effects of official messaging on public attitudes, particularly when citizens recognize the strategic intent underlying such communication (Bleck and Michelitch 2017; Bush et al. 2016; Knight and Tribin 2019). Overtly positive or self-congratulatory propaganda may backfire by triggering psychological reactance, reinforcing prior cynicism, or drawing attention to information asymmetries between the state and the public (Di Tella et al. 2012; Guriev and Treisman 2019). In the Chinese context, exposure to state media does not necessarily increase trust in the government or support for its policies and may instead heighten skepticism (Chang 2021; Chen 2019, 2024; Huang 2015b, 2018; Stockmann 2013).

Particularly relevant to this study, Xiang and van Gevelt (2025) show that China’s global leadership aspirations in climate governance can backfire domestically, as citizens perceive a tension between international ambition and domestic welfare. This finding underscores a broader point: propaganda that highlights China’s global responsibilities or international status may unintentionally heighten

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<sup>1</sup>Full Text: [https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202101/10/content\\_WS5ffa6bbbc6d0f72576943922.html](https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202101/10/content_WS5ffa6bbbc6d0f72576943922.html)

public sensitivity to the domestic costs of external engagement. These studies challenge conventional wisdom about authoritarian information control and suggest that propaganda effectiveness is conditional rather than automatic. Even carefully crafted frames may fail to generate the intended attitudinal support.

*H5a: Foreign aid frames do not affect domestic support for Chinese foreign aid.*

An emerging line of research emphasizes the role of source cues in shaping how political messages are received (e.g., Arnold et al. 2021; Arnon et al. 2023; Shen et al. 2025). In authoritarian settings, state media source labels function as a heuristic that cues propaganda, prompting audiences to discount or resist the content regardless of its substantive framing (Rahmani 2025; Stockmann 2013). Rather than enhancing credibility, such labels activate skepticism by highlighting government control over information and the regime's incentives to engage in strategic persuasion. This logic is consistent with broader findings in political communication showing that source transparency can undermine trust and increase aversion when the source is already associated with low credibility or manipulative intent (Liang et al. 2023; Moravec et al. 2024).

Applied to foreign aid frames, these insights suggest that revealing state media as sources of the frames may weaken their persuasive potential. While these frames emphasize the economic, political, or humanitarian benefits of Chinese foreign aid, the presence of a state media source cue may redirect audience attention from message content to sender intent, thereby reducing persuasion or even producing backlash. Consequently, state media labels that signal the propagandistic nature of a message attenuate or nullify the effects of foreign aid frames on domestic support for foreign aid.

*H5b: State media source labels undermine the positive effects of foreign aid frames on domestic support for Chinese foreign aid.*

## 4 Study 1: Text Analysis of Chinese Foreign Aid News

### 4.1 Data and Classification

We construct an original dataset of Chinese foreign aid-related news articles from *People’s Daily* covering the period 2015-2021. *People’s Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, functions as the central government’s authoritative mouthpiece. Its reporting reflects state-sanctioned priorities, diplomatic positioning, and official propaganda narratives. Focusing on this outlet allows us to capture how the Chinese government publicly frames and communicates its foreign aid activities, making it particularly well suited for analyzing aid as a tool of political signaling and international image construction.

The full corpus of articles during this period was processed using GPT-4o-mini under a structured and pre-specified coding protocol. The model was instructed to determine whether each article mentioned Chinese foreign aid, defined as activities in which the Chinese government, state-owned banks, or affiliated organizations provide grants, loans (including concessional and interest-free loans), technical assistance, humanitarian relief, debt relief, training, material support, or multilateral contributions to foreign countries or international organizations for development or diplomatic purposes. For articles classified as aid-related, the model extracted standardized information, including aid category, recipient country (or countries), specific subnational location if mentioned, approximate start date, sector classification, and a brief summary of the project. Articles not meeting the definition were coded as non-aid-related. This structured classification procedure enables systematic aggregation and quantitative analysis of official aid narratives across countries, sectors, and time while ensuring transparency and replicability.

To assess the validity of the automated classification, we randomly selected 212 articles from the corpus and independently coded them by hand using the same pre-specified protocol.<sup>2</sup> The inter-coder agreement between two independent human codings and the GPT-based classification was 0.86, indicating a high level of reliability. Fleiss’ kappa for three raters was 0.78 ( $z = 19.6$ ,

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<sup>2</sup>The validation sample was drawn using stratified random sampling, with approximately two-thirds of articles classified by GPT as non-aid-related and one-third classified as aid-related, in order to increase the representation of aid-related articles in the validation set.

$p < 0.001$ ), reflecting substantial agreement beyond chance and supporting the validity of the GPT-based classification.<sup>3</sup> In Appendix A1, we further evaluate the validity of the GPT-based classification by estimating a series of regressions linking the number of recipient-country mentions in the GPT-classified aid corpus to the total volume of aid received by each recipient. The positive and statistically significant association provides additional evidence that the model captures substantively meaningful variation in aid-related coverage.

## 4.2 Text Analysis Result

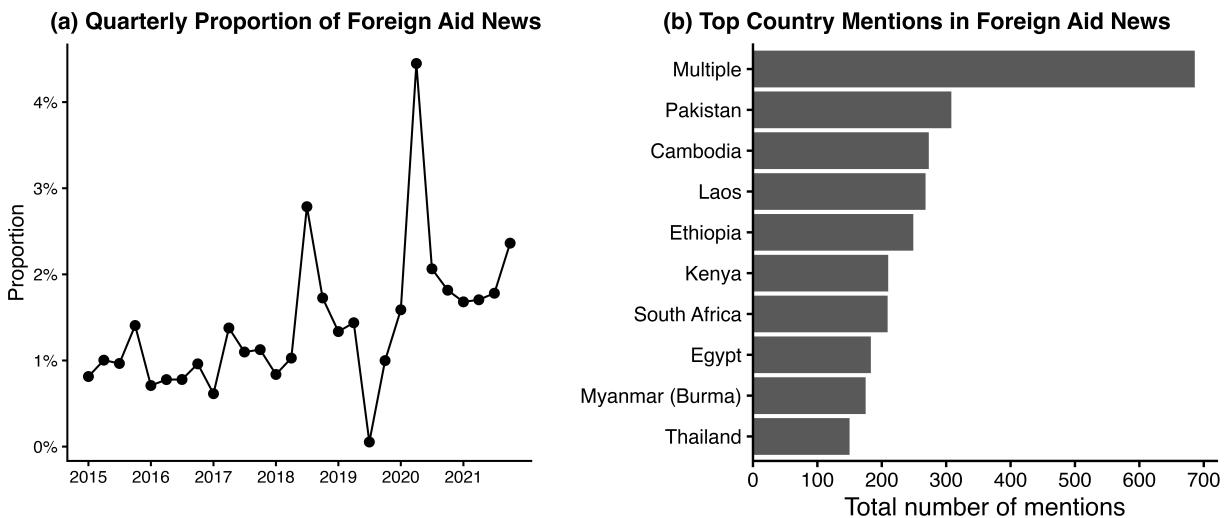


Figure 1: Time Trend and Country Mentions of Chinese Foreign Aid News

Figure 1a plots the quarterly proportion of *People’s Daily* articles classified as foreign-aid related. The overall trend gradually increases over time, indicating a growing salience of foreign aid within official discourse. Two prominent spikes punctuate this upward trajectory. The surge in 2018 corresponds to coverage surrounding the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) hosted in Beijing, which generated intensive reporting on aid and development cooperation. The subsequent spike around 2020 aligns with the COVID-19 pandemic, during which health assistance and so-called “mask diplomacy” became central themes. Overall, the pattern suggests both a general rise in

<sup>3</sup>A small number of articles related to Xinjiang were initially classified as aid-related by GPT. These articles typically discussed themes such as poverty alleviation, infrastructure construction, and economic development-topics that closely resemble the substantive domains of foreign aid and therefore fell within the semantic boundaries of the coding prompt. However, because these cases concern domestic policy rather than cross-border assistance, we exclude all Xinjiang-related articles from the main analyses to ensure that the dataset captures only foreign aid activities.

aid-related news and event-driven amplification at key diplomatic and global health moments.

