Donor Competition and Public Support for Foreign Aid Sanctions

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Abstract

Donor governments often threaten aid sanctions in response to human rights violations and other undesirable behavior on the part of aid-receiving states. Are there scenarios in which the public will not support these aid sanctions? We argue that public opinion on aid sanctions will vary with the international environment. Specifically, we examine whether the threat of competition with other donors for influence affects public support for executing sanctions against a repressive regime. Based on a survey experiment conducted among Japanese adults, we find that information that another donor might substitute for their own government's aid reduces support for sanctions. This effect runs most strongly through a pathway where the competition from another donor triggers concerns for national security, and the effect is larger among those who have pre-existing concerns about the other donor. These results speak to the way in which public desire for foreign aid to bring about material returns might hinder governments' ability to use development policy to promote humanitarian and good governance ends.

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Introduction

High-income countries use foreign aid to promote multiple foreign policy goals. These goals have included reducing poverty in less developed countries as well as promoting donor countries' security and economic interests (e.g., Alesina and Dollar 2000; Bermeo 2017; Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998; de Mesquita and Smith 2007). In the past 20 years, OECD donors have also begun to use the promise of aid, as well as the threat of its withdrawal, to promote political ends such as improved democracy, human rights and good governance (Claessens, Cassimon, and Van Campenhout 2009; Crawford 2001; Winters and Martinez 2015; Molenaers et al. 2015).

A growing body of work suggests that public opinion in donor countries is an important source of decisions surrounding aid policy, as it is for policies in other international arenas including trade, immigration, conflict, and cooperation.[4] This literature suggests that a combination of ideology, material interests, and moral values drives citizens' preferences regarding foreign aid (Milner and Tingley 2013; Paxton and Knack 2012). The way in which citizens weight these different factors in forming their preferences is likely to vary with the international environment. Surprisingly, however, little attention has been paid to the impact of the changing international environment that surrounds donor and aid-receiving countries. Focusing on competition among aid donors, we consider the extent to which citizens incorporate information about the international environment into their assessments of foreign aid policy.

[4] See Milner and Tingley (2013) for a recent review of the literature.

A specific focus on the international environment is important, we believe, because the global landscape of aid has changed drastically in recent years with the rise of so-called non-traditional donors, such as China, India and Brazil. Some scholars and aid practitioners have raised concerns regarding these donors, for instance, labeling them as "rogue donors" (Naim 2007; Woods 2008).[5] They argue that aid from new donors is undermining traditional donors' attempts to use aid to promote good governance and the protection of civil and political liberties in less developed countries. Implicit in these observations is the notion that donor competition directly challenges the ability of donors to use aid to influence the policies of aid recipients.

In this paper, we address the growing significance of donor competition in light of citizens' preferences for sanctioning governments engaged in human rights violations. Although citizens in advanced countries are generally said to believe that the provision of foreign aid should be conditioned on protection of human rights (Bodenstein and Faust 2017; Allendoerfer 2017), some recent studies have also shown that the public's willingness to cut aid to states engaged in questionable moral behavior is moderated by their views of how such a decision would affect their own material interests (Heinrich and Kobayashi 2018; Heinrich, Kobayashi, and Long 2018). We extend this line of work, and argue that the potential for donor competition should trigger an increased concern for how using aid to pursue moral ends might endanger material goals.

Our results, based on a survey experiment conducted among adult respondents in Japan, show that the threat of donor competition does indeed matter in the predicted direction, as those respondents informed of potential donor competition are less likely to support suspending aid to

[5] Dreher and Fuchs (2015) find little empirical evidence that China's aid flows differ substantially from those of Western donors.

countries engaged in human rights abuses. We further explore, through mediation models, four possible mechanisms through which information about donor competition reduces support for aid sanctions, namely that competition cues security, economic, reputational, and aid efficacy concerns. We find the strongest evidence for a security concerns mechanism. The importance of security concerns is additionally supported by evidence that those respondents who feel threatened by the potential competitor in our empirical application – China – react more strongly to the information about competition.

The argument and findings we present in this paper speak directly to the emerging debate on the motivations underpinning donor publics' preferences regarding foreign aid policy. More broadly, our work also contributes to the literature on whether and under what conditions foreign aid can promote better governance in less developed countries by suggesting that aid policy makers may be constrained by public opinion in their ability to use the threat of aid withdrawal to bring about changes in behavior.[6] While some question whether the public's preferences in donor countries affect aid policy, the case for suspending aid in the face of human rights violations is more likely than not to originate from civil society pressure. This is consistent with macro-level studies that show that the impact of human rights violations on aid allocation depends on media exposure and shaming by international human rights organizations (Nielsen 2013; Peksen, Peterson, and Drury 2014; Murdie and Peksen 2013).[7] Understanding why the public may be more or less likely to support conditioning aid on protection of human rights in

[6] For a review of the literature on the tools of external pressure, see Krasner and Weinstein (2014).
[7] See Molenaers, Gagiano, and Smets (2017) for an overview of aid suspensions; see Heinrich (2015)for more evidence of the role of media coverage in foreign aid allocation.

recipient countries may thus help aid practitioners make better arguments regarding the desirability of political conditionality and/or design policies more in line with public preferences.

Donor Competition, Mixed Motives and Support for Aid Sanctions

The public in donor countries is rarely fully informed about the amount of aid their own government and other governments are providing to less developed countries (Scotto et al. 2017). Research nonetheless shows that citizens have relatively stable and structured opinions regarding aid policy (Lumsdaine 1993; Milner and Tingley 2013; Paxton and Knack 2012). In developing their preferences over aid policy, citizens are likely to combine both material self-interest and moral concerns. Research on a sample of Americans recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk, for example, shows that decisions regarding foreign aid are driven mainly by concern for the welfare of the people in aid-receiving countries (Allendoerfer 2017). Respondents informed that an aid-receiving country—in this case, Chad—had been engaging in human rights abuses were more likely to support suspending aid than respondents who received no information on Chad's human rights conditions, or those informed that conditions were improving. Moreover, being informed of Chad's economic and strategic value to the United States had little effect on respondents' decisions regarding foreign aid. On the other hand, studies with more complex scenarios and more sophisticated experimental designs show that respondents care not only about the moral consequences of aid policy but also the material benefits derived from maintaining an aid relationship with a given recipient (Heinrich and Kobayashi 2018; Heinrich, Kobayashi, and Long 2018).

Building on insights from these studies, we likewise assume that when deciding whether to support aid sanctions against repressive states, citizens in donor states consider both moral and material considerations. Ceteris paribus, it is likely that donor-country citizens would favor suspending aid to countries engaged in human rights violations as punishment for the offensive behavior or as an inducement to change behavior. But they would be less likely to support suspending aid for human rights violations in aid-receiving states if severing the aid relationship would result in material losses for their own country. In the contemporary world, this weighting of moral and material calculations may be systematically affected by donor competition.

