

# Ideology at the Water's Edge: Explaining Variation in Public Support for Foreign Aid

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## Abstract

To explain variation in foreign aid levels and attitudes in donor countries, past research emphasizes the importance of values related to the welfare state such as economic ideology. Scholars argue that liberals support redistribution at home in the form of a strong welfare state and redistribution abroad in the form of foreign aid. Yet, the conditions under which values related to domestic politics translate to issues of foreign policy remain undertheorized. I argue that economic ideology interacts with foreign policy orientation – individuals' placement along the internationalist/isolationist spectrum – to shape foreign aid attitudes and outcomes. Using original data from surveys fielded in the U.S., UK, and Norway, as well as data on foreign aid spending levels, I show that the relationship between ideology and foreign aid is conditional on foreign policy orientation. The effect is driven by isolationist liberals whose support for redistribution stops at the water's edge.

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In February 2014, the United Kingdom Independence Party initiated a campaign to divert overseas development assistance funds to help needy Britons. In a rally promoting this initiative, Nigel Farage, the party leader, stated, “Anyone with an ounce of common sense knows that a government’s primary duty is to the well-being of its own citizens. *Charity begins at home* and it is not mean-spirited to say that, it is just basic common sense.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, the English proverb “Charity begins at home” has been used over time to convey two diametrically opposed sentiments (Trusler, 1790). Its original intent was to remind individuals that values related to compassion and charity should be encouraged in the home and should then extend beyond it into society. By the 1700s, however, the proverb had come to be used by those expressing the opposite feeling, that charity begins at home and ends there.<sup>2</sup> The dual meanings of this proverb illuminate an important puzzle in the literature that relates the welfare state to foreign aid: why do some individuals and countries externalize values related to the welfare state to foreign aid and others do not? More generally, how do values learned in the domestic political context translate to issues of foreign policy?

Scholarship on the relationship between the welfare state and foreign aid has been mixed.<sup>3</sup> While past research on foreign aid finds evidence consistent with the hypothesis that values and norms associated with the welfare state lead to foreign aid (e.g., Lumsdaine (1993), Noël and Thérien (1995), Noël and Thérien (2000)), some have more recently questioned

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<sup>1</sup>Emphasis added. Quote from: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2552969/Ukips-Nigel-Farage-calls-foreign-aid-budget-used-help-flood-hit-communities.html>

<sup>2</sup>In a book on morality published in 1790, an English writer notes, “This Proverb has been generally misunderstood and misapplied. It has been conceived to allude to the folly of giving to others what we want ourselves; and covetous men have used it in justification of their own selfishness” (Trusler, 1790, p.29).

<sup>3</sup>This research compliments a large body of work on the ideational sources of foreign aid, which include racial paternalism (Baker, 2015), generalized trust (Bayram, 2016), moral aversion (Heinrich and Kobayashi, 2018), global justice beliefs (Van Heerde and Hudson, 2010), and humanitarianism (Van der Veen, 2011), among others.

the relationship (Van der Veen, 2011).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a simple, descriptive examination of the American National Election Study over the past twenty years reveals a robust pattern: A significant number of respondents — more than twenty percent in each survey year — support domestic welfare programs but *oppose* foreign aid. This observation is inconsistent with existing theories that foreign aid attitudes and spending are strongly tied to the welfare state. Moreover, we lack a systematic explanation that accounts for this variation.

This study proposes a theory for why some individuals and states externalize domestic redistributive values to the foreign policy domain and others do not. The theory builds on recent work on foreign policy attitudes, focusing on what I call foreign policy orientation (Kertzer, 2013; Kertzer et al., 2014; Rathbun et al., 2016). Foreign policy orientation can be defined as an individual preference for the government to pursue or avoid interactions with other countries. My claim is that ideology and foreign policy orientation interact to shape foreign aid attitudes and policies. Conservatives, who on average do not support redistribution at home, will also not support redistribution abroad, regardless of their foreign policy orientation. Liberals, however, will be split. Those who want government to have an active foreign policy will support foreign aid. Those who believe government should avoid entanglements with other countries, will not. This relationship should apply specifically to foreign economic aid which is the type of overseas aid most closely resembling domestic redistribution.

I further theorize about the core values that constrain internationalist and isolationist liberals' views on foreign aid. I focus on the role of ethnocentrism as scholars have suggested a strong relationship between foreign policy orientation and ethnocentrism (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987; Kinder and Kam, 2009). The model suggests that isolationist liberals oppose foreign aid relatively more than internationalist liberals as they tend to see the world as

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<sup>4</sup>Van der Veen (2011, 148) notes that while many have established a correlation between the welfare state and foreign aid, the “causal factor behind these suggestive correlations remains unclear.”

divided into groups and prefer to restrict the use of government resources to help their in-group. Yet, this theory is in tension with other scholars who have shown that liberals rely less on moral foundations related to in-group loyalty and more on foundations related to fairness and caring (Graham, Haidt and Nosek, 2009). Thus, internationalist and isolationist liberals may be constrained by core values other than ethnocentrism. My work aims therefore to clarify the role of ethnocentrism as well.

I investigate the theory using a multi-method approach collecting both survey data in the United States and other countries, as well as cross-national observational data. First, I use survey data from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, the American National Election Study, and an original survey fielded to a nationally representative sample of Americans. In all three, I find a strong relationship between placement on the left-right ideological spectrum and foreign aid attitudes among internationalists. Among isolationists, this association is much weaker or absent altogether. Of particular note is the split among ideological liberals: Internationalist liberals support foreign aid, while isolationist liberals oppose it.

Second, I rule out ethnocentrism as the key difference between isolationist and internationalist liberals driving their split on foreign aid. While there are large differences in beliefs about the government's moral duty to help foreign citizens between internationalist liberals and isolationist liberals, there are *no* significant differences between the two in their levels of ethnocentrism. This is consistent with the idea that liberals rely on moral foundations other than in-group loyalty.

Finally, I examine the generalizability of the U.S. findings in two ways. First, using original data from the United Kingdom and Norway, I investigate the extent to which this theory helps explain variation in support for foreign aid outside of the American context. Although recent work in political behavior has begun to examine the generalizability of theories across countries, this is still a relatively rare occurrence in the literature (Gravelle, Reifler and Scotto, 2017). Second, I examine whether the theory can explain cross-national variation

in foreign aid spending. I combine data on social spending, globalization, and foreign aid to show how patterns of foreign aid giving in donor countries also follow the argument. Indeed, countries that spend more on domestic social benefits are split. High welfare spending countries that are below average in terms of their society's openness spend lower amounts on foreign aid, while the top aid donors are those with large social benefits programs at home and have a society that is broadly integrated into the international community.

This research contributes to existing work in a variety of ways. First, constructivist theory proposes that domestic political norms and values influence international politics. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argue, "Many international norms began as domestic norms and become international..." (893). While scholars since have investigated this process of norm externalization at the country level, less is known about the individual-level process. Indeed, how do values learned in the domestic political context come to bear on issues of foreign policy? My work sheds light on this question using the case of domestic welfare values and foreign aid.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the work presented here makes an important contribution to the study of political behavior in international relations (Hafner-Burton et al., 2017). Specifically, this research advances the literature on foreign policy attitudes by arguing against the idea that inconsistency across the domestic and foreign policy domains is a sign that foreign policy attitudes are less stable and structured than domestic policy attitudes (Almond, 1950; Converse, 1964).<sup>6</sup> My research suggests that individuals may in fact have principled reasons to support a policy in the domestic context but oppose its foreign policy cognate. Moreover, this work encourages future research on foreign policy orientation. International relations

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<sup>5</sup>Recent work has examined the role of domestic political values and support for other foreign policies such as the use of force (Stein, 2015). Future work could apply the theory developed here to the security realm to further illuminate the processes that link domestic political values to issues of foreign policy.

<sup>6</sup>My work joins other recent studies that also seek to reexamine common assumptions in the field of public opinion and foreign policy including work that reexamines the logic of audience costs (Kertzer and Brutger, 2016) and the elite-cues model of foreign policy attitude formation (Kertzer and Zeitzoff, 2017).

scholars must pay attention to foreign policy orientation as it may represent a central construct that structures the expression of norms and values learned in the domestic political context in the international domain.

## **Ideology and Foreign Aid**

Lumsdaine (1993) is often cited as one of the first scholars to recognize the importance of values related to the welfare state to the development of the foreign aid regime. He argues that the ideational roots of foreign aid can be found in a nation's domestic welfare policies and that citizens' preferences for both domestic aid and foreign aid share a common moral grounding.<sup>7</sup> Since then, numerous scholars have explored the link between values related to domestic redistribution and foreign aid. Studies have shown a positive association between welfare state spending and spending on foreign aid at both the country level and at the individual level in terms of spending preferences (Lumsdaine, 1993; Noël and Thérien, 1995, 2002). Researchers have also found evidence that placement on the left-right ideological spectrum can explain variation in public opinion on foreign aid (Paxton and Knack, 2012; Milner and Tingley, 2013), legislative votes on foreign aid (Milner and Tingley, 2010, 2011), and cross-national patterns of foreign aid spending (Tingley, 2010; Thérien and Noël, 2000). This research demonstrates that individuals and governments on the left support foreign aid more than those on the right of the ideological spectrum.