Figure 1b reports the frequency of top country mentions in the aid-related corpus. A substantial share of articles reference multiple countries simultaneously, indicating that aid is frequently framed in multilateral or region-wide terms rather than through single-recipient narratives. Among individual countries, Pakistan appears most prominently, followed by several Southeast Asian (e.g., Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand) and African (e.g., Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Egypt) recipients. This distribution underscores the geographic breadth of China’s aid-related discourse.

Table 1: Substantive Themes and Representative Keywords from 15 STM Topics

Category	Theme (Topic No.)	Representative Keywords (English)
<i>Economic Benefit</i>		
	Energy Infrastructure and Hydropower (T3)	hydropower, power station, electricity, energy, construction, Sri Lanka
	Railways and Transport Connectivity (T4)	railway, Djibouti, Kenya, bridge, tunnels, industrial corridor
	Agricultural Technology Cooperation (T8)	rice, hybrid crops, cultivation, farmers, food production
	Mainland Southeast Asia Projects (T7)	Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vientiane, regional infrastructure
	Development Finance and Multilateral Banking (T13)	banks, finance, investment, multilateral lending, bonds, capital
<i>Political Gain</i>		
	High-Level Diplomacy and Leadership Visits (T6)	Xi Jinping, president, Pacific Islands, Fiji, state visits
	Belt and Road Initiative (T2)	Belt and Road, Silk Road, initiative, connectivity, development
	China-Africa Forums and Summits (T15)	Africa, summit, forum, cooperation, South Africa, Senegal
	Mekong-Lancang and Bilateral Regional Cooperation (T14)	Mekong, Lancang, bilateral ties, Arab states, regional agreements
	UN Peacekeeping and Security Contributions (T11)	peacekeeping, troops, engineering corps, demining, conflict zones
	Soft-Power Narratives and Personal Stories (T5)	personal stories, overseas Chinese, family, Suriname, media narratives
<i>Humanitarianism and Global Health</i>		
	Vaccine Diplomacy (T1)	vaccines, vaccination, doses, immunity, Brazil, Chile, COVID-19
	Pandemic Solidarity Framing (T9)	epidemic, solidarity, humanity, global cooperation, anti-COVID struggle
	PPE and Material Aid (T10)	medical supplies, masks, testing kits, embassy donations
	Medical Teams and Emergency Care (T12)	medical teams, doctors, surgery, rescue, hospitals, patients

Table 1 reports the results of a structural topic model estimated using the `stm` package in R on the aid-news corpus.<sup>4</sup> Under *Economic Benefit*, the dominant emphasis is on development-as-material-transformation: large-scale infrastructure (hydropower, power stations, construction, electricity), cross-border connectivity (railways, bridges, tunnels, corridors), and the umbrella narrative of the Belt and Road (connectivity, development). Several topics further extend this economic-development register into sectoral and regional cooperation-agricultural technology (hybrid rice, cultivation, farmers), and geographically anchored project clusters in mainland Southeast Asia (Laos, Cambodia,

<sup>4</sup>We estimate a 15-topic Structural Topic Model (STM) on a corpus of *People’s Daily* articles. The Chinese texts are tokenized using `quanteda`, with punctuation, numbers, common Chinese stopwords, news-reporting boilerplate, and custom media-specific terms removed. Rare terms (appearing fewer than ten times) are trimmed to reduce sparsity. The cleaned document-feature matrix is converted to STM format and estimated with a constant prevalence specification, and topics are interpreted using FREX-weighted keywords and summary plots.

Myanmar, Vientiane) as well as Mekong-Lancang-style regional cooperation. The inclusion of “banks, finance, investment, multilateral lending, bonds, capital” indicates that aid-related coverage is also narrated through financial infrastructure and development finance, not only through physical construction. Taken together, these topics depict aid as tied to connectivity, productive capacity, and investment, rather than as an isolated transfer.

The *Political Gain* category centers on diplomacy, international convening, and security contributions. Topics here are explicitly keyed to leadership and state-to-state signaling (Xi Jinping, president, state visits; Pacific Islands, Fiji), structured cooperation venues (Africa, summit, forum; country mentions such as South Africa and Senegal), and global security roles (peacekeeping, troops, engineering corps, demining, conflict zones). The “Soft-Power Narratives and Personal Stories” topic, signaled by keywords like personal stories, overseas Chinese, family, Suriname, media narratives, suggests a complementary political register: legitimacy and affinity built through narrative and identity, not only through formal diplomacy or security contributions.

Finally, *Humanitarianism and Global Health* is tightly focused on COVID-era assistance and medical relief. Two topics revolve around pandemic response as both practice and moral language-vaccine distribution (vaccines, doses, immunity, vaccination; Brazil, Chile, COVID-19) and broader solidarity framing (epidemic, solidarity, humanity, global cooperation, anti-COVID struggle). Two additional topics capture the material and operational side of health aid: provision of supplies (medical supplies, masks, testing kits, embassy donations) and hands-on care (medical teams, doctors, surgery, rescue, hospitals, patients). In combination, these topics frame aid as urgent, life-preserving action and as a claim about shared responsibility.

Overall, the table supports a clean mapping between topic content and the three interpretive frames: (i) development and connectivity as economic returns and cooperation, (ii) diplomacy, summitry, and security as political positioning and influence, and (iii) vaccines, supplies, and medical teams as humanitarian and global-health commitment.

## 5 Study 2: Survey Experiment of Foreign Aid Propaganda Persuasiveness

### 5.1 Data and Design

To examine the persuasion effects of Chinese foreign aid propaganda on public support for foreign aid, we conduct a preregistered survey experiment in early 2026 that manipulates exposure to distinct propaganda frames. The experimental design, primary hypotheses, and outcome measures were preregistered prior to data collection.<sup>5</sup> Building on the theoretical framework developed above, respondents were randomly assigned to messages emphasizing the economic, political, or humanitarian benefits of Chinese foreign aid. This experimental design enables causal identification of the effects of propaganda framing on attitudes toward China’s overseas assistance.

The study recruited 2,959 Chinese citizens through three major online survey platforms. The experimental protocol received Institutional Review Board approval, and all respondents provided informed consent. The target sample size of 2,800 was determined ex ante through a power analysis based on a pilot study of 204 respondents, ensuring sufficient power to detect substantively meaningful treatment effects. Fielding the survey across multiple platforms was intended to increase sample heterogeneity and mitigate platform-specific selection biases. As is common for online surveys conducted in authoritarian contexts, the resulting sample is not nationally representative: respondents are disproportionately younger, more educated, and more likely to reside in urban areas than the general population. We detect no systematic imbalance across treatment arms on observed pre-treatment covariates. The power analysis, full demographic characteristics, balance tests are reported in Appendix A2.

