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Explaining generosity: a comparison of US and European public opinion on foreign aid

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Whereas European public opinion generally supports foreign aid, the U.S. public is relatively critical of its proportionally smaller aid programs. This research uses cross-national, multivariate analysis of data from the World Values Survey to examine transatlantic differences in attitudes toward foreign aid programs. We find that a well-informed and financially comfortable public that associates foreign aid with their core values is more supportive of aid appropriations. Our research indicates that support for foreign aid is stronger in Europe because it coincides with European perceptions about the role of government in addressing social problems and greater European confidence in government institutions. This study provides evidence that the attitudes which provide the foundation for public support for domestic and international programs are linked. It also demonstrates that there are core value differences underpinning transatlantic gaps in public opinion.

Keywords: Public opinion; foreign aid; values; trust in government

Introduction

What explains differences in public attitudes toward foreign aid among donor countries? Polls conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project and the German Marshall Fund provide strong evidence that European and US views on foreign policy issues have diverged since 2000.¹ After a relatively brief period of cross-Atlantic unity following 11 September 2001, many Europeans became critical of American unilateralism under the Bush administration. The 2005 Pew report notes that most Europeans want to take a more independent approach from the US on security and diplomatic affairs. The Pew report also notes that opinion of the US continues to be mostly unfavourable among America's traditional allies. A range of issues have divided the two continents, including the war in Iraq, the policy of pre-emptive strikes, and non-tariff barriers to trade. Kagan has summed this up with the quaint aphorism that, 'Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus'.² Clearly, the US defiance of the UN and occupation of Iraq have polarised public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. Despite growing economic ties across the Atlantic, there are clear cross-national differences on a host of foreign policy issues. What is not clear, however, is whether these are temporary squabbles emerging from the presence of a particularly polarising American administration, or whether these are long-term differences based on diverging national cultures and values. To what extent are differences in attitudes on foreign policy issues related to recent events and to what extent are they emblematic of values and attitude differences?

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Table 1. Support for bilateral development aid

Country	Percent who support development aid, 2002
Austria	68.7
Belgium	75.0
Denmark	92.5
Finland	91.6
France	73.9
Germany	79.3
Greece	93.7
Ireland	84.9
Italy	92.5
Luxembourg	95.4
Netherlands	92.3
Portugal	77.5
Spain	88.1
Sweden	91.9
UK	78.3
USA	54.0

Source: Eurobarometer 58.2 (2003) and Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (2002), see note 3.

This paper examines one foreign policy issue area on which public attitudes between Europeans and Americans diverge. As Table 1 indicates, Americans and Europeans hold very different opinions on the importance of foreign aid programs. Polls indicate that over 90% of the population in Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden express support for bilateral development aid programs.³ Of all European countries, Austria is the country in which the smallest proportion of citizens indicates support for bilateral aid (69%). By contrast, in the US only 54% of those polled express support for aid programs.

This paper seeks to explore and explain these differences in cross-national opinion on foreign aid programs. The data in this paper suggest that support for aid programs is a function of core values and awareness of programs. If we generalise these findings to other foreign policy issue areas, then we begin to see cross-national cleavages in public opinion as a reflection of long-term, deeply-rooted differences between Europeans and Americans. If we assume that public opinion on foreign policy issues is a function of value systems and knowledge, then the differences of opinion between the US and Europe must be viewed as more systemic than transient. While it may seem that the Bush administration and the war on Iraq have divided US and European opinion, these recent phenomena may be seen as symptomatic of more fundamental cross-national differences.

Literature review

This research draws on a variety of literatures, from the very general literature on foreign policy and public opinion to specific research on the comparative impact of trust in government on public opinion. The 'Lippmann-Almond Consensus' holds that US public opinion on foreign policy is ill-informed and erratic. Early on,

theorists described foreign policy as loosely constrained by public opinion and portrayed public opinion as providing the 'permissive limits' or 'system of dikes' through which foreign policy could flow.⁴ According to this notion, a disinterested and volatile public would accept most foreign policy initiatives as long as the policies were within a range of acceptability. This conventional wisdom is widely criticised by scholars who have attempted to portray American opinion on foreign policy as more rational and consistent.⁵ Holsti and Wittkopf demonstrate that there are differences in US public opinion across foreign policy domains;⁶ public opinion can have a significant impact even on US military and defence policy.⁷ Variability in public attention to foreign policy seems to be related to media attention. Powlick and Katz argue that 'to activate the public, foreign policy issues must receive major media coverage'.⁸ Thus, foreign aid, an issue that receives comparatively little media coverage, is unlikely to generate informed or consistent public opinion.