I argue, however, that individuals' values and orientations along different dimensions (e.g. economic/social or domestic/foreign) often come into conflict with each other. In the case of foreign aid, one's redistributive values may interact with other orientations in ways not yet theorized in the literature. Indeed, for redistributive values, it seems particularly

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<sup>7</sup>Beyond a moral grounding, ideology may be associated with certain psychological traits such as empathy (Morris, 2020), which have been shown to be correlated with foreign aid attitudes (Bayram and Holmes, 2020). Additionally, ideology could be related to generalized trust, which also shapes foreign aid attitudes (Bayram, 2016).

problematic to assume as the literature implies that supporters of domestic redistribution will automatically support international redistribution. This is because we know even within the domestic context that support for the welfare state is often conditional on factors such as shared identity (e.g., Alesina and Glaeser (2004)). Thus, I argue that while government intervention into the marketplace is common to both welfare and foreign aid, support for foreign aid requires an additional input: a general disposition that supports government involvement in world affairs. My claim is that support for the welfare state should matter little to individual support for foreign aid among those who think the government’s primary focus should be domestic affairs. The welfare state and foreign aid should only be strongly tied in the presence of an internationalist foreign policy orientation.

I draw on past work to support the theory. Prior research suggests internationalism is an important determinant of foreign aid policy, but does not specify the conditional relationship between it and domestic welfare values.<sup>8</sup> For example, while Lumsdaine (1993) is primarily credited with articulating the moral vision behind foreign aid and its basis in domestic redistributive values, he also emphasizes the importance of internationalism. In explaining the emergence of the foreign aid regime, he states, “The circumstances that led to the creation of aid programs suggest that their roots lay in the development of the welfare state *and of a broad internationalism*” (31).<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Lancaster (2008) argues that both economic ideology and foreign policy orientation are important, stating that, “The major ideas shaping U.S. aid reflect a fundamental tension in U.S. history and society between those whose world views were informed by classical liberalism’s preference for limitations

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<sup>8</sup>Although I discuss one possible relationship here, internationalism/isolationism may also be related to other preferences and ideologies that also affect foreign aid. For example, isolationism is often associated with populism. As recent work has shown, populism is an anti-elitist ideology that is associated with foreign aid attitudes (Heinrich, Kobayashi and Lawson Jr, 2021). Additionally, isolationism may be related to mistrust of international organizations through which some foreign aid is funneled by donor countries. This may be an additional channel through which internationalism affects aid attitudes as recent work has shown (Bayram and Graham, 2022).

<sup>9</sup>Emphasis added.

on the role of the state in society and those who looked to the state as a major vehicle for redistributive policies at home and, eventually, abroad... Other important ideas shaping aid involved the appropriate role of the United States in the world” (94).

Lancaster further discusses the role that foreign policy orientation plays in shaping foreign aid spending levels. She notes that the foreign aid policies of donor countries like the U.S. and Germany have varied as their publics turned inward. For example, she observes that the German public’s support for foreign aid declined, as did foreign aid spending, during the 1990s “undoubtedly reflecting the economic stresses associated with reunification” (185). Although Germany had a relatively generous domestic welfare state, the expression of that generosity abroad was constrained by the public’s relatively more inward-looking world view of the time.<sup>10</sup> These observations suggest that foreign policy orientation may be necessary to explaining variation in public opinion on foreign aid and why some states give more than others.

## **An Interactionist Framework of Foreign Aid Support**

In this article, I build on the work outlined above to argue that two dispositions important for structuring the political attitudes of individuals—economic ideology and foreign policy orientation—interact to shape support for foreign aid policies. I first define foreign policy orientation before specifying the theory that relates it to economic ideology and foreign aid.

Foreign policy orientation has a long history of study in American politics. Early scholars of American foreign policy argued that because of low salience and low knowledge of international politics, mass foreign policy attitudes lacked structure and were fundamentally

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<sup>10</sup>Beyond the domain of redistribution, scholars suggest more generally that internationalism matters for the scale and speed with which domestic norms may affect and be affected by international politics. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argue that, “[a]lthough norms have always been a part of international life, changes in communication and transportation technologies and increasing global interdependence have led to increased connectedness and, in a way, are leading to the homogenization of global norms” (909).



unstable (Almond, 1950; Converse, 1964). Contradicting these arguments, more recent research contends that foreign policy attitudes do have structure and are shaped by deeply held values and dispositions (e.g, Hurwitz and Peffley (1987)). One of the most important dispositions identified in this literature is the public's foreign policy orientation (Pollins and Schweller, 1999). This research finds that a cleavage exists within the American public between those who want an extroverted foreign policy (internationalists) and those who want the government to focus more on domestic issues (isolationists). It is this foreign policy orientation of individuals that I argue interacts with their domestic redistributive values to shape foreign aid outcomes.

There is significant variation across individuals in the extent to which they support extroverted foreign policies. Scholars demonstrate that much of the variation in foreign policy orientation can be found at the individual level rather than in the aggregate. In his study of foreign policy orientation (which he calls foreign policy mood), Kertzer (2013) notes that “there is over 12 times as much variation in foreign policy mood *within* each wave of the data as there are *between* them; there is far more division within the public in 1992, say, than between the public in 1988 and the public in 2002” (231). One of the main individual-level factors examined by scholars to explain variation in foreign policy orientation is ideology. Importantly, previous work finds that foreign policy orientation tends to be *uncorrelated* with ideology or partisanship. For example, Chaudoin, Milner and Tingley (2010) demonstrate that in over 60 years of public opinion data there are relatively few differences between Democrats and Republicans in their foreign policy orientation. Instead, ideology and partisanship seem to shape preferences over *how* the U.S. government engages in foreign policy, such as the desirability of using force, but not *whether* it engages (Wittkopf,

1990; Holsti, 2004; Rathbun, 2007; Milner and Tingley, 2013).<sup>11</sup>

Turning to the theory, the interactionist framework I propose argues that individuals will ask themselves both *whether* and *how* to help the poor in other countries when confronted with decisions to support or oppose foreign aid. First it is useful to specify the cognitive structure of foreign policy attitudes in the model. I draw on past work and assume a hierarchical structure of foreign policy attitudes in which core values constrain dispositions like ideology and foreign policy orientation, and dispositions structure attitudes towards specific issues such as foreign aid (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987). At the dispositional-level, I argue that individuals draw on both their ideological principles and foreign policy orientation when forming their preferences on foreign aid policy. With respect to ideology, I argue that contrary to the long-standing literature on foreign aid that suggests ideology will be strongly correlated with foreign aid policies, the relationship between ideology and foreign aid is conditional on foreign policy orientation. That is to say, foreign policy orientation moderates the relationship between ideology and foreign aid. Specifically, internationalists are inclined to support government action abroad, and draw on their ideological principles when considering the use of government resources to help the poor abroad. In contrast, because isolationist liberals do not support government action abroad, their ideological principles are not called upon. Thus, the theory predicts a strong correlation between ideology and foreign aid attitudes *only* among internationalists, but no correlation among isolationists. This leads to the following hypotheses, in which higher values of ideology correspond to the liberal end of the spectrum.

H1a: *There will be a large, positive association between liberal ideology and support for foreign aid among internationalists.*

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<sup>11</sup>A number of these scholars have attempted to identify multiple dimensions of foreign policy orientation. For the simple framework I propose here, I focus on the single internationalist-isolationist dimension. Future work could complicate this model by adding a hawk-dove dimension as well as a unilateralist-multilateralist dimension ((Wittkopf, 1986).

H1b: *There will be no association between liberal ideology and support for foreign aid among isolationists.*

Given the interactionist hypothesis stated above, we can also specify that the relationship between foreign policy orientation and support for foreign aid is conditional on the ideology of individuals. Conservatives who do not believe the government should intervene in the marketplace will not support foreign aid policies to help the poor regardless of whether they think the government should have an active foreign policy. For liberals, however, who are inclined to have the government intervene, the question of *whether* to help will have a greater impact. In the following hypotheses, higher values of foreign policy orientation correspond to the internationalist end of the spectrum.