Despite these limitations, the sample is well suited for evaluating the effects of foreign aid propaganda in contemporary China. Prior research demonstrates that Chinese online survey platforms reasonably approximate the country’s Internet population (Li et al. 2018), and our own data quality checks indicate that respondents closely mirror Chinese netizens in age and gender distributions, while being more educated and urban. These characteristics are consistent with samples used in related

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<sup>5</sup>The anonymized pre-registration can be found through this link: [https://osf.io/5y8hz/overview?view\\_only=8cac18e012284f659e9a886615a32865](https://osf.io/5y8hz/overview?view_only=8cac18e012284f659e9a886615a32865). For transparency, hypotheses H2, H3, H4, and H5b were explicitly preregistered, whereas H1a, H1b and H5a were not.

studies of Chinese public opinion. Importantly, although treatment effects estimated from online samples do not recover population average treatment effects, they remain substantively informative in this context for several reasons.

First, state propaganda regarding foreign aid is primarily disseminated and consumed through digital channels, making Chinese Internet users the population most likely to encounter and respond to such messages. Second, public opinion among Chinese netizens is politically consequential: existing research shows that online opinion can shape policy agendas and governance strategies in authoritarian regimes (Luo 2014; Wang et al. 2025). Methodologically, online surveys also reduce social desirability pressures in sensitive political environments and have been shown to yield experimental results comparable to those obtained from representative samples (Berinsky et al. 2012). Accordingly, online survey experiments have become standard in studies of domestic and foreign policy attitudes in China and other authoritarian contexts (e.g., Huang 2018; Liu and Shao 2024; Pan et al. 2022). Given the scale of China’s digital population with over one billion Internet users as of 2025, our findings speak directly to a large and politically salient segment of the Chinese public, though we caution against generalizing beyond this population.

To estimate both the average effects of propaganda framing and the moderating role of media source attribution, we employ a factorial experimental design that crosses framing content with source labeling. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of five theoretically motivated frames: one economic benefit frame, three political gain frames (global leadership, geopolitical competition, and foreign praise), and one humanitarian frame. For each frame, we further randomized whether the message explicitly identified *People’s Daily* as the media source or omitted any source attribution. This two-by-five factorial design yields ten primary treatment conditions and allows us to estimate both the main effects of individual frames and their interactions with state media labeling.

In addition to these core treatments, the experiment includes two comparison conditions. First, a baseline control condition provides a neutral definition of foreign aid without any framing content. Second, an informational correction condition presents respondents with factual statistics about Chinese foreign aid, designed to assess whether correcting overestimation of the scale of Chinese foreign aid affects public support independently of propaganda framing. Source labeling is

manipulated in the same manner for both comparison conditions. Taken together, the experiment comprises a  $7 \times 2$  factorial design.

The exact wording of the treatment vignettes for the seven experimental conditions without source labeling is reported in Appendix A3. In the corresponding source-labeled conditions, the vignette text is held constant and differs only by explicitly attributing the content to *People's Daily*. All vignettes are indeed adapted from articles published in *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party and one of the most authoritative state propaganda outlets in China. Drawing directly from these materials allows us to closely approximate the language, tone, and rhetorical strategies used in official foreign aid propaganda, thereby enhancing the external validity of the treatments. All vignettes begin with the same definitional prompt: “Foreign aid refers to financial, material, or technical assistance provided by our country to other countries.”

Our primary outcome of interest is public support for Chinese foreign aid. We measure this construct using three survey items capturing distinct but related dimensions of support. The first item measures general support for China’s provision of foreign aid. The second assesses support under an explicit domestic tradeoff, asking whether respondents continue to endorse foreign aid when prompted to consider opportunity costs for domestic welfare. Both items are measured on 11-point scales ranging from “very unsupportive” to “very supportive.” The third item captures fiscal preferences, gauging respondents’ willingness to increase or decrease foreign aid spending on a 5-point scale, with the status quo as the midpoint. We construct a composite support index by rescaling each item to a common metric and averaging across the three measures.

The experiment followed a standardized survey procedure. After providing informed consent, respondents completed a brief pre-treatment questionnaire collecting demographic information, political interest, and baseline attitudes toward foreign aid. They were then randomly assigned, with equal probability and stratified by survey platform, to one of the 14 experimental arms and exposed to the corresponding vignette. Immediately following treatment exposure, respondents completed a manipulation check assessing attention and recall of the vignette’s source attribution. They then answered the outcome measures, after which they were debriefed and completed the survey.

## 5.2 Pretreatment Description

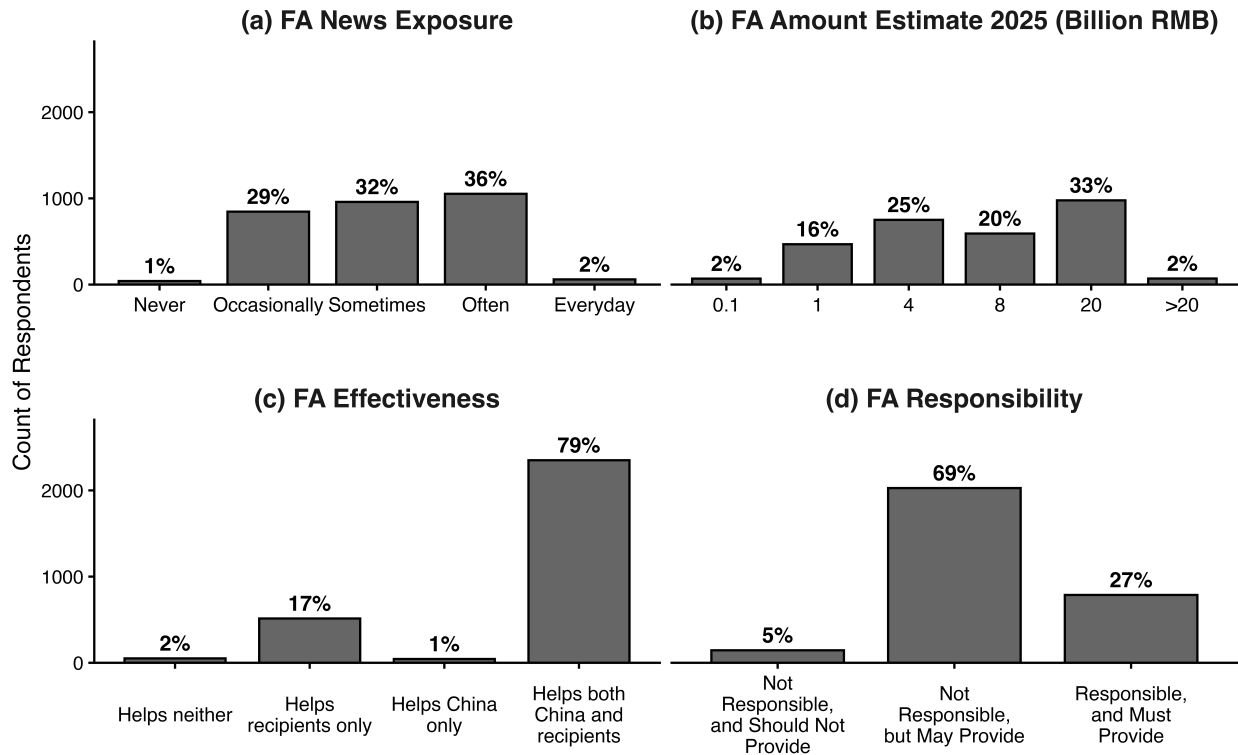


Figure 2: Pre-Treatment Views on Chinese Foreign Aid

Figure 2 presents respondents’ pre-treatment knowledge and attitudes regarding Chinese foreign aid. The top panels summarize baseline exposure to information about Chinese foreign aid and respondents’ prior beliefs about its magnitude.

Panel (a) reports self-reported exposure to news about Chinese foreign aid. News exposure is relatively evenly distributed across categories: approximately 36% of respondents report encountering such news often, 32% report sometimes, and 29% report occasional exposure. Only a small minority report either never encountering news about Chinese foreign aid or encountering it on a daily basis. Overall, these distributions indicate substantial but heterogeneous baseline exposure to information about Chinese foreign aid among respondents. The exposure is striking considering that foreign aid news only accounts for about 2% of the articles on People’s Daily as shown in Figure 1.