Centralised foreign policy decision-making in many European states casts doubt on the relationship between public opinion on foreign policy there. Olsen examines the relationship between opinion and aid policy in France, UK, Germany, and Denmark, and finds evidence of a high degree of centralisation and a weak link between government and society in aid policy-making. He concludes that foreign aid policy-making in these cases is more 'top-down' than 'bottom-up'.⁹ On the other hand, Risse-Kappen argues that the relationship between opinion and policy is more complicated. Examining public opinion and foreign policy-making in four democracies (US, UK, Germany and Japan), Risse-Kappen finds that public opinion is a function of domestic structure and coalition-building processes.¹⁰

The relationship between knowledge and opinion in foreign policy-making is an important element of this research. A public that understands that the aid program is a relatively small part of the budget will be more inclined to support the program. Gilens argues that correct information in a variety of issue areas (including foreign aid) has a direct impact on public opinion. He notes that opposition to foreign aid declined by more than 13 percentage points when respondents possessed correct information.¹¹ There is ample evidence that US public opinion on foreign policy is ignorant, insular, and indifferent.¹² Studies indicate that there is a substantial gap between US and European foreign policy knowledge. Data from the Program on International Policy Attitudes demonstrates that a large percentage of Americans hold major misconceptions about the war in Iraq and provides recent evidence of an American public that is poorly informed about foreign affairs.¹³

The American politics literature indicates that US citizens are deeply distrustful of government,¹⁴ and that both social and political trust have declined over the past four decades.¹⁵ Putnam argues that political discontent has mushroomed during the past three decades and that today's cynical views undermine the political confidence necessary to motivate and sustain political involvement.¹⁶ Trust is an important factor in determining why Americans are more favourably disposed towards some programs than others.¹⁷ Uslander notes that trusting societies are more likely to redistribute resources from the rich to the poor.¹⁸ In Europe, researchers report varying levels of confidence in government institutions. Miller and Listhaug find that public opinion is more trusting in Norway than in other cases.¹⁹ Pharr *et al.* report an overall decline in public confidence in government across several countries, but they note important differences among country cases.²⁰ Overall, the literature

indicates declining public confidence in government institutions, but the most severe decline is in the United States.

Research into values and their impact on foreign policy is complicated. Core values are difficult to 'unpack' from one another and extremely difficult to quantify.²¹ With reference to foreign aid, for instance, it is difficult to determine how much American criticism of aid programs is based on attitudes toward personal responsibility and how much criticism is based on scepticism about the ability of government to solve those problems. In *American Exceptionalism*, Lipset notes that the US 'devotes less of its income to welfare and the state is less involved in the economy than is true for other developed countries'.²² He suggests that underlying American values such as individualism and 'antistatism' contribute to both low voter turnout and poor support for social aid programs. Lipset's work provides the foundation for our hypothesis that public scepticism and criticism of foreign aid is based on fundamental values and ideas. Other analysts of the transatlantic gap in public opinion attach less importance to the impact of values differences and contend that the values gap between leaders and citizens across countries is more substantial than the values gap between Americans and Europeans.²³

Thus, the literature on public opinion and foreign policy is wide ranging, but inconclusive. Research related to the United States demonstrates that opinion is poorly informed and volatile, but attitudes vary with the issue area and the level of media attention. Although US public opinion can be led, it is not wholly inconsistent, especially among foreign policy elites. In Europe, centralised foreign policy decision-making means that foreign policy is less contingent on public approval. Although political values and trust in government are factors in public opinion on domestic policies, the impact of these factors on foreign policy has not been determined in the US or in Europe.