H2a: *There will be a large, positive association between internationalist foreign policy orientation and support for foreign aid among liberals.*

H2b: *There will be no association between internationalist foreign policy orientation and support for foreign aid among conservatives.*

These predictions about the conditional relationship between ideology and foreign policy orientation reveal a split between internationalist liberals and isolationist liberals. Given that I assume a hierarchical structure of foreign policy attitudes, it is thus reasonable to ask what are the core values that may explain the differences between internationalist and isolationist liberals in their support for foreign aid?<sup>12</sup> The literature points to a key value: ethnocentrism (Hurwitz and Peffley, 1987; Kinder and Kam, 2009). This work finds a strong correlation between ethnocentric values and foreign policy orientation. If it is the case that isolationist liberals are more ethnocentric than internationalist liberals then isolationist liberals will be less likely to identify with the foreign poor who will be viewed as members of their out-group and lead to lower support for foreign aid. I test the following observable implication of the theory.

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<sup>12</sup>Others have noted that the interaction between internationalism and ideology can shape the sector of aid preferred by governments (Greene and Licht, 2018). One way I build on that work here is by examining the core values underpinning these differences among liberals.

H3: *Isolationist liberals will be less likely than internationalist liberals to identify with the foreign poor.*

On the other hand, more recent work on values and political dispositions suggests that individuals on different sides of the ideological spectrum may rely on different values. Moral foundations theory for example shows that liberals are less likely than conservatives to use moral judgments related to in-group loyalty (Graham, Haidt and Nosek, 2009). Instead, moral foundations related to harm/care and fairness/reciprocity are key moral constructs used by liberals (Graham, Haidt and Nosek, 2009).<sup>13</sup> Thus, rather than ethnocentrism, the split between internationalist and isolationist liberals could be due to different moral beliefs about the obligations of government to foreign citizens which arise out of fairness or other moral concerns. This leads to an alternative implication that ethnocentrism is an unlikely value constraining internationalist and isolationist liberals' support for foreign aid. If ethnocentrism is not a relevant factor in liberal thinking, then I expect to find support for the following hypothesis.

H4: *Isolationist liberals and internationalist liberals will identify with the foreign poor at similar rates.*

## Data and Measurement

I use three sources of data from the United States for the initial tests of the theory. For all three sources of data, I attempt to identify survey questions that closely mirror each other for the main independent and dependent variables. The first source of data is from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (“the CC surveys”). The Chicago Council regularly surveys the American public on their views about foreign policy. In their 2017 and 2020 surveys, they include questions on economic ideology, internationalism, and foreign aid spending. The

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<sup>13</sup>Moral foundations theory has also been shown to underpin individuals' beliefs about how foreign policy should be carried out. Kertzer et al. (2014) show that cooperative internationalists, militant internationalists, and isolationists follow different moral foundations.

second dataset consists of pooled data from twenty years of the American National Election Study (“the ANES surveys”). The data begins in 1990, the first year that all three of the main dependent and independent variables are available and ends in 2008, the last year all three variables are available. The third source of data is an original survey fielded in July of 2013 to a nationally representative, online sample of 1,000 Americans through the survey firm YouGov (“the YouGov survey”).<sup>14</sup> After establishing consistent patterns in the data from 1990-2020 using the ANES and CC surveys, I use the final data source to examine the mechanisms proposed above.

There are two key independent variables in the study: economic ideology and foreign policy orientation. First, in much of the prior research relating the welfare state to foreign aid, domestic redistributive values are conceptualized as placement along the left-right ideological scale which scholars suggest roughly measures individual preferences for government intervention into the economy for the purposes of income redistribution.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in the analyses that follow, I use a measure of *Ideology* in which higher values correspond to the liberal end of the distribution. The variable has three categories and is coded 0 for those who identify as conservative, 1 for moderates, and 2 for liberals.<sup>16</sup> In most cases, the *Ideology* variable is trichotomized from a five or seven category ideology scale. Because my theory is primarily about liberals broadly-speaking and conservatives, I use the consolidated coding.<sup>17</sup>

Second, foreign policy orientation is measured in the standard way using a question asking respondents whether the U.S. should take an active role in world affairs or stay out of world affairs. In all analyses, the variable is labeled *Internationalism* and coded 1 if the

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<sup>14</sup>The survey questions were included as a part of the Stanford Laboratory of American Values omnibus instrument.

<sup>15</sup>The Supporting Information includes a section in which I use a measure of preferences for redistribution instead of ideology. The results are consistent.

<sup>16</sup>In the analysis in the main manuscript, I include this variable as a continuous variable. The Supporting Information includes models in which the variable is included as a binary indicator for each category. The results are similar.

<sup>17</sup>The SI also includes models in which the more extensive ideology scales are used. The results do not change with this coding of the ideology variable.

respondent said the U.S. should take an active role in world affairs and 0 if the respondent said the U.S. should stay out of world affairs. The questions measuring both *Ideology* and *Internationalism* are identically worded in all three data sources.

The relationship between *Ideology* and *Internationalism* varies somewhat over time.<sup>18</sup> In the Chicago Council surveys, 78% of liberals and 67% of conservatives are internationalist in 2017. The percentage of internationalist liberals grew in 2020 to 85% while the percentage of internationalist conservatives stayed the same. In the ANES surveys, 78% of liberals and 81% of conservatives say they are internationalists on average across all years. In the YouGov survey, conservatives are slightly more isolationist (53%) than they are internationalist (47%), while liberals seem to skew slightly to the internationalist side of the spectrum with 58% saying the U.S. should take an active role in world affairs and 42% saying the U.S. should stay out. Isolationism may have been much higher in the YouGov survey as it is the only survey closest to and following the 2008 financial crisis and periods of significant conflict in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Turning to the dependent variables, the question measuring foreign aid attitudes in the Chicago Council and ANES surveys simply ask respondents if they would like to increase, decrease, or keep the same the amount of money the U.S. government spends on foreign aid. I code the dependent variable 0 if the respondent wants to decrease foreign aid and 1 if they want to expand or keep it the same.<sup>19</sup> Around half the respondents in all three surveys (CC2017 59%, CC2020 53%, ANES surveys 51%) want to decrease foreign aid, while the other half want to maintain or expand it.

The second dependent variable comes from a vignette in the form of a news article

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<sup>18</sup>In some periods, this may be due to liberals and conservatives aligning differently with the U.S. President. Past research shows that individuals tend to be slightly more internationalist when the president is a co-partisan (Kertzer, 2013). In the SI, I include a model of alignment with the president in the ANES models since this dataset crosses time periods with presidents of different political parties. The results hold.

<sup>19</sup>This coding choice makes comparison to the YouGov survey easier. Results hold if I do not collapse the variable into two categories. See the Supporting Information (SI) for the regression models.

embedded in the YouGov survey, which was shown to a random subset of the sample (around 500 respondents).<sup>20</sup> Because individuals often are misinformed about foreign aid, the news article aimed to give individuals basic information about the aid program before asking respondents to offer their support or opposition. The news article featured a hypothetical foreign aid program that U.S. officials might cut. The program was described as a hunger relief program that helps 150,000 people. Respondents were also told that the program costs 100 million dollars<sup>21</sup> and that officials hope to reach a decision about the program soon.<sup>22</sup> After reading the news article, respondents were then asked whether they thought government officials should cut or should not cut the program. In all models, the dependent variable is coded as 1 if respondents said the officials “Should not cut the program” and 0 if they said officials “Should cut the program”.<sup>23</sup> Around 58% of respondents said they thought the government should cut the program, while around 42% said they thought the government should not cut the program.

## Findings and Discussion

### Explaining American Foreign Aid Attitudes, 1990-2020

To begin, I examine public opinion data from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the American National Election Study. The Chicago Council annually surveys the American public on issues of foreign policy. In particular, in 2017 and 2020, they included questions

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<sup>20</sup>The vignette can be found in the SI. The other half of the sample was randomly selected to receive information about a domestic welfare program. This part of the sample is not used in this study.

<sup>21</sup>Pretests using Amazon Mechanical Turk that asked respondents to describe why they supported or opposed a program revealed that the cost was seldom the reason for their decision. When cost was mentioned, there was substantial variation in respondents’ reactions ranging from the amount is too high to the amount is too low.

<sup>22</sup>Two factors are also randomized within the vignette. The first is the race of recipients and the second is the modality of the assistance (in kind or cash transfers). This leads to a 2x2 factorial design. I include binary indicators for the two treatments in all models. In related work, I investigate the importance of the two experimental factors to support for foreign aid.

<sup>23</sup>Descriptive statistics for the main independent and dependent variables can be found in the SI.

asking respondents whether they thought the U.S. government should increase, decrease, or keep the same, the amount of economic aid the government sends to other countries. This question about foreign aid most closely parallels the question asked in the ANES on which I am able to draw for more historical data.