Panel (b) displays respondents’ estimates of the total amount of Chinese foreign aid in 2025. Relative to official statistics, which report total Chinese foreign aid outflows of approximately 4.2 billion

RMB in that year, the majority of respondents substantially overestimate aid levels. Around 55% of respondents select estimates of 8 billion RMB, 20 billion RMB, or more than 20 billion RMB. By contrast, approximately 25% of respondents provide estimates that align closely with the official figure, while 18% underestimate the total amount of Chinese foreign aid. These patterns indicate widespread misperceptions regarding the scale of Chinese foreign aid prior to treatment, with overestimation emerging as the dominant bias, paralleling patterns documented in democratic contexts (Gilens 2001; Scotto et al. 2017).

The lower panels of Figure 2 summarize respondents' baseline attitudes toward the effectiveness of Chinese foreign aid and the perceived responsibility of the Chinese government to provide such aid. Panel (c) reports beliefs about the beneficiaries of Chinese foreign aid. An overwhelming majority of respondents (79%) believe that Chinese foreign aid benefits both China and recipient countries, while 17% believe that it benefits recipient countries only. These responses indicate broadly favorable baseline attitudes toward Chinese foreign aid, although a nontrivial minority expresses more limited or potentially skeptical views regarding its domestic benefits.

Panel (d) presents respondents' views on whether the Chinese government bears a responsibility to provide foreign aid. A majority of respondents (69%) express conditional support, indicating that China is not obligated to provide foreign aid but may do so under certain circumstances. By contrast, 27% of respondents believe that China has a responsibility and must provide foreign aid, while a small minority (5%) believe that China is neither responsible for nor should provide foreign aid. Taken together, these distributions suggest generally positive baseline attitudes toward Chinese foreign aid, lending support to the high baseline support hypothesis H1a.

To examine the correlates of baseline support for Chinese foreign aid, we estimate regression models that include three sets of predictors: foreign aid information and knowledge, political attributes, and demographic characteristics. The results are reported in Table 2. Among the foreign aid information and knowledge variables, exposure to news about foreign aid emerges as a strong positive correlate of support for Chinese foreign aid. Respondents who report more frequent exposure to foreign aid-related news express significantly higher levels of support. This association is consistent with the hypotheses (H2, H3, and H4) that foreign aid propaganda influences public attitudes toward

Table 2: Determinants of Pre-Treatment Support for Chinese Foreign Aid

	(1)	(2)	(3)
FA News Exposure	0.118*** (0.017)	0.068*** (0.017)	0.064*** (0.017)
FA Estimate - Accurate	0.056 (0.044)	0.023 (0.044)	0.023 (0.043)
FA Estimate - Over	-0.019 (0.040)	-0.049 (0.039)	-0.035 (0.040)
Nationalism		0.061** (0.022)	0.065** (0.022)
Life Satisfaction		0.231*** (0.025)	0.232*** (0.026)
Political Interest		0.105*** (0.026)	0.118*** (0.026)
Political Knowledge		-0.013 (0.038)	0.019 (0.038)
CCP Member		0.097** (0.036)	0.115** (0.037)
Male			-0.081** (0.029)
Age			-0.007*** (0.002)
College			-0.004 (0.039)
Income			0.007 (0.012)
Large City Residence			-0.106*** (0.030)
Num.Obs.	2939	2934	2931
R2	0.018	0.068	0.081

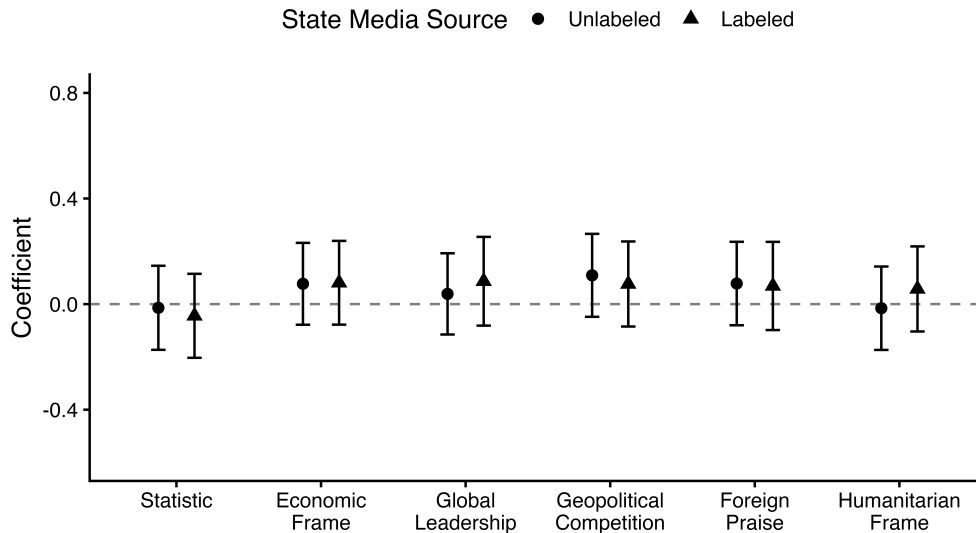
+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001  
Standard errors in parentheses.

foreign aid. By contrast, neither accurate knowledge of foreign aid levels nor overestimation of aid significantly predicts support, contrary to the conventional expectation that overestimation of foreign aid undermines public support.

Turning to political attributes, nationalism, life satisfaction, and political interest are all positively and statistically significantly associated with support for Chinese foreign aid. Individuals who are more nationalistic, more satisfied with their lives, and more politically engaged are more likely to endorse foreign aid initiatives, supporting the national identity hypothesis H1b. Political knowledge, however, is not significantly related to support, whereas Chinese Communist Party membership is positively associated with pro-foreign aid attitudes.

Finally, demographic characteristics exhibit meaningful variation in support for foreign aid. Men, younger respondents, and residents of metropolitan areas are significantly less supportive of Chinese foreign aid than women, older individuals, and those living in rural or smaller urban areas. College education and income are negatively associated with support for foreign aid, although these effects do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

### 5.3 Casual Evidence



*Note:* Points indicate OLS estimates; vertical bars denote 95% confidence intervals calculated using heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors.

Figure 3: Effects of Propaganda Frames on Composite Foreign Aid Support

While the positive association between foreign aid news exposure and support for Chinese foreign aid offers preliminary support for the hypothesis that information can shape public opinion, the experimental evidence suggests that the effects of individual propaganda frames are modest. Figure 3 presents the estimated effects of each propaganda frame on respondents' general support for Chinese foreign aid. The figure reports coefficients from an OLS specification in which the outcome is the composite aid-support index described above, and the key independent variables are indicators for assignment to each vignette condition, with the pure control group as the omitted category.

Although all propaganda frames, including those emphasizing economic, political, or humanitarian benefits yield positive coefficients, none reach conventional levels of statistical significance, either with or without source labeling, and their magnitude is small and statistically insignificant, indicating that while messaging nudges support in the expected direction, the effects are limited in size and precision. These results underscore that, while Chinese foreign aid propaganda may reinforce preexisting support, its ability to generate large or immediate changes in citizens' preferences is limited, rejecting H2 through H4 but supporting the null effect hypothesis H5a.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the moderating effect of state media labeling is not supported, rejecting H5b. Across conditions, indicating the source had minimal impact on the effects of propaganda frames. In some cases, such as the statistic and geopolitical competition conditions, labeling slightly reduced support, while in the global leadership and humanitarian conditions it slightly increased support. None of these differences are statistically significant, demonstration that source cues have little influence on how propaganda shapes attitudes in the foreign aid context.

