RQ: What are the characteristics of countries where China's diplomatic efforts are concentrated?

RQ: Why does China devote more diplomatic efforts to some countries but not others?

RQ rephrased: Where does China concentrate on building its soft power? [outreach]

DV: Diplomatic efforts

* foreign aids and developmental assistance,
* government visits
* media attention from the official outlets – importance (?)

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Older, 2nd route: Why does China devote more aids to some countries but not others?

Is Chinese aid discriminate; if so, on what basis?

DV: aids

IVs:

* formal media attention [importance],
* government visits [closeness/ties] (strategic reasons)
* democracy
* formal alliance
* UN vote alignment
* trade
* quality of governance (the ability to pay back loans and conduct business?)
* poor or rich, GDP
* geography
* disasters

Is that because the countries are in need of assistance, or they are inherently important for strategic reasons?

Joining the debate: "Is China a rouge doner?"

Need-based or strategy-based

Need-based: loans and aids to countries in need of infrastructure, education and so on

Strategy-based: political leaning (buying "votes"), supporting autocracy or democracy, loans and investment (pay back or feed to the economic development in China?)

Possibility of disaggregate forms of aids?

Western critics often label China as a rogue donor, claiming that aids are bundled with resource-seeking interests to advance its economy, buy policy concessions and support authoritarian regimes. We need more empirical scrutiny to understand Chinese aid-spending patterns to infer the government’s intentions. Why does China devote more aid to some countries but not others? Are Chinese aids need-based or strategy-based? We bring in a novel perspective to understand what constitutes strategic importance from the donor’s perspective. Media coverage in the expanding and foreign-targeted official media and the diplomatic visits suggest the government’s vision of important countries and connectivity with aid recipients. Using newly available data regarding bilateral Chinese foreign aid spending and regional diplomatic visits on AidData, coupled with the metadata of millions of *Xinhua* news articles on aid-recipient countries from 2000 to 2014, we find that media coverage and diplomatic visits can predict where China locates its aid. Our results suggest that Chinese aid allocation patterns do not set China apart from the traditional Western donors – closer friends get more aid.

**Updated (MW):** When and where are developing countries targets of China’s development finance? We bring a novel perspective to this issue by considering Chinese media coverage of developing countries intended for foreign audiences and China’s bilateral diplomatic activities. These measures capture two distinct but related aspects of China’s foreign policy: status/legitimacy in the eyes of a foreign (predominantly Western) audience and south-south diplomacy. To the extent that China’s development finance complements these goals, we expect greater coverage of a developing country in a Chinese media outlet directed to foreign readers and greater bilateral diplomatic activity to correlate with greater Chinese foreign aid giving. To test this expectation we merge AidData’s Chinese development finance dataset with two newly available datasets: (1) AidData’s compiled yearly counts of bilateral official diplomatic visits from China and (2) millions of English edition *Xinhua* news articles from 2000 to 2014 scraped by the Cline Center for Advanced Social Research. We find that greater media coverage of developing countries targeted at a foreign audience via the English version of *Xinhua* and the number of diplomatic visits to a developing country predict greater receipt of Chinese aid. Our results support the view that Chinese aid allocation patterns map to China’s broader diplomacy and legitimacy seeking objectives on the world stage.