The ANES regularly surveys large, nationally representative samples of the American public on an assortment of political issues. Beginning in 1990, researchers began including a question on foreign aid spending, but stopped in 2008. For simplicity, I pool the data from surveys fielded between 1990 and 2008 and control for the survey year.<sup>24</sup> It is important to emphasize that the dependent variable is more general in the ANES as the question simply asks individuals about foreign aid broadly conceived, rather than economic aid specifically as in the CC surveys. This may be a hard test for the theory as it is possible that ideology has a different relationship with certain kinds of foreign aid such as military aid. Thus, my findings depend somewhat on whether or not individuals think of foreign economic aid, the type of aid more closely resembling income redistribution, when they are asked about foreign aid in general.

I use OLS regressions to test the hypotheses. The dependent variable, *Aid Support*, is regressed on *Ideology*, *Internationalism*, and an interaction term *Ideology\*Internationalism*. The models include a number of control variables as well. Where available, I control for standard individual-level characteristics such as age, gender, race, education, and work status, as well as respondents' assessment of the state of the national economy. Previous research suggests that foreign policy orientation may be associated with subjective assessments of the state of the economy (Kertzer, 2013) and these subjective assessments may also be associated with support for foreign aid, particularly if respondents believe the U.S. cannot afford to spend money on overseas programs. Thus, I control for these subjective assessments in

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<sup>24</sup>Results based on each survey year are not reported here for ease of presentation. In every year included in the dataset, except for 1996, the results are consistent. It is unclear why the results are different for 1996, though this was the year the U.S. government debated and passed welfare reform.



order to eliminate bias associated with any short-term judgments about how well the U.S. economy is doing.<sup>25</sup>

I find significant support for the predictions from the interactionist model of foreign aid attitudes. The coefficients from the OLS regression models can be found in Table 1. For both the ANES and Chicago Council surveys, I display the coefficients from OLS models with and without the interaction term. As can be seen in Models 1, 3, and 5, *Ideology* and *Internationalism* are both significant predictors of support for foreign aid, the relationships are in the expected direction (positive associations for both), and are similar in magnitude across the ANES and CC surveys. Turning to the core hypotheses of the theory, one can see in Models 2, 4, and 6, that the coefficient on the interaction term between *Ideology* and *Internationalism* is statistically significant in all models suggesting that ideology and foreign policy orientation interact to shape foreign aid attitudes.<sup>26</sup> I estimate the marginal effects of *Ideology* and *Internationalism* on the predicted probability of supporting foreign aid from the interaction model. These probabilities are displayed graphically in Figure 1 for the ANES data and Figure 2 for the CC surveys.

The data reveal that among isolationists, there is a weaker relationship between ideology and foreign aid (H1b). Isolationist liberals are slightly more supportive of foreign aid than isolationist conservatives. The expected strong, positive association is found among internationalists (H1a). Internationalist liberals are substantially more likely to support foreign aid than internationalist conservatives. The difference in the predicted probability of supporting foreign aid is a little over 0.10 for the ANES study and more than three times that size for the Chicago Council surveys. Taken together, these findings support hypotheses H1a and H1b.

Turning to foreign policy orientation, I also find support for hypotheses H2a and to a

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<sup>25</sup>In the SI, I report robustness checks that include additional control variables. The results hold.

<sup>26</sup>In the SI, I replicate this table using the full three categories (increase, keep the same, and decrease) of *Aid Support*. The results are the same.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Ideology	0.06*** (0.008)	0.01 (0.017)	0.19*** (0.011)	0.14*** (0.021)	0.15*** (0.013)	0.07*** (0.026)
Internationalism	0.21*** (0.015)	0.16*** (0.022)	0.21*** (0.019)	0.15*** (0.025)	0.27*** (0.023)	0.20*** (0.031)
Ideology*Internationalism		0.06*** (0.019)		0.07*** (0.024)		0.10*** (0.030)
Education	-0.00 (0.008)	-0.00 (0.008)	0.02*** (0.005)	0.02*** (0.005)	0.02*** (0.005)	0.02*** (0.005)
Woman	0.05*** (0.013)	0.05*** (0.013)	0.00 (0.018)	0.00 (0.018)	-0.04* (0.021)	-0.04* (0.021)
Age	-0.00 (0.000)	-0.00 (0.000)	-0.00 (0.001)	-0.00 (0.001)	-0.00 (0.001)	-0.00 (0.001)
White	-0.11*** (0.015)	-0.12*** (0.015)	-0.04* (0.021)	-0.04* (0.021)	-0.04 (0.024)	-0.04 (0.024)
Employed	-0.05*** (0.015)	-0.05*** (0.015)	-0.02 (0.020)	-0.03 (0.020)	-0.01 (0.023)	-0.01 (0.023)
National Economy	0.04*** (0.011)	0.04*** (0.011)				
Constant	0.26*** (0.039)	0.31*** (0.041)	-0.01 (0.057)	0.05 (0.060)	0.04 (0.070)	0.10 (0.073)
Survey	ANES	ANES	CC 2017	CC 2017	CC 2020	CC 2020
Observations	5,570	5,570	2,664	2,664	2,034	2,034
R-squared	0.08	0.08	0.16	0.17	0.15	0.16

Note: The table reports OLS coefficient estimates. The dependent variable is a binary indicator coded 1 if respondents want to expand or keep the same foreign aid spending and coded 0 if respondents want to cut it. Higher values of ideology correspond to the liberal end of the spectrum. Heteroskedastic - consistent robust standard errors are in parentheses. ANES models also include year fixed effects. All results are unweighted. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 1: **Predictors of Foreign Aid Support in CC and ANES Surveys**

lesser extent, H2b. The strongest association between foreign policy orientation and support for foreign aid is among liberals (H2a), while the effect of foreign policy orientation is weaker among conservatives. The magnitude of the effect among conservatives is somewhat surprising even if it is less than the magnitude of the effect among liberals. These findings suggest that for foreign aid, internationalist conservatives may be significantly more likely to support foreign aid than isolationist conservatives as foreign aid may still be used for strategic purposes that internationalist conservatives are willing to support. Indeed, past work has shown that political parties may have strong preferences for different sectors of and

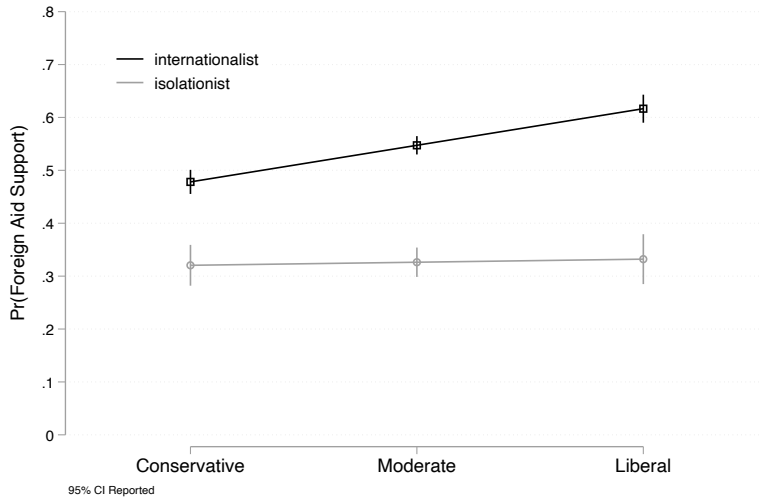


Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities of Foreign Aid Support by Ideology and Internationalism, ANES

(a) Chicago Council 2017

(b) Chicago Council 2020

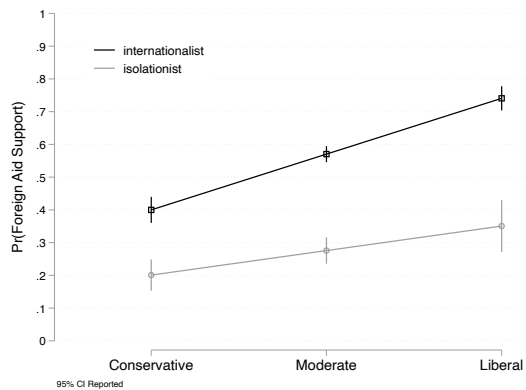
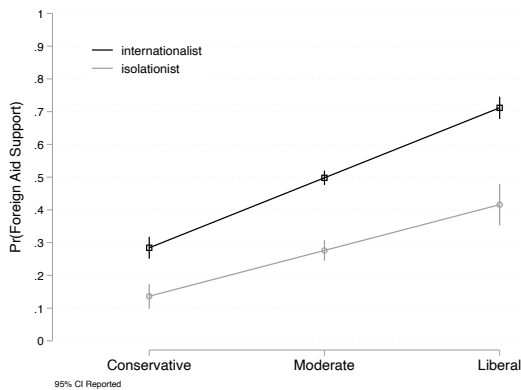


Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities of Foreign Aid Support by Ideology and Internationalism, Chicago Council

purposes for foreign aid (Greene and Licht, 2018). Together, this analysis provides support for the interactionist theory proposed in the manuscript and demonstrates its significance across more than three decades of American public opinion.