To further explore how respondents think about Chinese foreign aid, we examine respondents' open-ended comments on foreign aid included in the survey, which arguably are more authentic in the sense that they can simply skip or leave non-informative comments if they do not wish to reveal their true opinions. After removing missing or non-informative responses (e.g., "none" or "not at this point"), which accounts for slightly over half of the responses (51.4%), the remaining substantive comments (48.6%) were classified into five categories: support, conditional support (generally supportive with conditions), neutral, conditional oppose (generally opposed unless certain

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<sup>6</sup>The full regression table can be found in Appndix A4.

conditions are met), and oppose. Using the GPT-5-mini model, each comment was classified accordingly.

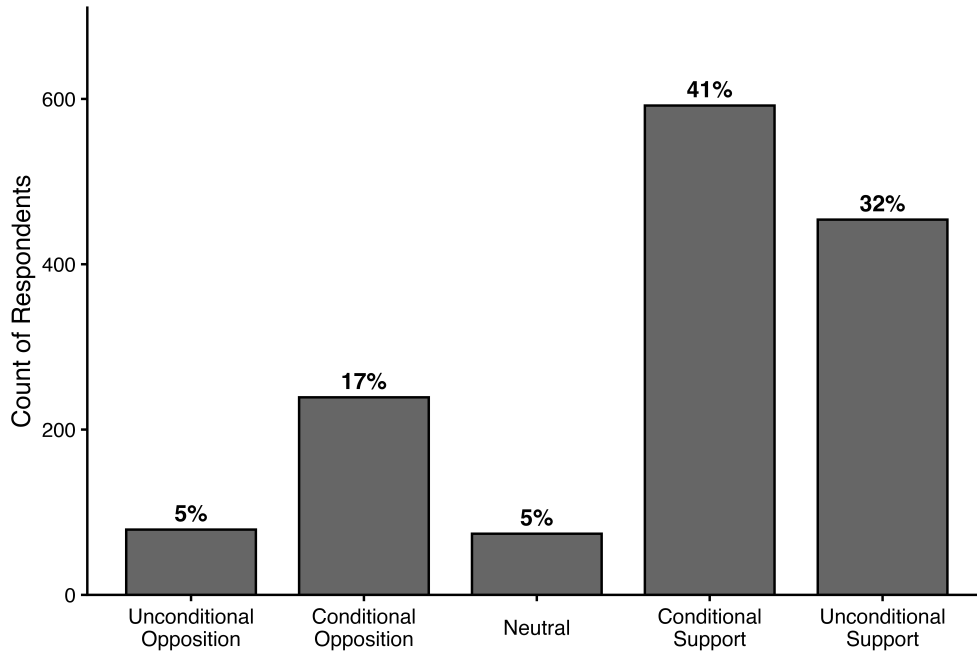


Figure 4: Open-Ended Comments on Chinese Foreign Aid

The distribution of these responses is presented in Figure 4. As shown in the figure, among the half respondents who shared substantive feedback, the majority (73%) expressed either conditional or unconditional support. Supportive comments emphasized both economic benefits, such as expanded market access, and political benefits, including enhanced soft power, the cultivation of allies, and global leadership, consistent with our theoretical expectations. Approximately 5% of respondents adopted a neutral position, while 22% expressed either conditional or unconditional opposition. Opposition and conditional support were primarily grounded in concerns about prioritizing domestic needs, with respondents citing domestic inequality and poverty as issues that should be addressed before extending foreign aid. These respondents also emphasized that aid should be limited in scale and demonstrably effective. The qualitative feedback again demonstrates high levels of public support for Chinese foreign aid, at least among citizens who are willing to share their opinions.

## 5.4 Potential Explanation of Null Causal Effects

There are several potential explanations for the null effects observed in this experiment. One possibility is a ceiling effect. If baseline support for Chinese foreign aid is already very high, there may be limited room for the treatments to increase support further. Indeed, the descriptive statistics have shown that 79% respondents believe that Chinese foreign aid helps both China and recipient countries and 96% say China may or must provide foreign aid. Figure A2 in Appendix A4 illustrates that the mean support level in the outcome measures is approximately 7.2 on a 0-10 scale, again in line with the strong baseline support hypothesis H1a. While this is moderately high, the standard deviation is around 2, indicating that most respondents are well below the scale maximum. This suggests that ceiling effects are unlikely to account for the limited impact of the propaganda frames.

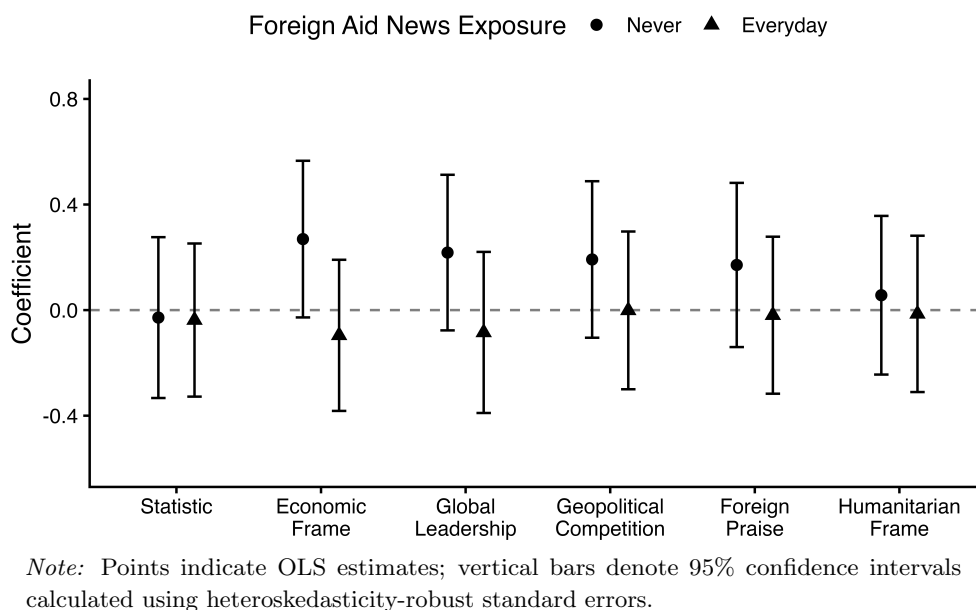


Figure 5: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects by News Exposure

A second potential explanation is that respondents may have been pretreated prior to the experiment, meaning that prior exposure to foreign aid news and propaganda could reduce their sensitivity to our experimental frames. This is plausible given the descriptive analysis, which shows that 32% of respondents report sometimes reading news about Chinese foreign aid and 36% report reading it often. To examine this possibility, we interact the treatment conditions with pretreatment foreign aid news exposure, and the results are presented in Figure 5. As shown, the treatment effect is generally

stronger among respondents who report never reading news about Chinese foreign aid, compared to those with daily exposure, especially in the economic benefit and political gain conditions. This pattern suggests that prior exposure may attenuate responsiveness to the experimental treatments, providing some evidence that pretreatment exposure moderates the impact of propaganda frames.

A third potential explanation concerns preference falsification, a common issue in surveys conducted in authoritarian contexts. One might suspect that the null effects arise because respondents, even if the treatment shifted their opinions, may be reluctant to express negative views about government policies. However, this is unlikely as respondents should generally feel safe expressing more positive opinions on Chinese foreign aid if the treatments were effective. A final explanation is that propaganda may simply be unpersuasive. A recent meta-analysis of 48 experimental studies on propaganda in China finds that over half report null or statistically insignificant effects of propaganda treatments (Shen and Yin 2025). This evidence underscores the broader limitations of propaganda as a tool for shaping public opinion and suggests that it should not be assumed to reliably alter citizens' attitudes.