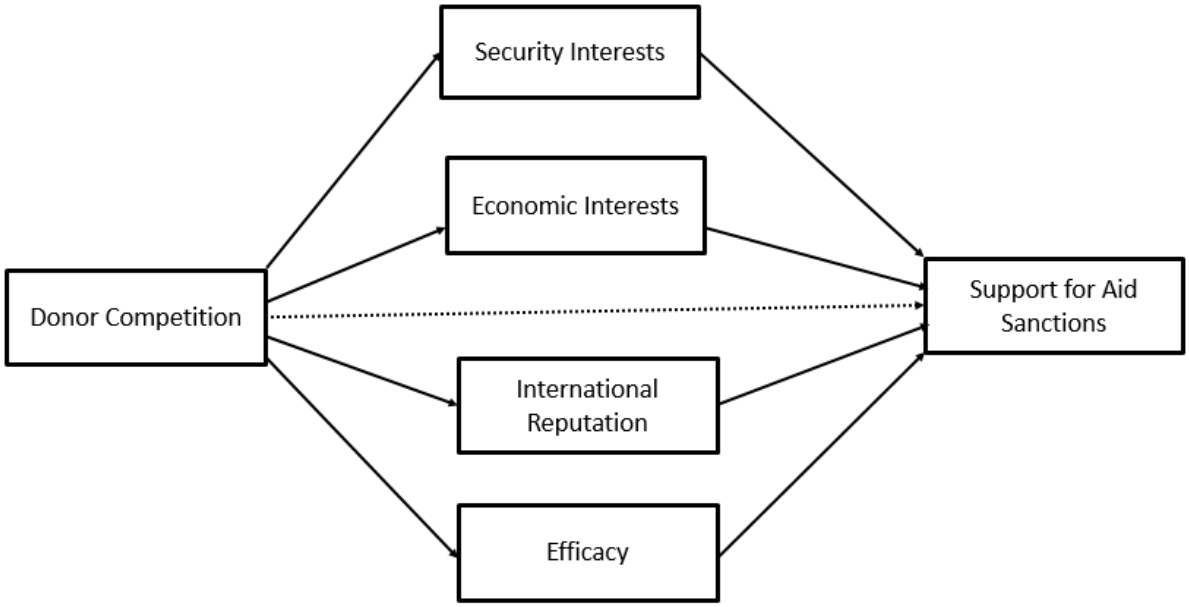
Competition for influence over less developed states through foreign aid is certainly not a new phenomenon. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union used foreign aid to reward states that embraced their respective political-economic systems and supported their policy positions in the international arena (Morgenthau 1962; Shipler 1976; Lundborg 1998). In the 1990s, with the fall of the Soviet Union, international competition through aid provision became less common. Not only did the United States and other major donors have generally similar perspectives on using aid but they were also all members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), a forum for coordinating the provision of foreign aid. With the rise of non-traditional donors, such as China, India, and other emerging market economies, however, the prospect of competition through foreign aid has emerged once again. While some of these states have been providing aid, mainly to countries close to home, for decades, the amount of aid that they are providing today has grown substantially. By one estimate, as of 2012, non-traditional donors were disbursing $10-$15 billion in aid per year (Chandy 2012).

There are a number of ways through which donor competition might influence citizens' support for or against aid sanctions. Here, we consider four such pathways. First, being aware of

another donor waiting in the wings might cause citizens to believe that their country's *security interests* might be put at risk by putting aid sanctions in place. The alternative donor might use a deepening of its relations with the aid-receiving state to improve its security position vis-à-vis the original donor. Second, citizens might also be concerned that another donor replacing reduced aid flows will lead to improved economic and commercial ties with the alternative donor, thus implying *economic costs* from implementing aid sanctions. Third, citizens might believe that implementing aid sanctions in the face of donor competition is something that will *improve the reputation* of their country because of the principled stance in favor of human rights, and this may strengthen rather than weaken their support for sanctions.[8] Fourth, insofar as citizens agree with using aid sanctions to try to induce behavioral changes by the target state, they might worry that the presence of an alternative donor will make such a policy *ineffectual*, such that they would not support the policy in the first place. Figure 1 presents a diagram of these four potential pathways running between information about donor competition and changing levels of support for aid sanctions.

[8] Alternatively, a state might have a reputation for consistently providing foreign aid, and cutting off aid might damage this reputation, but we think of this as a less common reputation for citizens to be concerned with. Thanks to Stephen Chaudoin for suggesting this alternative way of thinking about reputation.

Figure 1. Donor Competition and Support for Aid Sanctions



If information about donor competition triggers reactions along the security interests, economic interests, or efficacy pathways, we expect citizens to decrease their support for aid sanctions. If, on the other hand, the international reputation mechanism is particularly powerful, then we would expect to see information about donor competition leading to increased support for aid sanctions, since taking the principled action in the face of competition will strengthen the donor's reputation. We hypothesize that the overall effect of donor competition runs in the direction of decreasing support, as we submit that the effects of the security, economic, and efficacy pathways are likely to outweigh the countervailing reputational effect. Our main hypothesis is thus:

- H1: Support for aid sanctions against states engaged in human rights violations will be lower when other states are expected to substitute their resources for those withheld by the donor.

Beyond the reactions that we expect to our experimental stimulus, we expect to observe our stipulated mediating variables to have direct effects on one's preferences regarding the implementation of aid sanctions. Terminating an aid relationship is likely to result in the loss of economic and strategic benefits that the donor country was receiving from the relationship even if there is no other donor waiting in the wings to step in. On the other hand, canceling aid programs due to human rights violations may increase the state's international reputation for integrity even in the absence of a competing donor. Citizens who believe that aid sanctions are likely to bring about change in the target state's behavior will be more likely to support aid sanctions *ceteris paribus*.

- H2a: Individuals who view aid sanctions as damaging to their state's security interests will be less likely to support aid sanctions.
- H2b: Individuals who view aid sanctions as damaging to their state's economic interests will be less likely to support aid sanctions.
- H2c: Individuals who view aid sanctions as improving their state's reputation will be more likely to support aid sanctions.
- H2d: Individuals who view aid sanctions as reducing the target government's human rights violations will be more likely to support aid sanctions.

Finally, as described above, we expect to find evidence of four pathways mediating the impact of donor competition on individuals' decisions to support aid sanctions:

- H3a: Information about donor competition will lower support for aid sanctions by increasing the probability that respondents view aid sanctions as damaging to their state's security interests.

- H3b: Information about donor competition will lower support for aid sanctions by increasing the probability that respondents view aid sanctions as damaging to their state's economic interests.
- H3c: Information about donor competition will increase support for aid sanctions by increasing the probability that respondents view aid sanctions as improving their state's reputation.
- H3d: Information about donor competition will lower support for aid sanctions by increasing the probability that respondents view aid sanctions as less likely to be efficacious.

Research Design

We test our hypotheses with a survey experiment among Japanese residents registered in an online survey pool maintained by Nikkei Research, one of the major survey firms in Japan. Through a stratified random sampling procedure, respondents were drawn from categories defined by gender and region in proportion to demographic data reported in the most recent edition of Jūminkihondaichō (Basic Residence Register). Due to the skewed distribution of internet users among the elderly, the sample is limited to those between 20 and 69 years of age. The median respondent in the sample is thus slightly younger than the median Japanese resident. In previous comparisons between Nikkei Research online samples and the Japanese population, the samples are also shown to skew slightly higher income and more educated (results available upon request).

Japan is a particularly interesting case for two reasons. First, Japan relies heavily on foreign aid as a tool to influence other states because it is prohibited by its constitution from using force to settle international disputes (Komiya, Miyagawa, and Tago 2018). Thus, how aid is used and its consequences for the country are particularly important. Given this, the Japanese public may be more sensitive to the potential for competition from other donors – especially those whose goals may be in conflict with the foreign policy goals of Japan – than publics in other donor countries. In effect, Japan would be a crucial case that must "closely fit a theory if one is to have confidence in the theory's validity" (Eckstein 2000:148). Second, previous research on public opinion and aid sanctions has tended to focus on the views of citizens of the United States or the United Kingdom. We thus extend the scope of previous studies by focusing on public opinion in Japan, one of the other five largest OECD-DAC donors.