## Understanding the Liberal Split: Analysis of Core Values

The rest of the analysis in this section focuses on the findings from the YouGov survey. I begin by testing the hypotheses related to foreign aid that were first supported using the CC and ANES data. Following this discussion, I examine the core values leading internationalist liberals to greater support for foreign aid than isolationist liberals.

First, I show that the findings from the CC and ANES data replicate in the YouGov survey. The coefficients from the OLS regression models of *Aid Support* can be found in Table 2. Model 2 holds the results from the interactive model and Figure 3 holds the marginal effects. The figure clearly provides evidence in favor of the interactionist model. Beginning with H1a and H1b, there is a strong association between ideology and support for foreign aid among internationalists, while this association is much weaker among isolationists. The difference in probability of supporting foreign aid between internationalist liberals and internationalist conservatives is 0.43, while this difference is considerably smaller between isolationist liberals and conservatives at only 0.16. Moreover, confirming H2a and H2b, *Internationalism* has no effect on support for foreign aid among conservatives – a change in predicted probability of only 0.04. The effect among liberals on the other hand is dramatic. The change in predicted probability between internationalist liberals and isolationist liberals is significantly larger at 0.28, with internationalist liberals much more likely to support foreign aid than isolationist liberals. These findings provide strong evidence in favor of the theory presented here and confirm the hypotheses derived from it.

Finally, the YouGov survey allows me to examine the potential mechanism behind the split between liberal internationalists and isolationists. Specifically, this data can explore the extent to which the core value of ethnocentrism can help explain why internationalist liberals are significantly more supportive of foreign aid than isolationist liberals. To adjudicate between H3 and H4, I use a question that follows the news article vignette. The question measures the extent to which individuals identify with the recipients of the foreign aid

	Model 1	Model 2
Ideology	0.17*** (0.029)	0.10** (0.041)
Internationalism	0.13*** (0.043)	0.03 (0.055)
Ideology*Internationalism		0.12** (0.051)
Education	0.01 (0.022)	0.01 (0.022)
Woman	-0.00 (0.041)	0.00 (0.041)
Age	-0.00** (0.001)	-0.00** (0.001)
White	-0.16*** (0.050)	-0.16*** (0.050)
Employed	-0.05 (0.046)	-0.05 (0.046)
National Economy	0.08*** (0.031)	0.08** (0.031)
Constant	0.41*** (0.110)	0.47*** (0.111)
Observations	469	469
R-squared	0.22	0.23

Note: The table reports OLS coefficient estimates. The dependent variable is a binary indicator coded 1 if respondents said officials should not cut the aid program and coded 0 if respondents said officials should cut the aid program. Higher values of ideology correspond to the liberal end of the spectrum. The YouGov models also include binary indicators for two other independently-randomized treatments. Heteroskedastic - consistent robust standard errors are in parentheses. All results are unweighted. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Table 2: **Predictors of Foreign Aid Support in YouGov 2013**

program. It asks respondents whether they agree (1) or disagree (0) that they have ideas and interests in common with the recipients of the foreign aid program (*In-Group*). A more general version of this latter question has appeared in previous work on social identity theory

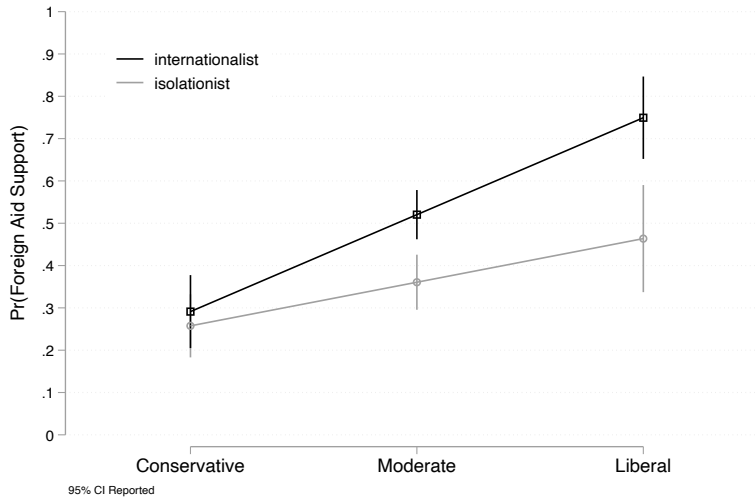


Figure 3: **Predicted Probabilities of Foreign Aid Support by Ideology and Internationalism, YouGov**

and has been used by scholars to measure the social groups individuals identify as their in-group (Wong, 2010). I also ask a second question to measure the extent to which different beliefs about the moral obligations of government explain the split between internationalist and isolationist liberals. As noted in the theory, it may be that moral obligations shape liberal thinking on foreign aid, but these concerns are not related to in-group loyalty. The question asks respondents whether they agree (1) or disagree (0) with the statement that the U.S. government has a moral obligation to help the recipients of the foreign aid program (*Obligation*).

In a sample from the YouGov survey that is restricted to liberals, I use probit regressions to estimate the effect of foreign policy orientation on *In-Group* and *Obligation*. These models can be found in Table 3. For ease of interpretability, I estimate the predicted probabilities from Model 2 of each dependent variable and display them in Figure 4 below. I do not find support for H3, as the effect of foreign policy orientation on *In-Group* is not significant at traditional levels. The substantive size of the effect is also relatively small. The predicted

	In-Group 1	In-Group 2	Obligation 1	Obligation 2
Internationalism	0.33 (0.239)	0.30 (0.253)	1.21*** (0.275)	1.22*** (0.292)
Education		0.23* (0.125)		0.34** (0.158)
Woman		0.09 (0.243)		0.01 (0.313)
Age		-0.00 (0.007)		-0.01 (0.009)
White		-0.32 (0.279)		-0.18 (0.363)
Employed		-0.06 (0.265)		-0.05 (0.317)
National Economy		0.01 (0.174)		0.00 (0.191)
Constant	-0.03 (0.237)	-0.16 (0.520)	0.05 (0.265)	-0.09 (0.661)
Observations	122	122	122	122
Pseudo R2	0.02	0.05	0.17	0.23
Log likelihood	-82.79	-80.51	-53.51	-49.96

Note: The table reports probit coefficient estimates. The sample size is limited to liberals in the foreign aid treatment condition. The dependent variable, In-Group, is coded 1 if the respondent views the foreign aid recipients as part of her in-group and 0 if she does not. The dependent variable, Obligation, is coded 1 if the respondent believes the U.S. government has a moral obligation to help the foreign aid recipients and 0 if she does not. All models include binary indicators for two other independently-randomized treatments. Heteroskedastic - consistent robust standard errors are in parentheses. All results are unweighted. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 3: Identification with Recipients and Beliefs about Moral Obligation among Liberals**

probability that internationalist liberals view foreign aid recipients as a part of their in-group is only 0.12 greater than isolationist liberals. Moreover, in the SI, I also show that internationalist liberals and isolationist liberals have similar levels of ethnocentrism as measured in the standard way in the literature (Kinder and Kam, 2009). These findings therefore support H4 and suggest that ethnocentrism is an unlikely core value that explains the split between

internationalist and isolationist liberals.

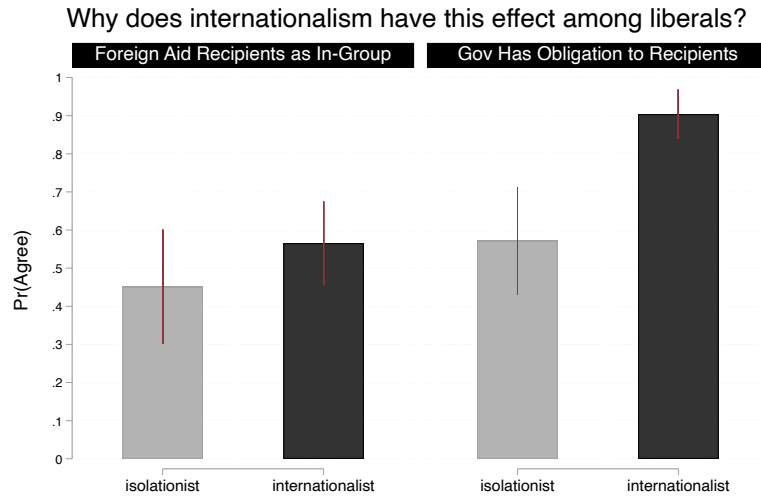


Figure 4: **Core Values and the Split Among Liberals**

Nevertheless, the data show that there is a strong relationship between foreign policy orientation and beliefs about the moral obligation of the U.S. government to help the foreign recipients. The model predicts that internationalist liberals are highly likely to agree that the U.S. government has a moral duty to help the recipients of the foreign aid program. Their predicted probability is 0.90. On the other hand, isolationist liberals only agree around half of the time, with a predicted probability of only 0.57. It is therefore evident that moral beliefs about the duties of the government to foreigners vary dramatically between internationalist and isolationist liberals. The effect of foreign policy orientation on liberal beliefs about the moral obligation of the government is quite large resulting in a change of probability between the two liberal camps of 0.33.<sup>27</sup> Although a limitation of this work is that it cannot identify *which* moral values liberals are relying on, it rules out an important variable in the

<sup>27</sup>Although there is a strong difference between internationalist liberals and isolationist liberals in their beliefs about government's moral obligations to foreigners, one might expect them to have similar beliefs about government's obligations to help co-citizens. In a figure in the SI, one can see that isolationist liberals and internationalist liberals have similar, strong beliefs that the U.S. government has a moral obligation to help domestic recipients of poverty relief programs.



literature—ethnocentrism—and encourages future work on other moral values.