Research design

Public opinion surveys indicate that the levels of support for foreign aid vary substantially across countries and individuals. The objective of this study is to determine what factors contribute to varying levels of public support for foreign aid among US and European donor countries. Other projects have examined aggregate cross-national data to identify causal relationships.²⁴ We cannot assume, however, that correlations found at the aggregate level will also exist at the individual level. Therefore, in this paper, we examine the question of popular support by analysing individual level data. We rely on data from the third wave of the World/European Values Survey.²⁵ To focus on transatlantic attitudinal differences, we include the United States and every European donor country (DAC member) for which data is available. The sample consists of 6395 respondents from the following countries, with the year of the survey noted: Finland 1996, Germany 1997, Norway 1996, Spain 1995, Sweden 1996, and United States 1995. Although the number of European countries included in the analysis is small, we do not believe that the sample is unrepresentative of European public opinion.²⁶

The model

This study examines public support for foreign aid as a function of knowledge, attitudes toward the appropriate role of government, confidence in government institutions, and economic circumstances in the donor countries. We also include a dummy variable to capture differences between the US and the European countries that are not explained by the other variables.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Aid opinion} = & a + \text{knowledge} + \text{economic circumstances} + \text{role of government} \\ & + \text{trust in government} + \text{US dummy} + e \end{aligned}$$

We examine each of these variables in the sections that follow. The cross-national model is estimated using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis.

The dependent variable

Attitudes toward foreign aid among donor populations are measured using question E129 of the World Values Survey (WVS). The text of the question follows:²⁷

Some people favor, and others are against, having this country provide economic aid to poorer countries. Do you think that this country should provide more or less economic aid to poorer countries? Would you say we should give ...

1. A lot more than we do now
2. Somewhat more than we do now
3. Somewhat less than we do now
4. A lot less than we do now

Table 2 below provides survey data by country. Note that 53% of Americans thought that 'somewhat more' or 'a lot more' aid should be provided. By contrast, 78% of Germans, 72% of Finns, 81% of Norwegians, 82% of Spaniards, and 82% of Swedes felt additional aid should be provided. A relatively large percentage (43%) of Americans felt that the US should provide 'somewhat less' or 'a lot less' foreign aid. This is more than double the percentage of respondents who advocate reductions in aid in Germany, Norway, Spain, and Sweden. Our model, then, includes four hypotheses to explain this cross-national variation in attitudes about foreign economic assistance.

Table 2. The dependent variable – public attitudes about foreign aid
Do you think that this country should provide more or less economic aid to poorer countries?

	Finland	Germany	Norway	Spain	Sweden	US
A lot more than we do now	14.7	17.8	21.8	31.9	34.8	5.6
Somewhat more than we do now	57.2	59.9	59.4	50.1	47.6	47.7
Somewhat less than we do now	19.3	17.1	15.3	11.5	12.7	28.3
A lot less than we do now	5.3	3.0	3.1	2.9	3.1	14.5
Don't know	3.5	2.2	0.4	3.6	1.9	3.8
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: World Value Survey/European Values Survey, 1995–7.

Hypothesis 1: Support for aid is positively associated with public knowledge of aid programs in the donor country

Polls conducted by the PIPA suggest that Americans are more likely to support US foreign aid programs when they are informed about the size of those programs.²⁸ Although other factors contribute to American lack of support for aid programs, to some extent American lack of support for aid is rooted in the tendency to exaggerate the size of that program. Europeans are more knowledgeable about aid programs and more supportive of those initiatives. Using data aggregated by country, Diven found a positive relationship between knowledge of foreign aid programs and support for those programs among donor countries.²⁹ One important explanation for lower levels of support for foreign aid is a lack of understanding about the size of those programs. Eight in 10 Americans claim that more than 3% of the federal budget is spent on foreign aid whereas the reality is that foreign aid comprised less than 1% of the budget in 2005.³⁰ In a 1995 report entitled 'Americans and Foreign Aid', PIPA found that Americans grossly inflated estimates of the aid budget.³¹ Asked to estimate how much of the federal budget goes to foreign aid, the median estimate was 15% of the US budget and the average estimate was 18%.³² When asked what an 'appropriate amount' of aid spending would be, the median response was 5% of the budget and the average was 8%. Writing in 'The Foreign Policy Gap', Kull *et al.* note, 'When respondents are asked to respond to correct information about the current level of foreign aid spending, an overwhelming majority find it unobjectionable.'³³

Americans also grossly overestimate US contributions to the United Nations. In a 2006 poll, Kohut and Stokes found that respondents supported UN appropriations that are substantially higher than actual appropriations.³⁴ Americans are also unable to make accurate comparative estimates of aid and other budget categories. Asked to compare US spending on foreign aid in relationship to US spending on Medicare, respondents typically overestimated the former. Rushefsky found that despite the fact that foreign aid is less than one-tenth the Medicare budget, the public believed foreign aid was larger.³⁵

Most Europeans are better able to estimate correctly the size of their country's aid program. Eurobarometer polls ask citizens to estimate the size of their country's development aid budget. Roughly 40% of those polled in Europe could correctly estimate the size of their country's aid budget.³⁶ As Table 3 indicates, public knowledge of aid spending was lower than in the US in only two European countries, Greece and Portugal. More than 50% of the public accurately assessed the percentage of the federal budget spent on foreign aid in the three Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, and Sweden).