Our work also differs from previous research that uses survey experiments by employing stimuli that focus on real-world examples of human rights abuse, in particular, in Myanmar and the Philippines, two countries in which Japan has substantial economic stakes. This is advantageous for two reasons. First, building the experiment on information about real Japanese aid recipients and, as we discuss further below, donor competition from China—arguably Japan's main rival donor—generates a strong dose of naturalism, which increases the ecological validity of our findings (Mutz 2011; Findley et al. 2017). Second, since the human rights abuses in Myanmar and the Philippines differ substantially—our information stimulus on Myanmar refers to the government's treatment of the minority Rohingya and states that several hundred thousand people were estimated to be victims of rape and torture, while the stimulus on the Philippines refers to the treatment of individuals in the government's war against drugs, with more than ten thousand estimated to have been killed—we are able to explore whether responses differ by the

type of victim and scale of human rights abuse. With only two scenarios, we are unable to test formally whether these variables affects respondents' support for or against suspending aid.[9] However, to the extent that our results do not differ substantially across scenarios, we are able to think about the effects of donor competition as generalizable across various situations.

Members of our sample of 4,322 respondents were randomly assigned to hear about either Myanmar or the Philippines and then to either the control or treatment condition referring to that country. In both the control and treatment conditions, respondents were asked to consider human rights abuses in the corresponding country and to engage with the question of whether or not Japan should suspend its aid. In the treatment condition, we included an extra statement to prime respondents to think about donor competition. The control condition for respondents assigned to hear about Myanmar read as follows:

> Next, we would like to ask you about Japan′s aid toward Myanmar in particular. Japan has regarded its relations with Myanmar as very important for economic interests of trade and investment and from the consideration of national security, and thus has provided aid in the amount of 50 to 250 billion yen annually. However, in recent years, the government of Myanmar has been widely criticized in the international community for oppressing the ethnic minority group called the Rohingya, with several hundred thousands estimated to be the victims of rape and torture. International organizations, such as Amnesty International and the United Nations have harshly condemned human rights violations by the Myanmar government. In light of this development, some argue that Japan should also reconsider its aid policy toward Myanmar. On the other hand, there is also an opinion that, despite the human rights violations, Japan should not cancel its aid to Myanmar.

[9] Theoretically, one could test systematically for the effect of donor competition on human rights abuses of different types and scale using conjoint analysis, however, this would almost certainly entail using numerous hypothetical scenarios and foregoing the ecological validity generated by using real-world scenarios.

For the Philippines, the text was similar except that the human rights violations were described as "inhumane punishments under the name of the war on drug-related crimes, with more than ten thousand estimated deaths."

In the treatment condition, we added a concluding clause designed to inform respondents of the potential for donor competition: "… with the consideration that, if Japan cancels its official development assistance, China might step in and increase its aid to substitute for the deficit and thus expand its influence in the region."

Naming China as Japan's potential competition in the provision of foreign aid to other Asian countries should make the treatment quite relevant to Japanese citizens. China began to receive aid from Japan in 1979 and quickly became one of Japan's largest aid recipients (Katada 2001; Jerdén and Hagström 2012). Public criticism, which began in the late 1990s, led Japan to suspend its concessional loans to China in 2008; by then, however, China's phenomenal growth had facilitated its rapid military build-up and enabled Beijing to extend its ambitions to influence other countries through the provision of foreign aid. While estimates are disputed due to the lack of official statistics, China's aid to Asian countries and its influence over them, is clearly growing, creating cause for apprehension in Japan (Kim and Potter 2012).

To ensure that our analysis concentrates on valid responses from attentive survey takers, we employed two attention check questions to filter out inattentive respondents or "satisficers." These questions were simple instructed-response items that anyone paying attention should be able to answer.[10] Respondents were excluded from subsequent analysis if they answered either

[10] One item states "from the five options below, select the options located at the second from bottom and the first from top." The correct answers are (1) and (4). The other item instructs the respondent to "…choose 'Supreme Court'" from a series of options that includes other political institutions.

question incorrectly. We also dropped from the analysis those who responded "Don't want to answer" to the main outcome variable and/or one or more of the mediator questions. After filtering out survey satisficers and respondents with missing responses on either the outcome or mediating variables, we retain 3,179 respondents for our analysis.[11]

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the sample by treatment group in the analysis, with the original number of respondents assigned to each condition before the elimination of satisficers and respondents with missing responses in parentheses. We do not observe any correlation between treatment assignment and the probability of being dropped from the study: the proportion of respondents retained in each condition is similar. For those in the Myanmar conditions, 0.74 of those in control and 0.73 of those in the treatment group were retained, while the corresponding proportions for those in the Philippine conditions were 0.74 and 0.73.[12]

Table 1. Experimental Conditions

	Recipient Country Focus	
	Myanmar	Philippines
Control	N=796 (1,078)	N=846 (1,137)
Treatment (Donor Competition)	N=769 (1,059)	N=768 (1,048)

[11] Among 4,322 initial respondents, 613 respondents gave incorrect answers to the questions intended to detect satisficers, and 530 respondents are dropped due to missing responses.
[12] Analysis of correlation between treatment assignment and pre-treatment covariates also indicates that the randomization procedure was successful (see Appendix 1).

After each respondent received their assigned vignette, we then asked a series of questions to measure respondents' views on the impact of aid sanctions on Japan's material interests and international reputation as well as their perceptions of the efficacy of aid sanctions. These questions capture attitudes that are likely to mediate the impact of the information about donor competition on support for aid sanctions and to determine baseline levels of support for aid sanctions.

Specifically, we asked respondents the following four questions in random order: "How do you think cancelation of ODA to {Myanmar, the Philippines} would influence…"

- Japan's national interests in terms of national security, such as Japan's defense and regional stability?
- Japan's national interests in terms of economic benefits such as trade and investment opportunities?
- Japan's reputation in the international community?
- Government behavior in {Myanmar, the Philippines} in terms of human rights violations?

Since we are interested in the extent to which the treatment changes these attitudes as a pathway to changing support for aid sanctions, for ease of interpretation, we recoded the responses to these questions on a five-point scale with 1 representing positive answers (i.e., cancelation of ODA will improve Japan's security, economy, and international reputation; and reduce the target state's human rights violations) and 5 representing negative answers (i.e., cancelation of ODA will harm Japan's security, economy, and international reputation; and increase the target state's human rights violations).

These items were followed by the outcome variable, a question measuring support for suspending aid to the countries whose governments were criticized for human rights abuses:

- Do you or do you not think Japan should cancel its ODA for {Myanmar, the Philippines}?