The combined evidence from U.S. survey data shows that ideology and foreign policy orientation interact to shape foreign aid attitudes. This conditional relationship is identified in the Chicago Council and ANES using data from 1990-2020 and in an original survey fielded in 2013. I further demonstrate that foreign policy orientation affects the relationship between ideology and foreign aid attitudes by constraining isolationist liberals who do not externalize their support for domestic redistribution to the international context. This is not however due to a difference in the degree to which internationalist liberals and isolationist liberals identify with foreign recipients. These results therefore suggest that core values other than ethnocentrism underpin the beliefs of liberals across the internationalist-isolationist spectrum.

These results provide significant insight into why American support for foreign aid is so low. Indeed, it is well known that Americans are quick to want to cut foreign aid and it is often the first policy on the chopping block when Americans are asked to eliminate a program. While past research would suggest that this is because Americans generally do not favor policies that include a redistributive element, I show that in fact the base of support for foreign aid in the U.S. is even weaker. Even those who are favorable towards redistribution may not extend this support to foreign aid. Thus, American support for foreign aid continues to be dramatically low because liberals, who should be the base of support for redistribution, are divided by their foreign policy orientation.

## **Generalizability**

Two limitations to the above analyses are that the hypotheses are only tested using American public opinion and they do not test whether the theory helps explain variation in foreign aid *policy*. Thus, in this section, I examine the generalizability of the findings in two ways. First,

while there is no expectation that the theory should operate differently across countries, I use data from the UK and Norway – two important donor countries – to confirm the theory there. Second, I provide suggestive evidence below that understanding how foreign policy orientation and ideology interact, can also explain variation in cross-national spending on foreign aid.

## Public Opinion in Other Donor Countries

I collect data from two additional donor countries – the United Kingdom and Norway – using original surveys fielded in 2014. Although these cases were chosen partially for practical reasons and data availability, they are also important foreign aid donors. In 2013, the UK was second only to the United States in its spending on official development assistance. When one weights these spending figures by GNI, however, it is Norway, and not the U.S. or UK, which appears the most generous. Thus, if we want to understand public opinion in countries important to the global foreign aid regime, these are two of the other leading foreign aid donors.

The UK data was collected in a panel survey fielded in March and April of 2014 using the survey firm Survey Sampling International. The vignette is largely the same as in the U.S. study, as is the dependent variable.<sup>28</sup> The dependent variable also asks respondents whether or not the respondent believes the government should cut or should not cut an aid program (called *Aid Support*). Around 68% of respondents said they wanted to cut the program, while only 32% of the respondents said they wanted to keep the program. The British respondents are about ten percentage points less supportive of foreign aid than the U.S. respondents and significantly less supportive than the Norwegian respondents as we will see.

The key independent variables vary slightly from the U.S. models. First, *Ideology* is

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<sup>28</sup>See the SI for an image of the vignette shown to British respondents.

measured using a question taken from the British Election Study. This question asks respondents to place themselves on a ten-point scale where “right” is defined as one end of the scale and “left” is defined as the other end. Second, *Internationalism* is measured using a question that asks respondents about British intervention in international politics, but in a more narrow way than the U.S. study. The question asked respondents the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement “The UK needs to play an active role in solving conflicts around the world”. I code those who “agree strongly” or “agree somewhat” with the statement as 1 and those who disagree or are uncertain as 0. Although this question may introduce some measurement error into my analysis, it is the best available in the survey. Third, I control for the same demographic factors of respondents as well, except for one. The UK survey does not have a measure of respondents’ perceptions of the national economy. Instead, I use a more narrow question that measures respondents’ perceptions of the effects of foreign aid on the national economy.<sup>29</sup>

Figure 5 holds the marginal effects of *Ideology* and *Internationalism* on the predicted probability of supporting the aid program (regression table in the SI). These are derived from a model that regresses *Aid Support* on the control variables and the interaction between *Internationalism* and *Ideology*. The pattern is nearly identical to that observed in the U.S. At the conservative end of the distribution of *Ideology*, *Internationalism* has little effect on support for foreign aid. Both isolationist conservatives and internationalist conservatives are similarly opposed to the foreign aid program. It is not until we reach the middle of the ideological scale that we start to see a separation between isolationists and internationalists. At the liberal end of the scale, a wide gap opens up. The difference in the probability of supporting the aid program between isolationist liberals and internationalist liberals is around 0.20, or almost the identical results as were obtained in the U.S. YouGov survey

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<sup>29</sup>The question asked respondents the extent to which they believed the UK economy would benefit from the foreign aid program described in the vignette.

fielded in 2013.

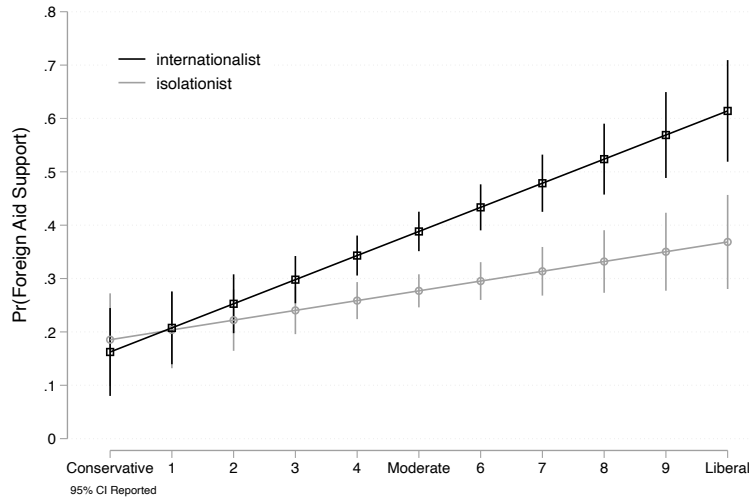


Figure 5: **Predicted Probabilities of Foreign Aid Support by Ideology and Internationalism, UK 2014**

Turning to Norwegian public opinion, I fielded an original survey as a part of the Norwegian Citizen Panel in October and November of 2014. The questionnaire differed more substantially from the U.S. and UK designs. The dependent variable is a question that asks respondents to assess whether the Norwegian government should increase, decrease, or maintain the present level of government spending on foreign aid. I create two different dependent variables from these responses. The first variable is a binary indicator coded 1 if the respondent said maintain or increase foreign aid spending and coded 0 if the respondent said to cut spending on foreign aid. This variable most closely mirrors the dependent variable from the UK and U.S. surveys. The distribution of this variable demonstrates that Norwegians are significantly more supportive of foreign aid than either the American or British respondents. 77% of Norwegian respondents said they wanted the government to increase or maintain current spending levels on foreign aid compared to only 23% who said they wanted to cut it. Because Norwegians are significantly more supportive of foreign aid than either the UK

and U.S. respondents, I also use a trichotomous variable with three categories for decrease, maintain, and increase, in order to explore the upper range of the distribution.

The measures of *Internationalism* and *Ideology* are more similar to what has been used in the U.S. and UK surveys. First, the question that measures *Internationalism* mirrors exactly that used in the U.S. surveys. Respondents were asked whether they think it is best for the future of Norway if Norway plays an active role in international politics (coded 1) or takes a more reduced role (coded 0). Second, the measure of *Ideology* is the same as that used in the UK survey. Respondents were asked to place themselves on a ten-point scale where one end of the scale corresponded to “left” and the other end of the scale corresponded to “right”. Although these independent variables are similar to what was used in the previous studies, the control variables vary somewhat. I measure respondents education, gender, age, employment status, and their perception of the national economy. The survey, however, lacks a measure of respondents’ racial background, which is not common on surveys in Norway and thus is not included on the instrument fielded to the Citizen Panel. I considered using a measure of respondents’ immigration history, however, that question was not asked to a third of the sample. Thus, I opt to simply not include a measure of racial background in the Norwegian models.