In order to assess knowledge at the individual level (and thus not rely on country aggregate data) we use measures of political knowledge and political interest from the World Values Survey as proxies for direct knowledge of aid. Two measures were used to capture knowledge: (1) education level and (2) political interest. The first measure asks respondents to identify the highest level of education attained.³⁷ The second measure asks, 'how interested are you in politics?' Although neither of these measures refers specifically to aid, we assume that those with more education and more interest in politics are more likely to have accurate knowledge about aid programs. Assuming that better information creates support, we hypothesise that these variables will be positively and significantly related to public support for aid.

Table 3. Knowledge of foreign aid spending as percentage of federal budget

Country	Percent with accurate knowledge of government aid spending ^a
Austria	39.3
Belgium	28.6
Denmark	63.0
Finland	66.1
France	31.8
Germany	45.2
Greece	15.4
Ireland	29.2
Italy	23.5
Luxembourg	35.8
Netherlands	35.7
Portugal	13.3
Spain	21.9
Sweden	54.2
UK	34.9
USA	16.0

Source: Eurobarometer 58.2 (2003).

Note: ^aIn all country cases, responses were considered 'accurate' if they estimated that the percent of the central government budget spent on aid was 'less than 1%' or 'between 1 and 4%'.

Hypothesis 2: Support for aid is positively associated with satisfaction with economic circumstances of respondents in the donor country

The conventional wisdom is that public support for all budget outlays (domestic and international) increases during prosperous economic times. Thus, it stands to reason, that public support for foreign aid will be stronger in countries that are experiencing prosperity. Among those experiencing economic hardship, we expect less support for foreign aid spending. Eurobarometer polls indicate that domestic poverty and bad economic conditions are cited most frequently as justifications for those who oppose aid.³⁸ In his study of public opinion on development aid, Stern (1998) studies the relationship between support for aid and economic conditions across 17 countries in 1995. Stern suggests that income levels and economic growth rates should be positively correlated with support for aid. He looks for correlations between data on support for aid and three different indicators of economic well-being: GDP growth rates, unemployment figures, and the health of domestic government finances.³⁹ Rather than focus on aggregate economic statistics, our model uses a survey instrument that measures respondents' self-reported satisfaction with their financial situation. Clearly, public opinion on foreign aid is likely to be a function of people's perceptions of their economic well-being.

The WVS poses the following question:

How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? If "1" means you are completely dissatisfied on this scale, and "10" means you are completely satisfied, where would you put your satisfaction with your household's financial situation?

Responses are scored on a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 indicating the highest level of satisfaction. Our hypothesis is that those who are more comfortable with their own

economic status will be most likely to support government aid programs, so we anticipate a negative relationship between this variable and the dependent variable.

Hypothesis 3: Support for aid is negatively associated with the value placed on personal responsibility for providing for people in the donor country

This hypothesis asserts that public attitudes toward foreign aid are strongly associated with core values toward the role of government in providing for the social welfare of its citizens. Core values are difficult to separate from one another and their impact is extremely difficult to quantify. Acknowledging these issues, this research attempts to relate core values to public opinion on aid. We believe that public support for aid is related to one's vision of personal responsibility and social compassion. The scope and variety of domestic social welfare programs is evidence that people in some countries have a strong commitment to address the needs of their vulnerable populations. Values systems in other countries place a greater emphasis on individualism and equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcomes. Citizens in many European countries have been more willing to redistribute incomes than citizens in the US.

The World Values Survey/European Values Survey (WVS/EVS) has conducted large-scale cross-national polls that attempt to estimate the willingness of people to help those less fortunate. For the purpose of this study, we use WVS/EVS data that asks respondents to evaluate their feelings about government versus personal responsibility. Specifically, respondents are asked to give their answer on a ten-point scale in which (1) is 'People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves', and (10) is 'The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for.'