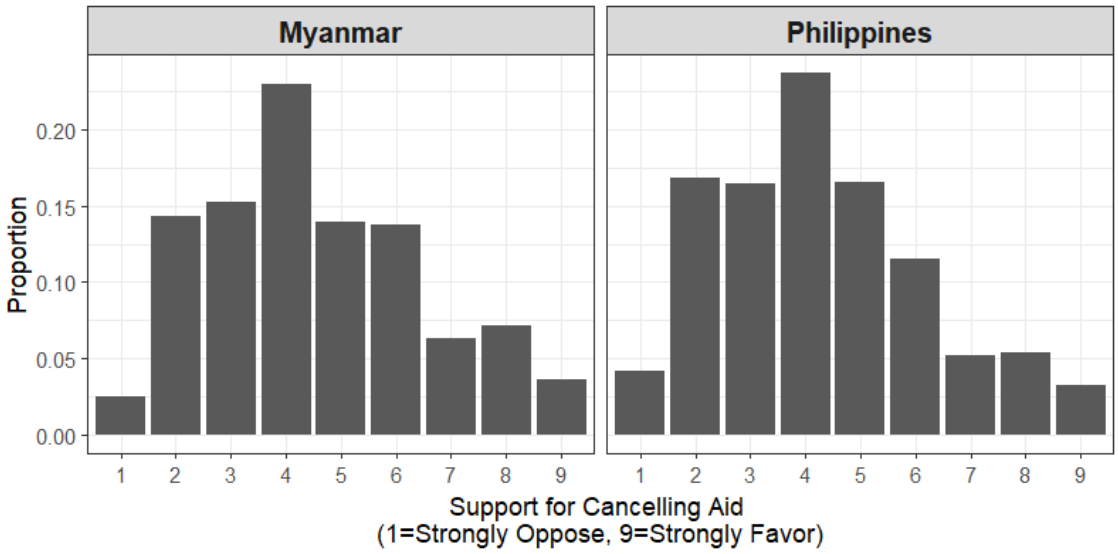
The answer choices for this question were "should not cancel", "it's difficult to say one way or the other", and "should cancel." This three-category response item was further disaggregated with follow-up questions. Individuals who answered that Japan should or should not cancel aid were asked how strongly they felt about their answer: very strongly, somewhat strongly, or not so strongly. Individuals who answered that it was hard to say received the following prompt: "You answered, 'it's difficult to answer' but if you were forced to answer, which would you be inclined to say?", and were given the option to express whether they would support or not support aid sanctions if forced to answer, or whether it was still too difficult to say. This procedure results in the responses for the main dependent variable which was coded on a nine-point scale with 1 indicating that the respondent did not at all support canceling aid (i.e., implementing sanctions) and 9 indicating that the respondent was most strongly in support of canceling aid (i.e., carrying out sanctions).[13]

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the outcome variable. For both Myanmar and the Philippines, values are approximately normally distributed with a peak at 4 (i.e., "it's difficult to answer, but I oppose canceling aid if forced to choose"). Given that our outcome variable takes

[13] We also estimated treatment effects with a multinomial logistic regression using the coarser 3-category response item. As expected, the treatment effects are attenuated, however, they are in the same direction as our analyses with the more nuanced measure of aid cancelation. Those in the "donor competition" treatment group were more likely to support continuation of aid (i.e., "should not cancel") and less likely to support cancelation of aid than the control group (see Appendix 2).

on nine values and has an approximately normal distribution, we treat it as continuous throughout the analysis; results are robust to models that treat the outcome variable as ordinal (results available upon request).

Figure 2. Distribution of the Outcome Variable



Results

To examine H1, which asserts that information about donor competition will reduce support for implementing sanctions, we start by applying simple ordinary least square regressions with robust standard errors. Table 2 presents these results. We show results for the vignettes involving each of the two recipient countries separately. For each country focus, the first model includes only the binary treatment variable (i.e., 0 = control, 1 = treated), whereas the second model includes potentially relevant covariates for reducing variance in the estimation. The relevant covariates include gender, age, and ideology, which are expected to affect support for aid cancelation. They also include attitudinal variables based on questions asked of

respondents before the information treatment. These variables measure the respondent's view that:

- The aid-receiving country (i.e., Myanmar or the Philippines) poses a threat to Japan;
- It is important for Japan to maintain relations with the recipient country;
- Japan might develop an important economic relationship with the recipient country in the future;
- Official Development Aid (ODA) is important for the pursuit of Japan's national interest; and
- International political issues are interesting.

Respondents' views on the above issues are measured on ordinal scales and collapsed into ordinal categories. Ideology was coded on an 11-point left/right scale. Gender and age are based on self-reported information.[14]

As shown in Table 2, for both Myanmar and Philippines, the donor competition treatment has a negative effect on support for canceling aid. On average, support for canceling aid (i.e., implementing aid sanctions) among those who are treated is 0.20 - 0.25 points lower than for respondents in the control conditions. The effects are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level using a two-tailed test with robust standard errors. The estimated effects are statistically indistinguishable across the vignettes referencing Myanmar and the vignettes referencing the Philippines. In both cases, therefore, we find evidence in favor of H1: support for aid sanctions among the Japanese public is lower among those informed that another donor – in

[14] See Appendix 3 for more details on these variables.

this case China – might provide aid to a government engaged in human rights abuses should Japan suspend its aid

For either the Myanmar or the Philippines vignette, the estimated treatment effect is relatively small in magnitude. On the one hand, the estimated treatment effect is similar in magnitude to, or larger than, the effects of political interest and ideology, two variables that have been identified in previous work to influence support for foreign aid (Milner and Tingley 2013; Paxton and Knack 2012). On the other hand, the treatment effect is only one-third the size of the descriptive difference that we observe in levels of support for aid sanctions between those respondents who think that the target country is likely to be economically important to Japan versus those who do not. Similarly, the descriptive difference in the level of support for sanctions between individuals who view the target country as a threat versus those who do not is three times as large in the data based on the Myanmar vignettes as the treatment effect.

Table 2: Treatment Effect on the Support for Cancelling Aid

	Myanmar	**Myanmar**	**Philippines**	**Philippines**
(Intercept)	4.657**	6.153**	4.411**	6.964**
	(0.072)	(0.264)	(0.069)	(0.262)
Treatment (Donor Competition)	-0.202*	-0.206*	-0.239*	-0.253**
	(0.100)	(0.093)	(0.097)	(0.083)
Recipient's Threat (Moderate)		0.212†		0.085
		(0.111)		(0.092)
Recipient's Threat (High)		0.774**		0.379†
		(0.240)		(0.204)
Recipient's Importance (Moderate)		0.024		-0.525**
		(0.165)		(0.165)
Recipient's Importance (High)		-0.076		-0.745**
		(0.169)		(0.166)
Recipient's Potential (Moderate)		-0.461**		-0.251*
		(0.135)		(0.123)
Recipient's Potential (High)		-0.871**		-0.725**
		(0.153)		(0.139)
Political Interest (Moderate)		0.297**		0.044
		(0.115)		(0.111)
Political Interest (High)		0.225		-0.278*
		(0.148)		(0.136)
ODA Importance		-1.552**		-1.938**
		(0.129)		(0.121)
Gender (Female)		0.192*		0.367**
		(0.095)		(0.084)
Age		-0.002		-0.000
		(0.004)		(0.003)
Ideology (Moderate)		0.043		-0.050
		(0.127)		(0.115)
Ideology (Right)		-0.012		-0.335**
		(0.123)		(0.117)
R^2	0.003	0.145	0.004	0.272
Adj. R^2	0.002	0.137	0.003	0.266
Num. obs.	1565	1565	1614	1614
RMSE	1.989	1.849	1.943	1.667