## 6 Conclusion

Amid growing polarization and competition among great powers, foreign aid has become an increasingly contested policy domain. While traditional Western donors are retrenching their foreign aid commitments, partially in response to public skepticism, China has moved in the opposite direction, substantially expanding its overseas assistance and investment in developing countries. This divergence raises an important question: how does the Chinese state shape and sustain domestic public support for an expansive foreign aid agenda?

This project addresses this question by examining the foundations of Chinese public support for foreign aid. We show that such support cannot be understood solely through contemporary propaganda strategies or issue framing. Our survey experiment with Chinese citizens reveals a high level of baseline support for foreign aid among Chinese respondents, along with extensive prior exposure to foreign aid-related information. Against this backdrop, experimental framing

treatments emphasizing economic, political, or humanitarian benefits have no discernible effect on attitudes toward Chinese foreign aid. This null effect is itself substantively meaningful: it suggests that public opinion in this domain is already well formed and saturated, leaving limited room for short-term persuasion through conventional framing strategies.

Therefore, we argue that Chinese public opinion on foreign aid is rooted in a longer historical trajectory that traces back to the revolutionary era, during which foreign assistance was embedded in narratives of socialist ideology, national identity, and South-South solidarity (Dreher et al. 2022b; Lee 2010; Mawdsley 2012). These historical narratives and ideological legacies continue to structure citizens' baseline attitudes toward foreign aid, providing the regime with a durable reservoir of public support that can be mobilized and reinforced through modern communication strategies. By highlighting the interaction between historical ideology and contemporary propaganda, this study contributes to broader debates on authoritarian legitimation, mass opinion, and the political sustainability of foreign aid policies.

This study carries several important implications. One central implication is that China occupies an advantaged position in global competition over foreign aid thanks to strong domestic public support. Unlike Western donor governments, which often face public backlash and electoral constraints that limit the scale and durability of foreign aid commitments (Milner and Tingley 2010), the Chinese state can sustain relatively costly aid programs and continue to expand its presence in developing countries. On the one hand, expanded Chinese foreign aid provides recipient countries with an additional and often critical source of development finance. On the other hand, it enhances China's political influence and leverage in recipient regions, reshaping the balance of competition with Western powers.

A further implication concerns how scholars and policymakers should think about public opinion under authoritarian rule. The findings suggest that mass attitudes in authoritarian regimes are not merely shallow, volatile, or easily manipulated in the short term. Instead, they can be deeply institutionalized through historical narratives and ideological socialization, generating stable policy support that persists even in the absence of active or effective persuasion. This challenges accounts that equate authoritarian public support with contemporary propaganda effectiveness

and underscores the need to take historically grounded mass opinion seriously when analyzing authoritarian foreign policy behavior and its long-term international consequences.

Nevertheless, the durability of this support may not be guaranteed going forward. As the persuasive power of revolutionary ideology and historical narratives wanes in contemporary Chinese society, and as economic pressures mount due to rising unemployment and slowing growth, signs of public discontent with China's foreign policy are becoming more visible. Evidence from the open-ended responses in our survey indicates that many respondents favor prioritizing domestic welfare over international commitments, with some expressing outright opposition to foreign aid. These patterns point to an important unresolved question: whether public support for Chinese foreign aid can be sustained in the absence of rapid economic growth. If material conditions deteriorate and the implicit social contract underpinning regime legitimacy weakens, foreign aid may increasingly be perceived as a distributive trade-off rather than a source of national pride or moral obligation. Assessing how economic slowdown reshapes Chinese citizens' attitudes toward China's international engagement thus represents a critical avenue for future research.

Parallel questions arise in other authoritarian foreign aid donors, including Russia and the Gulf monarchies. Extending this research agenda to these cases would allow scholars to assess how different autocracies seek to shape public opinion around foreign aid and whether such strategies are effective across varying ideological, institutional, and economic contexts. Comparative analysis of authoritarian foreign aid donors would deepen our understanding of the mechanisms of public opinion management under autocracy and help identify broader, systematic patterns in how domestic political control shapes international economic engagement.

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Omitted for peer review.

## **Disclosure of interest statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest related to this work.

## **Funding statement**

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## **Data availability statement**

Replication data and codes will be available upon publication.

## **Research ethics and consent statement**

This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University A (anonymized for peer review). All participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study prior to participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. The consent included permission to use anonymized data for research and publication purposes.

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## Online Appendix

### A1 Validity of GPT Classification

It is necessary to establish how Chinese foreign aid is covered in official discourse. We therefore begin by documenting patterns in *People’s Daily* coverage and by assessing whether a computational approach can reliably identify aid-relevant news at scale. Using ChatGPT to classify articles allows us to construct a comprehensive corpus of foreign aid reporting, but this strategy requires validation: large language models may misclassify foreign policy or economic news as aid-related, or fail to capture substantively relevant coverage.

To evaluate the validity of the GPT-classified corpus, we estimate a series of regressions relating the frequency of recipient-country mentions in aid-related coverage to China’s actual aid engagement with those recipients. If the classification accurately captures foreign aid reporting, media attention should covary with realized aid exposure rather than with short-term geopolitical events or general foreign policy salience. The dependent variable measures the annual number of times a Chinese aid recipient country is mentioned in *People’s Daily* news articles from 2015 to 2021 that discuss foreign aid. To construct this variable, we used ChatGPT-4.1 Mini to systematically extract all news content related to Chinese foreign aid by providing a tailored prompt designed to capture articles explicitly referring to aid, assistance, or development projects. Each extracted article was then manually verified to ensure the accuracy and relevance of ChatGPT’s classification. The final count for each country-year thus reflects the intensity of China’s official media attention toward that recipient in the context of foreign aid. The full ChatGPT prompt and filtering procedure are provided in the Appendix.

The main independent variables capture the intensity of Chinese development engagement at the country-year level. The first variable, cumulative projects, measures the cumulative number of Chinese development projects committed to a recipient country up to and including a given year. The second variable, cumulative ODA-like projects, restricts this measure to projects classified as ODA-like—that is, projects meeting the concessionality criteria of Official Development Assistance, typically characterized by high grant elements and development-oriented purposes. Both variables are constructed using project-level data from AidData’s Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0 (GCDF 3.0), compiled through the Tracking Underreported Financial Flows (TUFF) methodology (Custer et al. 2023). This dataset provides comprehensive, geocoded coverage of Chinese official finance from 2000 to 2021, allowing us to track cumulative aid exposure for each recipient country over time.

For controls, first, we control for BRI membership, since BRI membership may predict higher Chinese economic and strategic interests with that recipient, potentially leading to more news mentions. We retrieve the data from Sacks (2021). Second, we control for trade volume with China, and we retrieve the data from UN Comtrade (United Nations Statistics Division 2024). Third, we control for domestic violence death in the recipient country, since dramatic events may lead to more Chinese aid and news mentions. We use Uppsala Conflict data on the best estimate for fatalities in organized violence within the borders of a country in a given year as a proxy for level of domestic conflict and violence (Davies et al. 2025). Finally, we control for UN voting alignment with China, and the data is retrieved from Voeten (2009).