Table 4 provides the mean response from each country on this ten-point scale. A lower value on this scale indicates that the mean respondent places greater emphasis on personal responsibility. A higher value indicates an attitude that favours government responsibility to 'provide' for the needs of citizens. Citizens of Austria, France, the United States, and Sweden placed the greatest emphasis on personal responsibility whereas citizens in Spain, Italy and Belgium placed more emphasis on government responsibility. A problem with this measure is that respondents either may have a short-term interpretation of the question or they may interpret it overly generally. Therefore, we add a second, less temporally volatile, indicator of value structure, self-positioning on a left-right political spectrum. This item from the WVS reads as follows:

In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right.' How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?

The 'Role of Government' variable combines these two variables into an index which is then used to estimate the impact of values on public opinion.⁴⁰

Hypothesis 4: Higher levels of trust in domestic and international institutions of government are positively associated with public support for economic aid

In a democratic republic, citizens must place their faith in government representatives to make policies and implement programs in the public interest. When that trust

Table 4. Personal v. government responsibility scale

Country	Personal v. government responsibility scale
Austria	3.97
Belgium	5.13
Denmark	4.39
Finland	4.57
France	4.02
Germany	4.73
Ireland	4.58
Italy	5.63
Netherlands	4.68
Portugal	4.84
Spain	5.65
Sweden	4.24
UK	4.43
USA	4.29

1–10 Scale: 1 = 'Personal responsibility to provide' and 10 = 'Government responsibility to provide'.
Source: WVS/EVS 4th wave (1999–2000).

is challenged, public support for programs wanes. Eventually, trust in government institutions and the governing system itself may be jeopardised. Hetherington notes that trust is particularly important when the benefits of programs are not immediately apparent. He cites the example of public education and notes that support for public education is naturally higher among citizens with school-aged children. Among those without school-aged children, support or disapproval for government funding will be strongly influenced by the level of trust in government.⁴¹

In the case of foreign aid, citizens in donor countries must have confidence in their own governments and in the governments of recipient countries. Given the disconnect between the citizen donor/tax-payer and the recipient, a lack of confidence in the program is understandable. Indeed, one factor frequently cited among critics of foreign aid in Eurobarometer and PIPA polls is government corruption and military spending in recipient countries.⁴² In the PIPA polls, American respondents are overwhelmingly supportive of aid programs when they are told to assume that their aid money will have an important impact on the recipient population.⁴³ It is noteworthy that a sizeable proportion of respondents to the PIPA poll on foreign aid expressed fear that foreign aid would not be used effectively. When asked to give their best guess about 'what percentage of US aid money . . . ends up helping the people who really need it', the median estimate was just 10%.⁴⁴ Apparently, the survey respondents believe that 90% of the money never reaches those it is intended to help.

Thus, overall confidence in governing institutions may play an important role in determining public opinion on foreign aid. Because aid is provided through both bilateral and multilateral channels, citizens must have confidence that their taxes will be used effectively by both their own governments and the international organisations that provide foreign aid. We use two questions from the World Values Survey to

test the relationship between confidence in government and public opinion on aid funding. The wording of these questions is as follows:

I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?

... The government (in your nation's capital)

... The United Nations

We use these two variables to test whether public trust in both their own government and in international organisations is related to approval for aid funding. Although the United Nations is only one of many multilateral aid organisations, we believe that citizens who place greater trust in international organisations such as the United Nations will be more supportive of aid overall. Thus, we expect that the relationship between these independent variables and the dependent variable will be positive and significant in both cases.

The US dummy variable

Among the donor countries, the US is a more exceptional case than the other countries included in the sample. US public opinion on aid is clearly more negative than European public opinion on aid. The US is also the largest aid donor (by far) in the sample, although this is not true if one examines aid in relation to gross national income. In order to capture the impact of 'US exceptionalism' we created a 0-1 dummy variable (US = '1') to test whether American public opinion on aid is significantly different from public opinion on aid in the other country cases. We hypothesise that, when controlling for the other variables, Americans will be less likely to support high foreign aid appropriations.