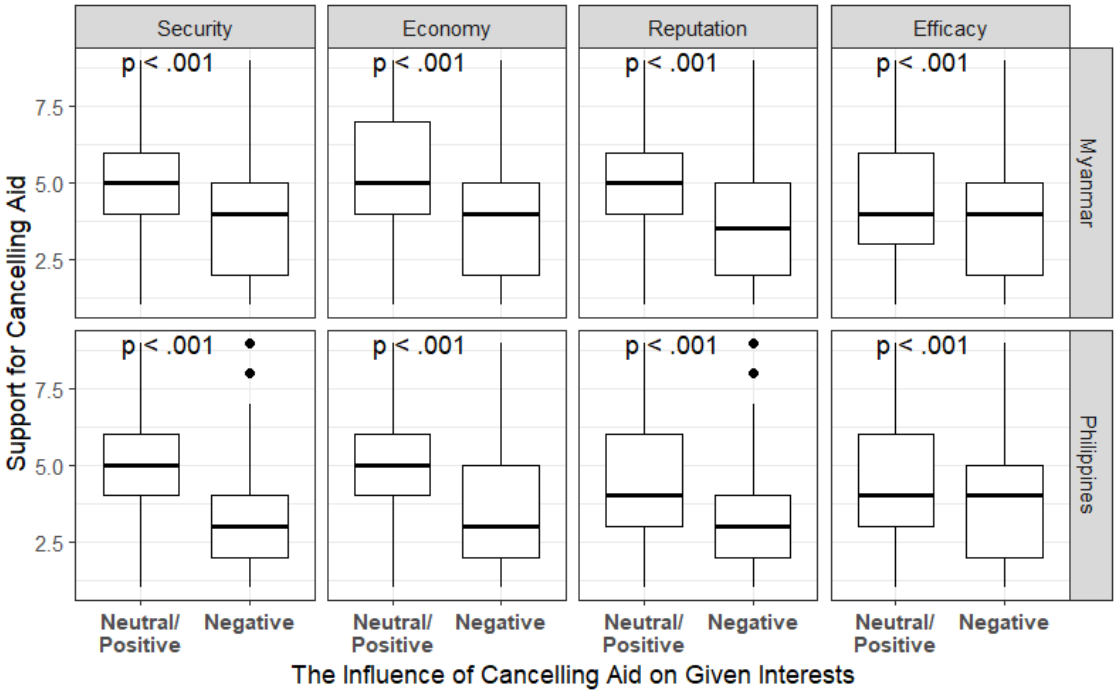
**p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, †p < 0.1
Estimated by ordinary least square (OLS) regression. HC1 robust standard errors in parentheses.

Exploring Four Possible Treatment Pathways

Before examining whether the treatment effects reported in Table 2 are mediated through respondents' concerns regarding the impact of aid sanctions on their own country's strategic and economic interests, international reputation, as well as the likelihood of the sanctions affecting the target government's behavior, we first explore whether the proposed mediators are correlated in the expected direction with the outcome variable—support for sanctions. If the mediators are not associated with the outcome, then any impact our donor competition treatment has on the mediators is unlikely to influence the outcome. For ease of presentation, we collapse respondents into two groups for each mediator: (1) those who state that suspending aid will have a neutral or positive effect on Japan's interests in terms of security, the economy, reputation, and efficacy with respect to reducing human rights violations (i.e., those who chose 1-3 on the 5-point scales), and (2) those who state that suspending aid will have a negative influence on Japan's interests (i.e., those who chose 4 or 5). We then display the two groups' distribution of responses on the outcome variable in Figure 3 using boxplots.

As shown in each cell in Figure 3, on average those who think canceling aid has a negative influence on the given interest exhibit lower support for canceling aid than those who think canceling aid has a neutral or positive influence on the given interest. Based on Welch's t-tests, all of these differences are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. These results support H2a-H2d.

Figure 3. Potential Mediators Have Strong Associations with the Outcome Variable



Having established that our donor competition treatment decreases support for suspending aid to Myanmar and the Philippines, and that our proposed mediators (attitudes regarding the effect of aid sanctions on donor interests and target government's behavior) are strongly associated with support for aid sanctions, we now assess H3a-H3d, which state that the impact of donor competition on support for aid sanctions will be mediated by changing attitudes regarding the effects of aid sanctions. To do this, we use causal mediation analysis within the counterfactual framework described in Imai et al. (2011). For each mediator, the method decomposes the total treatment effect (shown in Table 2) into direct and indirect (mediated) effects. In contrast to common structural equation-based methods, which only allow linear models, this method allows flexible statistical modelling at each stage of estimation. In subsequent analyses, we collapse each mediator into two categories (1=negative influence,

0=not) and use a generalized linear model with logistic regression to estimate the treatment effect on the mediators. We then use linear regression to model the effect on the outcome (which we continue to treat as continuous).[15] We use the **medflex** package in the statistical software R (Steen et al. 2017).

While our treatment was randomly assigned, the mediators were not. Thus, in order for our estimates to be valid, the sequential ignorability assumption must hold. This assumption consists of two statements. First, all pre-treatment confounders that cause both the mediators and the outcome must be measured and included in the model as covariates. While we cannot definitively state that we have measured all pre-treatment confounders, we include the pre-treatment covariates included in the analysis of the treatment's total effect on support for sanctions (see Table 2) to meet this condition. These are variables that can potentially cause both the mediators (i.e., the perceived influence of aid cancelation on different types of national interests) and the outcome (i.e., support for canceling aid).

Second, the sequential ignorability assumption states that there should be no post-treatment confounders. In our research design, this statement implies that there should be no causal relationships among our mediators. We have no theoretical reason to expect that any one mediator precedes and causes the others. For example, there is no theory for why we would expect that perceptions of the influence of aid cancelation on national security causes—or is caused by—perceptions of aid cancelation's influence on national economic interests. To guard against the possibility that the responses to these questions might be correlated because of

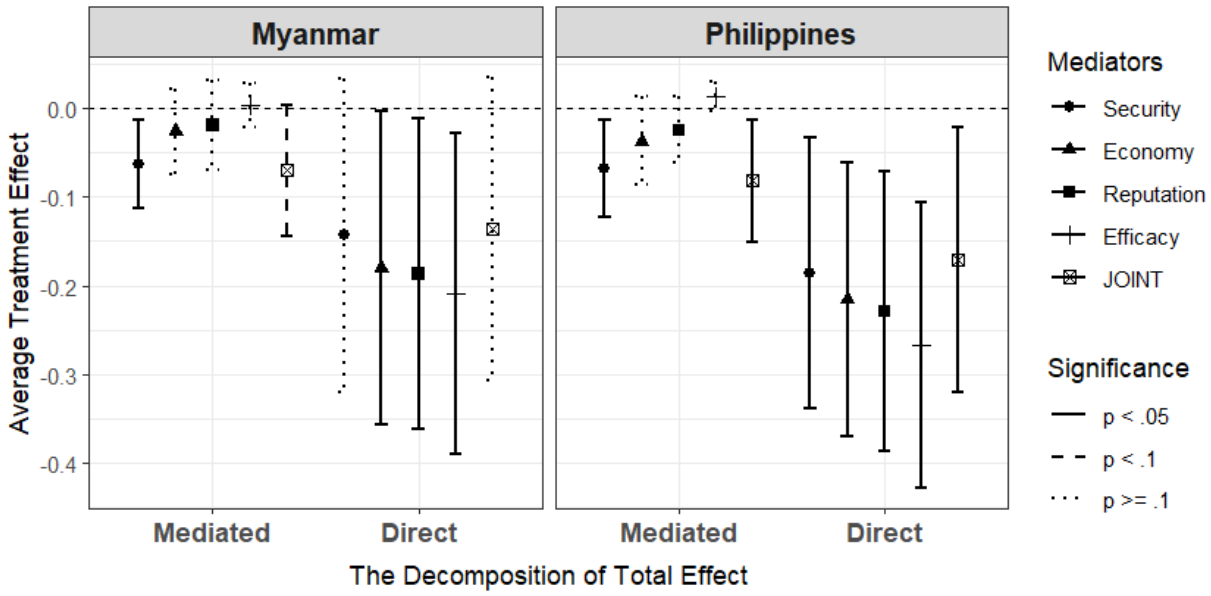
[15] Results are robust to various alternative model specifications. Mediators are collapsed to increase the frequency within each category, but the results are similar even when the mediators are modelled as ordered categorical variables with three or more categories. The models we present assume no treatment-mediator interaction, but the findings are the same even when the interaction term is included. Results available upon request.

consistency bias, we randomized the order in which the questions for the mediating variables were asked. Thus, assuming no unobserved/omitted pre- and post-treatment confounders, we expect to be able to estimate consistently the mediation effect of each mediator and ignore the existence of other, causally unrelated, mediators.