Table A1: Determinants of Country Count

	Dependent variable: Country Count			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Cumulative projects	0.0884*	0.0902*		
	(0.0350)	(0.0357)		
Cumulative ODA-like projects			0.1352**	0.1398**
			(0.0481)	(0.0486)
China–UN GA agreement		1.346		-5.050
		(11.92)		(11.85)
BRI (1/0)		1.674		0.8605
		(1.268)		(1.373)
log(1 + Trade)		3.066		3.484
		(1.673)		(1.809)
log(1 + Conflict deaths)		-0.4015		-0.2052
		(0.3696)		(0.3172)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	597	500	597	500
$R^2$	0.734	0.751	0.732	0.750
Adjusted $R^2$	0.659	0.675	0.657	0.674

Notes: The dependent variable is *country\_count*. Standard errors are clustered at the country level and reported in parentheses. All models include country and year fixed effects. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

Table A1 shows that recipient-country mentions in *People’s Daily* are systematically associated with China’s accumulated aid engagement rather than short-term geopolitical or economic considerations. Countries that have received more cumulative Chinese development projects are mentioned significantly more often in aid-related coverage, and this relationship is even stronger when attention is restricted to ODA-like projects. This pattern indicates that development-oriented aid is particularly salient in official media narratives and, crucially, that the computational classification captures reporting that tracks meaningful variation in China’s aid footprint.

By contrast, variables that proxy for contemporaneous strategic alignment or newsworthiness—China–UN General Assembly voting agreement, BRI participation, trade volume, and conflict intensity—do not exhibit systematic effects once country and year fixed effects are included. Their limited explanatory power suggests that the extracted articles are not driven by generic foreign policy coverage or episodic international events.

Taken together, these results provide strong face validity for the GPT-based identification of aid-relevant news. Rather than reflecting transient geopolitical attention, the classified corpus mirrors the long-run structure of China’s development engagement, indicating that the model successfully isolates foreign aid-specific reporting in official media.

## **A2 Experiment Power Analysis and Balance Table**

Power analysis was conducted using pilot data for the main outcome on support for Chinese foreign aid. We defined the primary treatment as foreign aid frames and computed the outcome standard deviation from the pilot sample ( $SD = 2.01$ ). The primary calculation targeted 80% power to detect a substantively meaningful detectable effect of 0.3 points on the 0–10 scale (standardized effect size  $d = 0.3/2.01$ ). Under these assumptions, the required sample size is 397 participants per arm, yielding a total required sample of 2,779 participants. To allow for minor deviations from these assumptions, we plan to recruit 3,000 participants. The power curve are provided in Figure A1 to illustrate sensitivity to sample size.

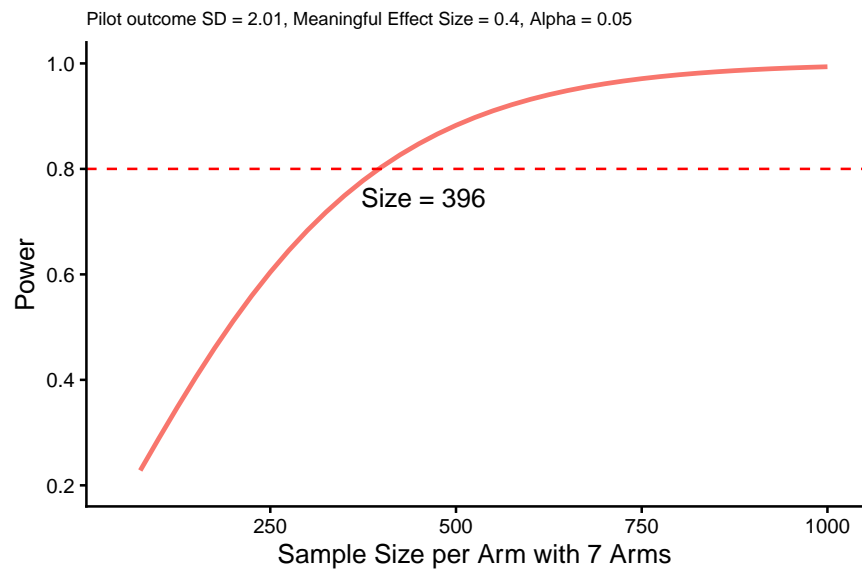


Figure A1: Power Curve Based on Pilot Experiment

Table A2: Covariate Balance by Treatment Status

	Control (N=428)	Statistic (N=427)	Economic Frame (N=415)	Global Leadership (N=422)	Geopolitical Competition (N=419)	Foreign Praise (N=420)	Humanitarian Frame (N=423)	p value
<b>Gender</b>								0.917
N-Miss	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	
Female	236 (55.1%)	229 (53.6%)	221 (53.3%)	223 (53.1%)	229 (54.7%)	221 (52.6%)	239 (56.6%)	
Male	192 (44.9%)	198 (46.4%)	194 (46.7%)	197 (46.9%)	190 (45.3%)	199 (47.4%)	183 (43.4%)	
<b>Age</b>								0.162
Mean (SD)	32.400 (8.674)	32.864 (8.825)	31.892 (8.164)	31.398 (7.763)	32.160 (8.531)	32.571 (8.327)	31.766 (8.349)	
<b>Education</b>								0.979
No College	83 (19.4%)	73 (17.1%)	73 (17.6%)	76 (18.0%)	80 (19.1%)	77 (18.3%)	75 (17.7%)	
College	345 (80.6%)	354 (82.9%)	342 (82.4%)	346 (82.0%)	339 (80.9%)	343 (81.7%)	348 (82.3%)	
<b>Income</b>								0.328
Mean (SD)	1.701 (1.311)	1.869 (1.385)	1.773 (1.375)	1.739 (1.347)	1.680 (1.235)	1.845 (1.398)	1.768 (1.296)	
<b>Geography</b>								0.309
Rural or small city	216 (50.5%)	189 (44.3%)	177 (42.7%)	200 (47.4%)	205 (48.9%)	198 (47.1%)	199 (47.0%)	
Large city	212 (49.5%)	238 (55.7%)	238 (57.3%)	222 (52.6%)	214 (51.1%)	222 (52.9%)	224 (53.0%)	
<b>Party Membership</b>								0.524
Non-member	354 (82.7%)	334 (78.2%)	343 (82.7%)	345 (81.8%)	342 (81.6%)	333 (79.3%)	348 (82.3%)	
CCP member	74 (17.3%)	93 (21.8%)	72 (17.3%)	77 (18.2%)	77 (18.4%)	87 (20.7%)	75 (17.7%)	

Note:  $p$ -values are derived from Linear Model ANOVA for numeric variables and Pearson's  $\chi^2$  tests for categorical variables.