Findings

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between public opinion on aid and (a) knowledge, (b) attitudes toward government versus personal responsibility, (c) perception of economic circumstances, and (d) confidence in government institutions. A dummy variable was also included to measure the uniqueness of US public opinion among donor countries.⁴⁵

The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 5. These results indicate that all variables were significantly related to public opinion on aid. As anticipated, US respondents had a substantially lower likelihood of supporting foreign aid. Both education and political interest, the independent variables used to estimate knowledge of foreign aid programs, had a strong, positive relationship with public opinion on aid. The independent variable indicating attitudes toward personal versus government responsibility in providing for the people is significantly related to public opinion on aid. The level of confidence expressed in the respondent's government and the United Nations is also positively and significantly related to opinions on aid. Finally, public opinion on aid is more positive when respondents are more comfortable with their own financial situation.

Table 5. Explaining public attitudes on economic aid to poorer countries OLS coefficients

Variable	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
(Constant)	2.011	.104		19.282	.000
Highest educational level	.067	.006	.135	11.006	.000
Interest in politics	.085	.016	.066	5.445	.000
Role of government	-.029	.004	-.092	-7.464	.000
Satisfaction with financial situation of household	-.031	.006	-.063	-5.196	.000
Confidence in the government	.139	.019	.091	7.354	.000
Confidence in the UN	.166	.018	.113	9.191	.000
US dummy variable	.783	.035	.267	22.049	.000

Adjusted *R* square = .139; *N* = 6395.

The adjusted *R*-squared for the model is .139, indicating that this model captures a relatively small share of the variation in public opinion on aid. In order to make full use of the World Values Survey (and thus be able to use data at the individual level) we used some measures that were less than ideal. For example, because there were no direct measures of knowledge of aid, we used levels of education and political interest as rough proxies. The degree to which these proxy variables deviate from true knowledge of aid reduces the model's goodness of fit and lowers the *R*-squared. We expect that if the survey questions were more directly linked to the variables then the *R*-squared would be higher.

Discussion

The results of the multiple regression analysis present straightforward evidence of the relationship between public opinion on foreign aid, knowledge of foreign aid programs, core national values, economic circumstances, and confidence in government. In addition, this research provides evidence that US public opinion on aid stands apart from other donor countries.

In countries where citizens are better informed about the magnitude of the aid program, a greater percentage of the population supports foreign assistance. Many Americans are critical of foreign aid, but they are also very poorly informed about the cost of the program as a share of the federal budget. Governments that seek greater support for international aid programs would be well-advised to educate their populations about the cost-effectiveness of foreign assistance. A public relations campaign that informed citizens that aid represents just 1% of the US budget would likely increase public support for aid among Americans. Not surprisingly, this research also demonstrates that people who are more comfortable with their own economic circumstances are more supportive of government spending on foreign aid.

This research indicates that important gaps between US and European opinion on foreign policies are based on values and attitudes, not just current events. Although it is tempting to think of the divergence in US and European foreign policy attitudes as bound by one administration or current events, there is evidence of a

lasting and substantial gap between Europeans and Americans on some measures of fundamental ideology. These differences in core values appear to have an impact on public opinion of foreign programs, including foreign aid. The continuum from government to personal responsibility measured by the World Values Survey is just one of the attitude cleavages that characterises the current ideological gap between the US and European citizens. Additional research should be undertaken to better understand the other values and attitudes that underlie the current rift in transatlantic relations.

Another important contribution of this project is highlighting the relationship between confidence in government institutions and public opinion on foreign programs. Whereas trust in government has long been known to be an important indicator of support for domestic programs such as education and health care, it is clear that public support of foreign programs is a function of confidence in government as well. In the case of foreign aid and other international programs, this trust must extend to both the domestic government and the international organisation or recipient government managing the program. The results of this research indicate that governments and international organisations that seek to improve public attitudes towards foreign aid may consider cultivating greater confidence in their institutions. This is especially true in the United States.

This examination of support for aid demonstrates that knowledge, economic comfort, ideology, and confidence in government are all important predictors of opinion on foreign policy. The finding that public opinion on foreign aid is based on long-term, fundamental differences between donor countries is important and should act as counterweight to political pundits who assume that the current chill in transatlantic relations is largely a function of a specific US administration. This study demonstrates that these differences are more deeply rooted and fundamental.