Figure 4 presents results of our causal mediation analysis. In Figure 4, we decompose the total effect of the treatment with pre-treatment confounders from Table 2 included as covariates into mediated and direct effects for each potential mediator. Because we assume no relationship between our mediators, we first model the mediated effect of each mediator separately. Thus the estimate of each mediated effect is accompanied with the estimate of direct effects, which essentially includes the effect of the other mediators and all other paths through which the treatment affects the outcome. We also model the joint effect of the mediators and present this and the accompanying direct effect of the treatment not accounted for by the mediators in our model (VanderWeele and Vansteelandt 2014).[16] As mentioned earlier and shown in table 2, the sum of the mediated and direct (i.e., unmodeled) effects is -0.206 for the models analyzing vignettes about Myanmar and -0.253 for the models analyzing vignettes about the Philippines.

[16] The joint mediation effect combines treatment effects that are mediated through all possible causal pathways connected to multiple mediators. It partially relaxes the sequential ignorability assumption by allowing the existence of causal relationships among mediators.

Figure 4. Decomposed Causal Effect of Donor Competition Treatment



Note: Lines represent 95% confidence intervals calculated using robust standard errors. The mediator models are estimated with binary mediators and the outcome model is estimated with linear regression through the imputation-based apporach used in the 'medflex' R package. 'JOINT' is the joint mediation effect of all mediators.

As shown in Figure 4, among either respondents who heard about Myanmar or those who heard about the Philippines, of the four potential mediators, only security interests mediate the treatment effect at conventional levels of statistical significance; this mediated effect is statistically significant at the 95% level. Holding all covariates constant, the treatment effect mediated through security interests reduces support for aid sanctions by 0.065 for Myanmar, and by 0.066 for the Philippines. When the potential mediator is economic interests, international reputation, or the efficacy of the aid sanctions, the mediated treatment effect is very small and statistically insignificant. These results provide support for H3a; they do not support H3b, H3c, or H3d. Although all mediators are strongly associated with the outcome variable (as shown in Figure 2), on average, making respondents aware of China as a potential alternative donor reduces the Japanese public's support for aid sanctions through increasing concern for national

security interests and other unmodeled pathways but not through increasing concern for economic consequences, nor through the belief that aid sanctions will improve Japan's reputation, nor through concerns about the efficacy of the sanctions.

Estimating the joint effect of the mediators and the direct effect of the treatment through pathways not explicitly included in the model, we observe that the the size of this joint effect is very similar to that of the mediated effect of security interests, and the direct effect of the treatment through other pathways is similar to the direct effect excluding the mediated effect of security interests. These results confirm that the decision to support aid sanctions is not mediated by concerns over sanctions' economic, reputational, or efficacy consequences. The results also highlight that information regarding donor competition has an effect on public support for aid sanctions in ways that we did not explicitly model. We discuss this further in the conclusion.

Exploring Conditional Treatment Effects

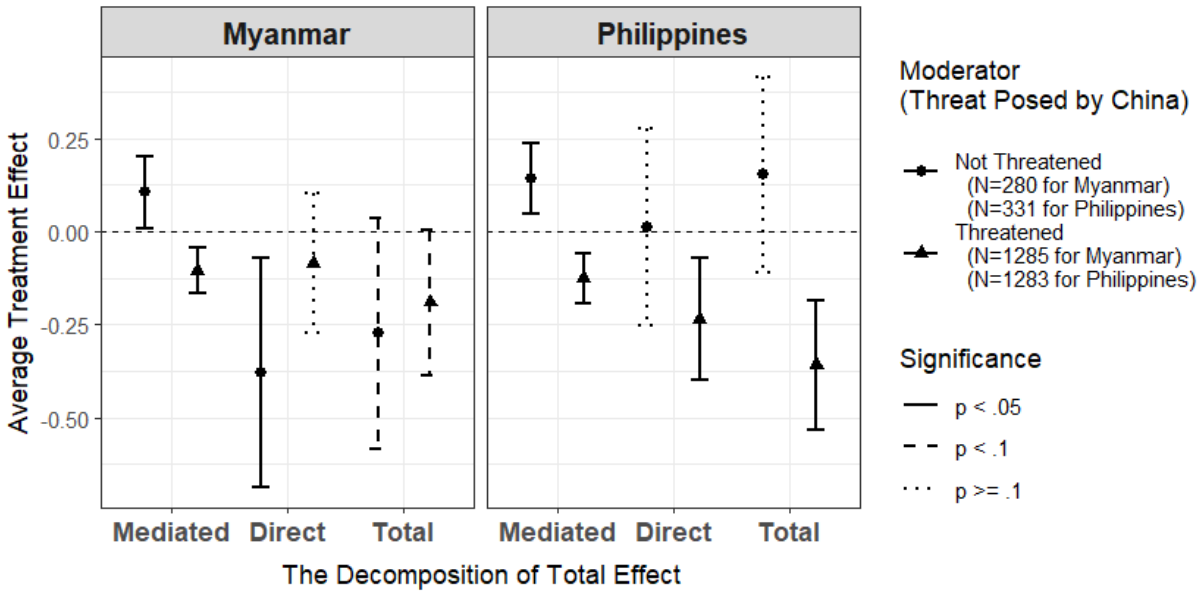
Having found that security concerns are the most potent pathway for explaining how information about donor competition might decrease support for aid sanctions, we next consider whether respondents' prior perceptions of the threat posed by China moderate the impact of information regarding China as a potential alternative donor on attitudes toward aid sanctions. To do this, we employ responses from the following pre-treatment question: "How much of a threat do you feel China poses to Japan?" Responses were recorded on a five-point scale where 1 indicates the respondent does not feel threatened at all and 5 indicates the respondent feels most strongly that China poses a threat to Japan. For ease of presentation, we treat those who scored 1, 2, or 3 in the above question as "not threatened" (N=611), and those who score 4 and 5 as

"threatened" (N=2568). Notably, responses were concentrated on the high end of the scale indicating that the vast majority of respondents felt China poses a threat to Japan. This moderator is included in the analysis as a dichotomous variable. Given that the donor competition treatment stimulates concerns about security, we expect those who feel strongly that China poses a threat to Japan will be more responsive to the treatment than those who feel only weakly, or not at all, threatened.

Figure 5 presents results of this moderated mediation analysis. Here we present the total effects of the treatment on each group of respondents as well as the decomposed (mediated and direct) effects. When it comes to the pathway through which the donor competition treatment might lead to reduced support for aid sanctions, we focus on the national security interests pathway. We start by looking at the effects of the treatment on those threatened by China. As shown in Figure 5, among those threatened by China, we find, as expected, that the total effect of the treatment is negative and significant at the 90% and 95% level for respondents assigned to the Myanmar and the Philippines conditions, respectively. Furthermore, we find that the treatment's effect on support for aid sanctions goes through the national security pathway. The mediated effects of this pathway for respondents threatened by China and assigned to both the Myanmar and the Philippines conditions are negative and significant at the 95% level. In contrast, for respondents not threatened by China assigned to either the Myanmar or the Philippines conditions, the mediated effects of security interests on the outcome variable are positive, however, the treatment's direct and total effects differ across the two groups. For respondents in the Philippines condition not threatened by China, the positive mediated effect of security interests is associated with an unmodeled direct effect that is close to zero, leading to a positive but null total effect. For non-threatened respondents assigned to the Myanmar condition,

the treatment's total effect is negative and significant at the 90% level despite the positive mediated effect of security interests. For this group of respondents, the treatment's direct effect is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that other pathways not explicitly modeled link information about donor competition to negative attitudes toward aid sanctions. Results for this group, however, should be viewed with caution because of the relatively small size of this sample (N=280).