### A3 Experiment Vignette

Table A3: Treatment Vignettes

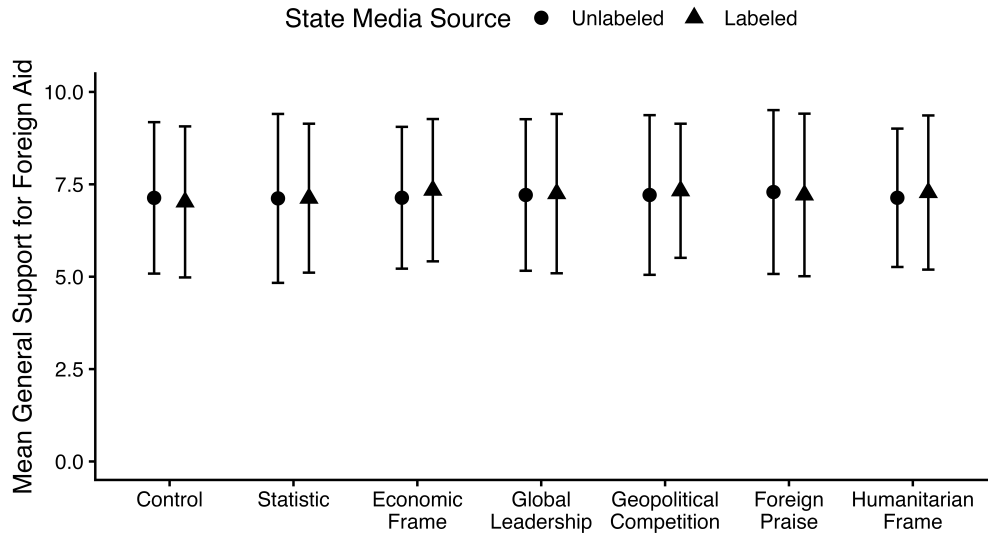
Condition	Vignette (English Translation)
<i>Comparison</i>	
Pure Control Statistic	Null According to customs data, in 2025 China provided approximately RMB 4.2 billion in aid to other countries and international organizations, accounting for about 0.015% of its total exports.
<i>Economic Benefit</i>	
Economic Benefit	Through the in-depth implementation of foreign aid projects, Chinese enterprises have accumulated valuable experience in fields such as infrastructure construction, energy development, and health care, continuously enhancing their international operational capacity and core competitiveness. Foreign aid has increasingly become an important channel for China to access overseas markets, promote international production capacity cooperation, and facilitate the optimization and upgrading of the domestic industrial structure. It has created new growth opportunities for related industrial and supply chains and has also provided a wide range of overseas employment opportunities for domestic workers. Foreign aid has thus generated tangible economic returns for China.
<i>Political Gain</i>	
Global Leadership	China's foreign aid serves as a symbolic demonstration of its international leadership and governing capacity. China's assistance is not confined to a specific region or country; rather, it is comprehensive and wide-ranging, presenting to the world China's commitment and responsibility as a major country. It reflects a distinctive approach to major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, style, and vision. China's foreign aid has enhanced its soft power and international influence, enabling it to play a more active and constructive role in global governance and international affairs.
Geopolitical Competition	China's foreign aid helps strengthen its influence and competitiveness in international affairs. Historically, a series of "development programs" proposed by some Western countries to developing nations have often failed to address local problems effectively and, in some cases, have even exacerbated existing difficulties. At a time when advanced Western economies are increasingly unable to make substantial contributions to other countries, China's foreign aid has brought new hope to many recipient nations. As the global political landscape and economic order undergo profound changes, China's foreign aid is becoming a new lever in its competition with Western countries.

*Continued on next page*

Condition	Vignette (English Translation)
Foreign Praise	<p>China’s foreign aid has received widespread recognition and high praise from governments and peoples around the world. Citizens in recipient countries have directly experienced the positive changes and support brought about by China’s assistance. Many have remarked that no other country has extended help with the same level of sincerity and persistence as China. They express heartfelt gratitude for China’s selfless support, noting that it is precisely this assistance that has brought new turning points and opportunities to their lives and to their countries. People of different nationalities and backgrounds, speaking different languages, have voiced a shared sentiment: “Thank you, China.”</p>
<i>Humanitarianism</i> Humanitarian	<p>China’s foreign aid has played an important and far-reaching role in promoting socioeconomic development, improving livelihoods, and enhancing public health in recipient countries. Through infrastructure construction, medical assistance, and the sharing of poverty reduction experience, China has effectively helped many countries strengthen their capacity for independent development and improve local living conditions. Today, as the world faces multiple challenges and global humanitarian needs continue to rise, China’s foreign aid not only embodies the spirit of international humanitarianism but also promotes the principles of solidarity and mutual assistance, injecting strong momentum into global shared development.</p>

#### A4 Additional Experiment Result

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Trt-Statistic	-0.013 (0.085)	-0.014 (0.062)	-0.016 (0.151)	-0.017 (0.075)	-0.046 (0.251)
Statistic × Labeled Source	0.023 (0.118)	-0.030 (0.087)	-0.014 (0.212)	-0.126 (0.108)	0.140 (0.349)
Trt-Economic Frame	0.016 (0.081)	0.077 (0.060)	0.131 (0.147)	0.119 (0.077)	0.117 (0.244)
Economic Frame × Labeled Source	0.073 (0.113)	0.004 (0.086)	0.150 (0.209)	-0.023 (0.109)	-0.106 (0.342)
Trt-Global Leadership	-0.005 (0.080)	0.039 (0.060)	0.188 (0.149)	0.035 (0.075)	-0.036 (0.246)
Global Leadership × Labeled Source	0.113 (0.115)	0.048 (0.088)	-0.039 (0.220)	-0.005 (0.107)	0.479 (0.352)
Trt-Geopolitical Competition	0.065 (0.082)	0.109+ (0.061)	0.176 (0.150)	0.162* (0.077)	0.201 (0.240)
Geopolitical Competition × Labeled Source	0.041 (0.114)	-0.033 (0.087)	0.034 (0.212)	-0.141 (0.110)	0.096 (0.342)
Trt-Foreign Praise	0.055 (0.084)	0.078 (0.061)	0.214 (0.151)	0.049 (0.078)	0.224 (0.231)
Foreign Praise × Labeled Source	-0.023 (0.119)	-0.009 (0.089)	0.049 (0.221)	-0.030 (0.110)	-0.057 (0.342)
Trt-Humanitarian Frame	-0.015 (0.080)	-0.016 (0.061)	-0.018 (0.147)	-0.010 (0.077)	-0.077 (0.240)
Humanitarian Frame × Labeled Source	0.075 (0.114)	0.073 (0.087)	0.241 (0.213)	-0.016 (0.110)	0.339 (0.335)
Source Labeled	-0.001 (0.081)	0.017 (0.062)	-0.044 (0.150)	0.080 (0.076)	-0.030 (0.245)
Pre-treatment Support		0.599*** (0.018)	1.441*** (0.051)	0.586*** (0.019)	1.370*** (0.059)
Foreign Aid Exposure		0.042** (0.015)	0.101** (0.037)	0.058** (0.019)	0.042 (0.058)
Accurate Aid Estimate		-0.007 (0.036)	0.019 (0.090)	-0.018 (0.046)	-0.035 (0.140)
Overestimate Aid Amount		-0.088** (0.034)	-0.108 (0.085)	-0.079+ (0.043)	-0.365** (0.128)
Political Interest		0.096*** (0.023)	0.286*** (0.059)	0.044 (0.028)	0.297*** (0.090)
Life Satisfaction		0.240*** (0.024)	0.521*** (0.060)	0.130*** (0.029)	0.939*** (0.090)
Political Knowledge		-0.017 (0.031)	0.010 (0.080)	0.039 (0.039)	-0.273* (0.126)
CCP Member		0.117*** (0.031)	0.257*** (0.072)	0.113** (0.040)	0.309* (0.121)
Male		-0.055* (0.025)	-0.237*** (0.061)	-0.016 (0.031)	-0.096 (0.097)
Age		-0.005** (0.002)	-0.012** (0.004)	-0.008*** (0.002)	0.003 (0.006)
College		-0.039 (0.034)	0.038 (0.090)	-0.063 (0.043)	-0.194 (0.130)
Large City Residence		0.006 (0.025)	0.088 (0.062)	0.014 (0.032)	-0.117 (0.099)
Household Income		0.047*** (0.011)	0.052+ (0.027)	0.036** (0.013)	0.226*** (0.041)
Outcome	Composite Support	Composite Support	General FA Support	Increase FA Amount	FA-Domestic Trade-off
Num.Obs.	2954	2931	2931	2931	2931
R2	0.002	0.446	0.427	0.303	0.260



*Note:* Vertical bars denote one standard deviation above and below the mean.

Figure A2: Group Means and SDs of General Foreign Aid Support