Notes

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2. Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).
3. Data on the levels of public support for foreign aid programs comes from the European Commission, *Eurobarometer 58.2 L'Aide aux Pays en Développement*, March 2003, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_184_fr.pdf. Question 2 asks, 'In your opinion, it is very important, important, not very important, or not at all important to help people in poor countries in Africa, South America, Asia etc to develop?' For the purposes of this study, we added together the percentage of respondents who indicated that it was 'very important' and 'important' into a measure of general public support for aid. The survey was conducted in 2002. The US data comes from: German Marshall Fund of the United States and Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 'Worldviews 2002: American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy' (Chicago: The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2002), <http://www.worldviews.org/detailreports/usreport.pdf>.
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26. A 1996 Eurobarometer survey that uses virtually the identical question as WVS/EVS indicates that the average level of support for higher foreign aid spending in our four EU countries, at 81.9%, is almost identical to the average for the entire EU-15 (81.7%). That year, popular support in Finland, Germany, and Sweden for higher levels of foreign aid spending was lower than the EU-15 average. In Spain, support for higher aid levels was above the EU-15 average. The 1996 WVS/EVS value for Norway (81.2%) is also very close to the EU-15 average for that year (see European Commission, *Eurobarometer 50.1 Europeans and Development Aid*, February 1999), http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_126_en.pdf.
27. In interpreting the regression analysis, it is important to note that support for 'a lot more' aid is coded with the lowest numeric value.
28. One PIPA report indicates that when asked how much money should be devoted to foreign aid, the majority of respondents propose an amount far higher than the actual amount. When asked for an 'appropriate amount', the median response was 10% of the federal budget. This is approximately 10 times the actual spending level. See, Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), 'Americans on Foreign Aid and World Hunger: A Study of U.S. Public Attitudes', February 2001, http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/ForeignAid/ForeignAid_Feb01/ForeignAid_Feb01_rpt.pdf
29. Diven, 'Values, Ignorance and Economics'.
30. Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *America Against the World: How We are Different and Why We are Disliked* (New York: Times Books, 2006), 188.
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32. To some extent, the enormous overestimation of the percentage of the federal budget devoted to foreign aid is based on PIPA methodology. When given more of a context in which to estimate budget categories (a list of 11 major budget categories of which one was foreign aid), respondents estimated that aid was about nine percent of the federal budget. While this is still a gross misperception, it is less severe than the PIPA surveys have indicated. See Polly Diven, 'Evaluating Public Opinion on Foreign Aid: Political and Methodological Issues' (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Los Angeles, March 14–18, 2000).
33. Steven Kull, I. M. Destler, and Clay Ramsay, 'The Foreign Policy Gap: How Policymakers Misread the Public' (College Park, MD: Program on International Policy Attitudes, Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, 1997), 108.
34. Kohut and Stokes, *America Against the World*.
35. Mark E. Rushefsky, *Public Policy in the United States: at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, 3rd ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).
36. This is a weighted average based on the population of the 15 countries as reported in *Eurobarometer 58.2*.
37. This variable is rescaled in reverse order from the original WVS question to allow for consistency in hypothesis wording.
38. Both *Eurobarometer 50.1* and *Eurobarometer 58.2* include, 'Reasons given to minimize the importance of development aid'. In both surveys, the most frequently cited reason is 'First, we should solve problems (poverty, unemployment, economy) in our country'. For the EU as a whole, 76.3% of those asked chose this response in 1999 and 70.7% chose this in 2003. Note that only those for whom development aid was not important were asked this question. Also note that respondents could select more than one reason for their lack of support for development aid.
39. Marc Stern, 'Development Aid: What the Public Thinks' (UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, Office of Development Studies, Working Paper Series 4, 1998). However, Stern's study is problematic in that he presents only scatterplots of the relationship between individual variables and support for aid. He does not conduct regression analysis or present correlation data. The text and scatterplots suggest a positive but weak relationship between GDP growth and support for aid.
40. In order to combine these variables we flipped the responses to the political ideology question to 'right – left.'
41. Hetherington, *Why Trust Matters*.

42. For the EU as a whole, 39% of those who do not support foreign aid indicate that they are opposed because the money will be misused (*Eurobarometer* 58.2). PIPA (2001) indicates that the median respondent estimates that 50% of aid money ends up in the hands of corrupt government officials in recipient countries.
43. The PIPA 2001 report indicates that 83% of respondents would support US participation in an international effort to cut world hunger in half by 2015, and 75% said they would be willing to contribute an extra \$50 per year for aid in support of such a program.
44. PIPA, 'Americans on Foreign Aid', section 7.
45. For the regression analysis, we treat the scaled responses as interval data. This introduces the assumption that there are equal distances between the values of each variable. Regression coefficients were generated using the SPSS program.

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