Figure 5. The Effect of Donor Competition Treatment Moderated by the Perception of Threat Posed by China to Japan



Note: Lines represent 95% confidence intervals calculated using robust standard errors. The mediator models are estimated with a binary mediator and the outcome model is estimated with linear regression through the imputation-based apporach used in the 'medflex' R package.

Conclusion

Donors use foreign aid to pursue a mix of goals. Indeed one explanation for the poor record of development assistance in promoting development is that donor governments allocate aid in large part to serve their own commercial and strategic interests (Alesina and Dollar 2000; de Mesquita and Smith 2007; Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998; Morgenthau 1962; Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998). On the other hand, there are many examples of states using aid to try to promote democratic reform or to stop human rights violations. When donor states object to anti-democratic practices or human rights violations, a common response is to threaten to withdraw aid: that is, to threaten to employ an aid sanction.[17]

In this paper, we examine how the mass public in a major aid-giving country thinks about the potential for using aid sanctions. In particular, we question whether they see a risk in pursuing a morally-motivated foreign policy that cuts off aid flows to strategically important countries when there is another donor willing and able to provide substitute financing for the lost aid. As we have noted, the prospect of this kind of donor competition for influence over less developed countries is increasing with the rise of non-traditional donors.

In this emerging international context, we conducted a large public opinion survey in Japan, a major donor that is highly dependent on the use of foreign aid for pursuing foreign policy goals. Our initial analyses show that, on average, the prospect of donor competition with China has a negative effect on the Japanese public's willingness to support the Japanese government employing aid sanctions against foreign governments engaged in human rights

[17] Notably, the literature on economic sanctions is generally skeptical about their effectiveness (Baldwin 2000; Tostensen and Bull 2002).

violations. While our results show a statistically significant, negative relationship between information about donor competition and support for aid sanctions, the estimated effect is not large. There are several reasons why this estimate may be attenuated toward zero. First, in our experiment, we mentioned the risk of Chinese aid substituting for Japanese aid only at the end of a lengthy paragraph about the human rights situation in the aid-receiving country and the goals of implementing aid sanctions. More could be done to make the informational stimulus more prominent, and we suspect this would have generated a larger estimated effect. Second, for the sake of the mediation analysis, we placed the series of mediator questions before the ultimate outcome question. It is likely that these questions primed respondents in the control condition to also be skeptical of cutting off aid, thereby attenuating the effect estimate.[18] Third, the actual effect might be small because the Japanese public already thinks about competition with other donors when considering the possibility of aid sanctions. In future research, it would be interesting to explore these issues—possibly obtaining larger effect estimates that might more accurately reflect the way in which the Japanese public thinks about donor competition.

Through mediation analysis, we find that the negative effect of information about donor competition on support for aid sanctions runs through increasing concerns about Japan's national security. Why might "security concerns" stand out, among the four mediation paths that we proposed, in influencing Japanese attitudes toward aid sanctions? There are at least three possibilities. First, as has been shown repeatedly by public opinion surveys, ordinary people in Japan currently regard China's territorial ambition as the most serious, concrete threat to their national security (Kohno 2016). Especially since the Senkaku/Diaoyu boat collision incident in

[18] This might also explain why the overall distribution of attitudes toward the sanctions skews towards not implementing them.

2010, the Japanese public is constantly on "high alert" against infringements of territorial waters by Chinese fishing boats and coastguard vessels. The worst nightmare for the Japanese, therefore, would be a situation where strategically important friendly countries, such as Myanmar and the Philippines, would move closer to China than Japan. Second, given that Japan's economy relies far more heavily on domestic consumption and exports to advanced industrial countries than trade and investment with developing countries, such as Myanmar and the Philippines, many Japanese people might not place much priority on Japan's economic relations with the two countries in the vignettes.[19] Third, ordinary Japanese people are generally confident in their image and reputation in the international community and thus may view as negligible any negative reputational effects from continuing to provide aid to dictators engaged in human rights abuse.[20]

Studying the extent to which respondents' ex ante perceptions of the threat from China moderate their reactions to the treatment (and the extent to which these reactions flow through the national security concerns path), we find that respondents who feel threatened by China ex ante are less likely to support aid sanctions when informed that China might increase its aid should Japan withdraw its aid. For this subgroup, we continue to find that this reluctance to support sanctions is in part due to concerns regarding Japan's security interests should Japan withdraw its aid and China step in.

[19] Among our sample, less than 40% of respondents rated Myanmar and the Philippines highly in terms of potential to form important economic relations with Japan.

[20] It is also possible that the treatment prompted respondents to think of security concerns because it included a reference to the possibility that China's influence in the region would expand if it provided aid as a substitute to Japan. While this is certainly possible, reference to China's influence could as easily have conjured up concerns regarding economic interests, reputation, and/or the efficacy of aid sanctions. That it activated security concerns among our respondents suggests that they may have already been pre-occupied by security concerns. We thank Lauren Prather for bringing this to our attention.

In future work, we look forward to seeing if the effects of donor competition on support for aid sanctions that we find among the Japanese public are generalizable to other donor publics. We speculate that citizens of the United States, still the leading donor country in the world, may be less influenced by what other donors do. Compared to Japanese citizens, the public in this superpower are less likely to feel that their security interests would be put at risk by suspending aid even if a potentially competitive donor country (such as China) is waiting in the wings. Citizens of other traditional donors, on the other hand, may be influenced by what other donors do, although the mechanisms through which donor competition influences their attitudes toward aid sanctions may differ from those of the Japanese public. We hope to explore the variation in relevant mechanisms across donor countries in future work.

It would also be interesting to examine whether the effect of donor competition is limited to "rogue donors" and/or China in particular. Would competition between traditional donors elicit similar reluctance to support aid sanctions? Would such competition activate concern over the efficacy of sanctions rather than concerns regarding material interests? Are there other pathways through which donor competition might influence support for or against aid sanctions? Our results indicate that even with respect to the Japanese public, we have not identified all the mechanisms mediating the links between information about donor competition and support for suspending aid to governments engaged in human rights abuse.

Finally, another promising extension of our study would be to explore the ultimate boundary at which security (and other material) interests outweigh moral considerations in determining public preferences for providing or suspending aid to countries engaged in human rights violations or anti-democratic practices. Our results suggest that enthusiasm for using aid sanctions as a tool of a moral foreign policy is mixed to begin with. By developing our

knowledge about the range of state behaviors for which citizens would and would not support the use of sanctions, we can provide valuable information to policymakers about where they might be able to move forward with the use of aid as a tool of a moral foreign policy versus where they might need to do more work to convince the public of the appropriateness of the policy.