Figure 6 holds the predicted probabilities from OLS regression models of the binary indicator for foreign aid support that includes the interaction between *Ideology* and *Internationalism* (regression table located in the SI). There are two key elements of this figure of importance to this study. The first is that the relationship between ideology and support for foreign aid among internationalists is difficult to discern in its entirety. This is because the liberal end of the ideological spectrum is characterized by almost unanimous support in favor of maintaining or increasing foreign aid spending. In other words, there is a ceiling effect that appears to constrain what would otherwise be an even stronger correlation between ideology and support for foreign aid among internationalists. It also makes the interactive

hypothesis difficult to confirm. This is the second issue of importance. Although, this figure is suggestive of an interaction as there is a slightly weaker correlation between ideology and support for foreign aid among isolationists. The relationship between internationalism and ideology appears to be more additive than interactive.

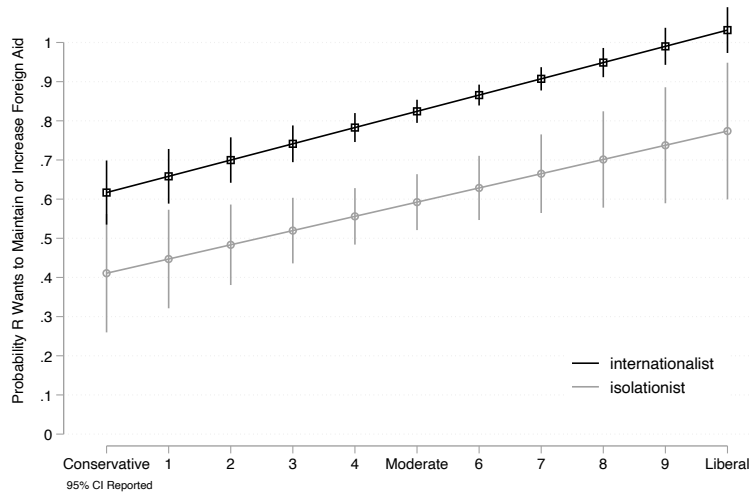


Figure 6: **Predicted Probabilities of Foreign Aid Support (Maintain and Increase) by Ideology and Internationalism, Norway 2014**

To examine whether it may be easier to observe the interaction at the upper end of support for foreign aid, I employ an ordered probit model and use the trichotomous measure of foreign aid support. Figure 7 holds the predicted probability that a respondent wants to *increase* foreign aid (not just maintain it) based on the ordered probit model. Here the expected pattern is much more apparent. There is a strong, positive association between ideology and support for increasing foreign aid among internationalists, while the relationship is much weaker for isolationists. Moreover, there is almost no difference among conservatives in their opposition to increasing foreign aid. Among liberals, however, a wide gap opens up with internationalist liberals significantly more likely to want to increase foreign aid than isolationist liberals. The difference is substantively quite large with the probability of

wanting to increase foreign aid among the most internationalist liberals at 0.58 and the same probability among the most isolationist liberals at only 0.22.

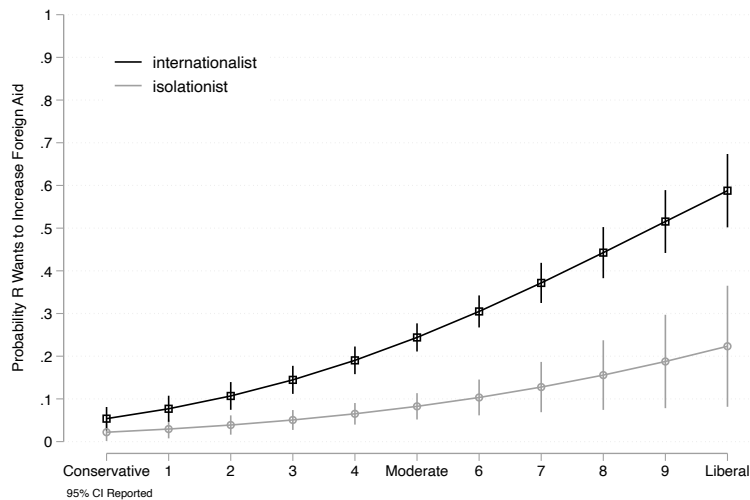


Figure 7: **Predicted Probabilities of Support for Increased Foreign Aid by Ideology and Internationalism, Norway 2014**

The findings from the UK and Norway provide evidence that theory developed in this article applies to other important donor countries. Like in the United States, there is a significant interaction between ideology and foreign policy orientation that shapes British attitudes towards foreign aid. Given Britain’s turn towards isolationism and the rise of isolationist parties like the United Kingdom Independence Party, these findings provide a window into the potential future of British foreign aid. The findings from Norway also demonstrate that the theory helps explain attitudes in other countries. Although the relationship between ideology, foreign policy orientation, and foreign aid appeared more additive than interactive at first glance, this result seems to be more an artifact of the high levels of support for foreign aid there. Where the theory really seems to take hold is in explaining who in Norway wants to see foreign aid increased. Although not quite as isolationist yet as other European countries, Norway too has had its share of issues surrounding redistribution and foreigners.

These issues have tended to be related to the domestic welfare state and immigration, but could extend to foreign aid.

## **Cross-National Variation in Foreign Aid Spending**

What are the implications of the individual-level findings for cross-national variation in foreign aid spending? Can the theory developed here help us understand why some countries are generous at home but more stingy abroad and others are generous in both contexts? Most donor countries are democracies. Thus, the public's level of internationalism and also their ideology could affect foreign aid policy outcomes in at least two ways. First, citizens can hold politicians accountable at the ballot box by voting for politicians who enact policies in line with their preferences and voting out politicians who do not. Second, politicians themselves are drawn from a pool of citizens and reflect the values and traditions of the societies in which they live. Specifically, we would expect that in countries with high levels of societal internationalism, welfare spending would be strongly correlated with foreign aid spending, but for countries with low levels of societal internationalism, this relationship would be significantly attenuated.

Using data on social benefits spending, societal internationalism, and foreign aid spending, I show that the pattern identified at the individual level, also holds cross-nationally at the country level. For social spending data, I draw on the OECD's Social Expenditure Database. This database includes a measure of public social spending as a percentage of GDP.<sup>30</sup> For internationalism, I follow Fuchs, Dreher and Nunnenkamp (2014) and draw on the KOF Globalization Index. Specifically, I look to the *Social* Globalization index which scores countries based on the interpersonal, informational, and cultural connections they

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<sup>30</sup>According to the OECD, public social spending includes “financial flows controlled by General Government (different levels of government and social security funds), as social insurance and social assistance payments.” More information here: <https://www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm>



have abroad.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the dependent variable is official development assistance (ODA) spending as a percentage of gross national income. These data also come from the OECD.<sup>32</sup> The data cover years 2014 to 2020 and include 33 traditional and emerging foreign aid donor countries.

Figure 8 shows the relationship between social spending levels and the social globalization index. As can be seen in the figure, there is significant variation across the variables in terms of countries that are above and below average on both variables as indicated by the dashed lines in the figure. To more clearly illustrate which countries fall above and below average for each of these variables, we can see in Table 9 the names of the countries and where they fall for the majority of the years.

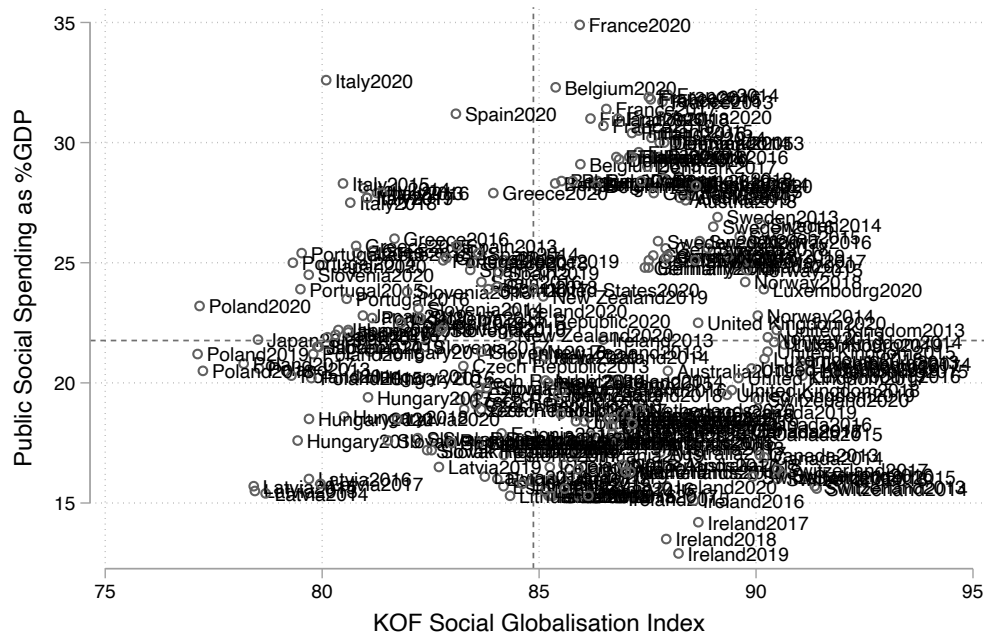
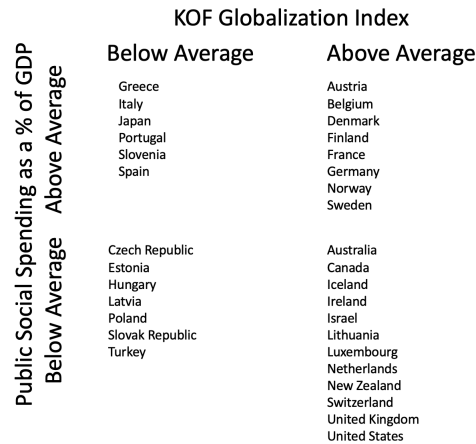