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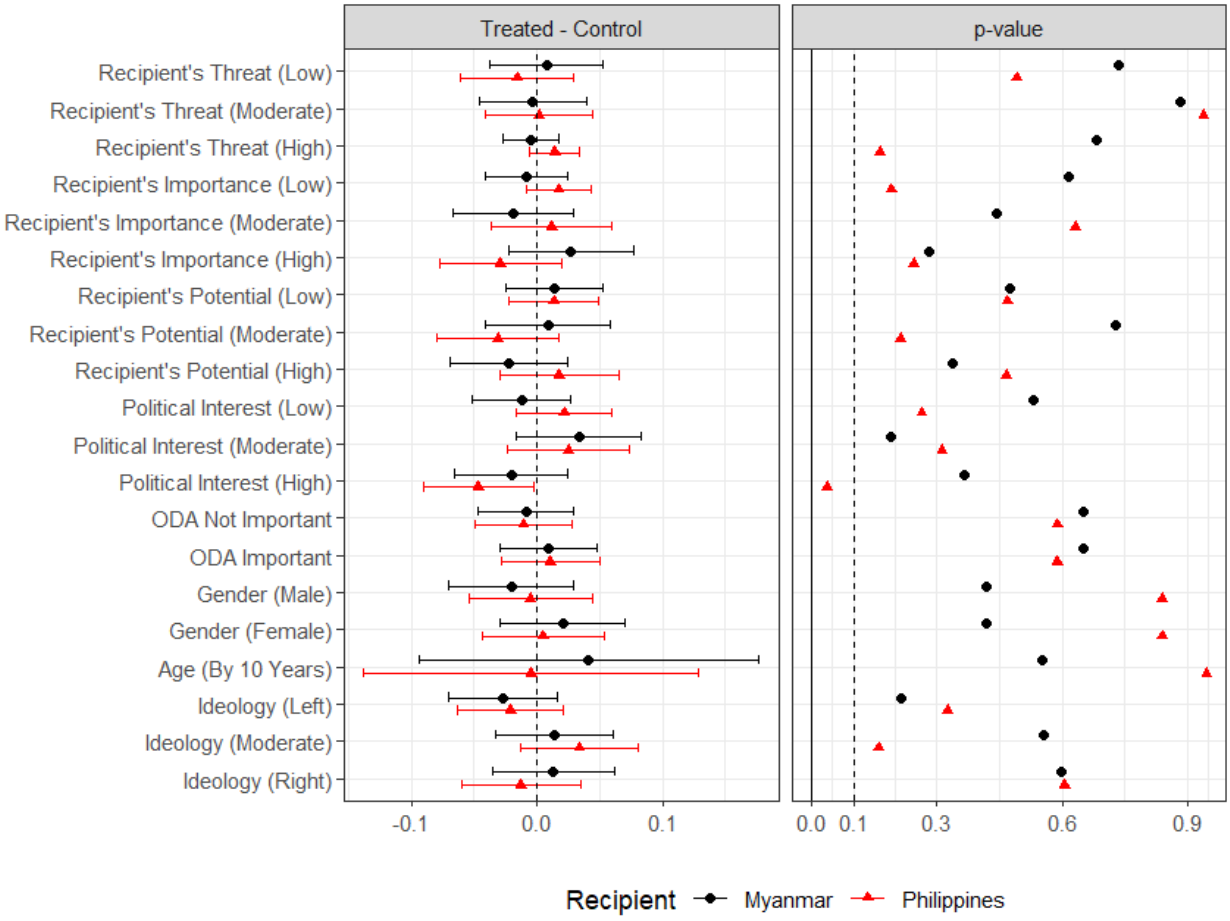
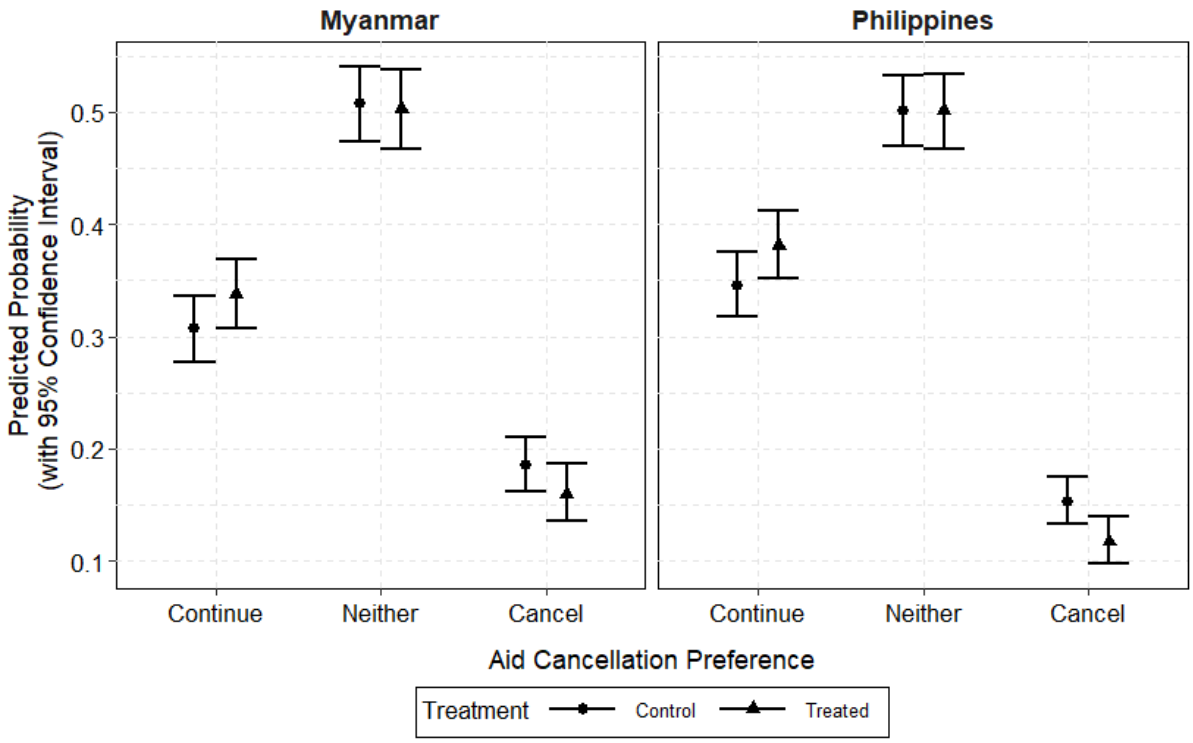
Appendix 1. Covariate Balance between Treatment Groups



Appendix 2. Predicted Probabilities
Donor Competition on Support for Canceling Aid



Note: Lines represent 95% confidence intervals estimated from quasi-Bayesian Monte Carlo method based on normal approximation using robust standard errors. The model is estimated by Multinomial Logistic regression.

Appendix 3. Variables included as Covariates in Analysis

Variable	Survey Question	Values
Recipient's threat to Japan	How much of a threat do you feel [Myanmar/the Philippines] poses to Japan?	1 to 5[a]
Importance of relations with recipient	How important do you feel is it to maintain good relations with [Myanmar/the Philippines]?	1 to 5[a]
Recipient's potential for economic relations with Japan	How much potential do you think [Myanmar/the Philippines] has in developing so that Japan will have important economic relations with it in the future?	1 to 5[b]
Importance of ODA as means of diplomacy	In general, how important do you think it is that the Japanese government continue its Official Development Aid (ODA) to developing countries as a means of diplomacy in the pursuit of national interest?	1 to 7[c]
Interest in international political issues	We would like to ask your interests and opinions about Japan's foreign policy and international affairs. Are you interested in international issues surrounding Japan?	1 to 4[d]
Ideology	The paired terms "conservative and liberal," or "right and left" are often used to express one's political position. If "0" is most left/liberal and "10" is most right/conservative, where would you place yourself on this scale?	0 to 10[e]
Gender		1=Female 0=Male
Age		20-69

[a] Recoded to low (1,2), moderate (3), and high (4,5)
[b] Recoded to low (1,2), moderate (3 or DK), and high (4,5)
[c] Recoded to important (1-3) and not important (4-7)
[d] Recoded to high(1), moderate (2), and low (3,4)
[e] Recoded to left/liberal (1-4), moderate (5), and right (6-10)