Figure 8: Cross-national Variation in Social Spending and Internationalism, All Countries, All years

<sup>31</sup>More information here: <https://kof.ethz.ch/en/forecasts-and-indicators/indicators/kof-globalisation-index.html>

<sup>32</sup>Data access and information here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=Table5>



**Figure 9: Cross-national Variation in Social Spending and Internationalism, List of All Countries, All years**

To explore these relationships further, I employ an OLS regression model that regresses the ODA variable on public social spending, the KOF Social Globalization score, and the interaction between the two. Furthermore, for ease of presentation and to complement the figures from the survey data, I also create a binary indicator for the KOF Social Globalization score that codes country-years above the sample mean as 1 (labeled internationalists) and those below the mean as 0 (labeled isolationists). I also include year fixed effects in all models. Table 4 includes the coefficients from the OLS models with the continuous measure of the social globalization index as well as the binary indicator. As can be seen in the table, when the interaction term is not included, both social spending and internationalism are positively and significantly associated with more foreign aid spending. We can also see the interaction term is positive and significant. To better understand the relationship, I produce Figure 10 that shows the predicted levels of ODA spending as a percent GNI taken from Model 4 in Table 4. The figure clearly shows that in years that countries are more isolationist, more social spending actually has a negative relationship with spending on foreign aid. However, in years that countries are more internationalist, social spending has

the expected positive relationship. These results contribute further to our understanding that the predicted relationship between welfare and foreign aid is conditional on foreign policy orientation.<sup>33</sup>

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Public Social Spending	0.01*** (0.004)	-0.57*** (0.042)	0.01*** (0.003)	-0.01** (0.005)
KOF Social Globalization Index	0.02*** (0.004)	-0.10*** (0.009)		
Internationalism			0.29*** (0.032)	-0.40*** (0.140)
Public Social Spending*KOF		0.01*** (0.001)		
Public Social Spending*Internationalism				0.03*** (0.006)
Constant	-1.37*** (0.317)	8.69*** (0.763)	-0.01 (0.082)	0.45*** (0.120)
Year Fixed Effects	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	262	262	262	262
R2	0.13	0.51	0.29	0.35

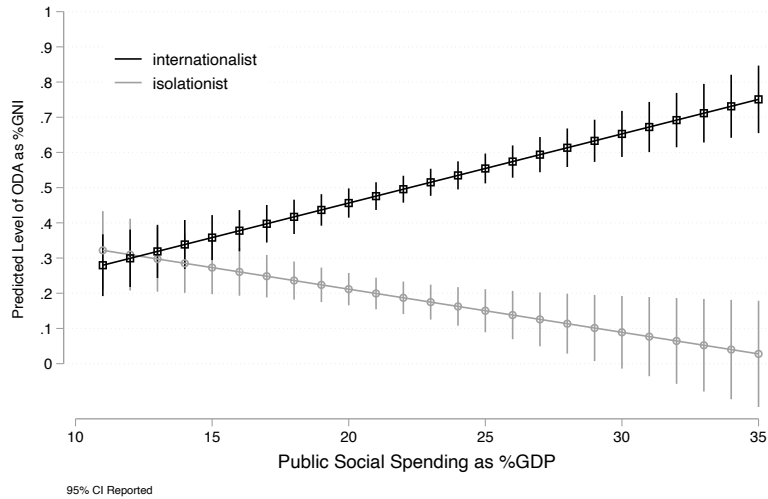
Note: The table reports OLS coefficient estimates. The dependent variable is ODA as a % GNI. Internationalism is a binary indicator coded 1 if a country-year has a score on the KOF Social Globalization Index above the sample mean and coded 0 if the country-year scores below the mean. Standard errors reported in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 4: **Explaining Cross-national Variation in Foreign Aid Spending in Years 2014-2020**

## Conclusion

The theory and evidence presented here provide new insights into the relationship between ideology and foreign aid. The review of the literature demonstrates that prior research

<sup>33</sup>Additional exploration of the generalizability of the individual-level findings to explain cross-national variation in foreign aid spending can be found in the SI using World Values Survey data to explain foreign aid spending levels.



**Figure 10: Predicted Level of ODA as % GNI by Public Social Spending as %GDP and Internationalism**

assumes that liberal ideological values are associated with support for foreign aid. Yet, I argue that for some individuals these values may stop at the water’s edge. My theory proposes that support for foreign aid also requires that individuals want their government to be actively involved in world affairs, otherwise their support for government intervention in the domestic economy does not translate to the international marketplace. Using data from the U.S., UK, and Norway, I confirm the hypotheses drawn from the theory demonstrating the conditional relationship between values and foreign policy orientation and showing how they work together to shape foreign aid attitudes. Moreover, I show that foreign policy orientation conditions liberal support for foreign aid not due to an underlying difference in ethnocentrism between isolationist liberals and internationalist liberals, but rather due to principled beliefs about the moral obligations of government to help foreign citizens. Finally, I find that the theory sheds new light on variation in foreign aid spending across donors.

These findings have a number of implications for foreign aid and international relations more generally. First, I provide evidence that the theory developed here can help explain not

just public attitudes towards foreign aid, but cross-national patterns of foreign aid spending as well. Future work could build on this research by examining the interaction between ideology and foreign policy orientation using different measures of internationalism at the country-level and exploring the interaction between social welfare values and foreign policy orientation among policymakers. If the results hold, the implications for the politics of foreign aid are clear. While the existing literature would suggest that a decrease in support for domestic redistribution is the most likely factor to produce a decrease in foreign aid spending, my work suggests that an increase in isolationism could have a similar effect. For example, it appears that in many donor states, including the U.S. and Europe, isolationism is on the rise among the public. This may then lead to a decrease in spending on foreign aid even though it is unlikely that domestic welfare budgets would decrease.

Second, beyond foreign aid, this work has implications for explaining variation in foreign policy preferences more generally. Given that core values and beliefs are learned in a social context (Feldman, 1988), and the most immediate contexts for individuals are the interpersonal and domestic domains, then we might expect this theory to be applicable to a wider set of foreign policy issues. That is to say, foreign policy orientation may govern the expression of other domestic political values in the international context. For example, Liberman (2006) examines the role of retributive values in shaping support for war. He argues that a proxy for these values in the domestic context is support for the death penalty. Following a similar logic to that of the relationship between domestic and foreign redistribution, he proposes that beliefs about government punishment in the domestic context will be associated with beliefs about government punishment abroad. Does foreign policy orientation govern the extent to which these retributive beliefs come to bear on support for war? Future work could test the theory on a wide range of domestic and foreign policy cognates, pushing the research agenda on norm externalization at the individual level even further.

Third, this study has implications for theories about the structure of foreign policy atti-

tudes. As previously noted, one of the early observations in the literature on foreign policy preferences was that foreign aid attitudes lack structure and a sign of this was that there appeared to be inconsistencies across the domestic and foreign policy contexts in individual attitudes. My work suggests that this inconsistency could yet be structured by an individual's foreign policy orientation. Rather than a signal that individual attitudes are fleeting or uninformed, it may be that certain individuals prefer government policies in the domestic context but oppose them or prefer different policies in the international domain. Again, future work looking at a large set of domestic and foreign policy pairs would help to make more sense of the exact nature of their relationship.

Finally, the research here showed that at least among American respondents liberals are relatively split between internationalists and isolationists on their foreign aid attitudes, but ethnocentrism does not appear to be the core value behind this split. Instead, I demonstrated that there was a large difference in beliefs about the moral obligation of the government to help foreign citizens. Future studies could be designed more directly to examine why internationalist liberals and isolationist liberals vary on this dimension, what are the moral values important to liberal thinking about foreign aid, and the implications of that split for other types of foreign policies.

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