# United States “Buying” U.N. Votes?

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# Research Question

Does increased US foreign aid to a country(s) result in their greater voting “alignment” for pro-US policies/resolutions in the United Nations?

# Background

[March 2018]

"U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley is **proposing a sweeping reassessment of U.S. foreign assistance with a view to punishing dozens of poor countries that vote against U.S. policies at the U.N.**, according to a confidential internal memo drafted by her staff."[1]

Cynically: Does the US buying votes stifle the democratic nature of the institution?

https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/15/haley-vote-with-u-s-at-u-n-or-well-cut-your-aid/

# The Data I: United Nation General Assembly Voting

**1946 - 2017**

| | rcid | ccode | session | member | vote | Country | Countryname | year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0** | 3.0 | 2 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1 | USA | United States of America | 1946 |
| **1** | 3.0 | 20 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 3 | CAN | Canada | 1946 |
| **2** | 3.0 | 31 | 1.0 | NaN | 9 | BHS | Bahamas | 1946 |
| **3** | 3.0 | 40 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1 | CUB | Cuba | 1946 |
| **4** | 3.0 | 41 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1 | HTI | Haiti | 1946 |

Erik Voeten "Data and Analyses of Voting in the UN General Assembly" Routledge Handbook of International Organization, edited by Bob Reinalda (published May 27, 2013). Available at SSRN:http://ssrn.com/abstract=2111149

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# The Data II: US Foreign Aid

| | session | rcid | abstain | yes | no | importantvote | date | unres | amend | para | short | descr | me | nu | di | hr | co | ec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0** | 1 | 3 | 4 | 29 | 18 | 0 | 1/1/1946 | R/1/66 | 1.0 | 0.0 | AMENDMENTS, RULES OF PROCEDURE | TO ADOPT A CUBAN AMENDMENT TO THE UK PROPOSAL ... | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| **1** | 1 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 34 | 0 | 1/2/1946 | R/1/79 | 0.0 | 0.0 | SECURITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS | TO ADOPT A USSR PROPOSAL ADJOURNING DEBATE ON ... | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| **2** | 1 | 5 | 1 | 28 | 22 | 0 | 1/4/1946 | R/1/98 | 0.0 | 0.0 | VOTING PROCEDURE | TO ADOPT THE KOREAN PROPOSAL THAT INVALID BALL... | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| **3** | 1 | 6 | 10 | 12 | 27 | 0 | 1/4/1946 | R/1/107 | 0.0 | 0.0 | DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS | TO ADOPT A CUBAN PROPOSAL (A/3-C) THAT AN ITEM... | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0 |
| **4** | 1 | 7 | 0 | 25 | 18 | 0 | 1/2/1946 | R/1/295 | 1.0 | 0.0 | GENERAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS | TO ADOPT A 6TH COMMITTEE AMENDMENT (A/14) TO T... | NaN | NaN | NaN | NaN | NaN | NaN |

https://explorer.usaid.gov/about.html

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# Interpreting “Alignment”

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- **Different interpretations of alignment:**
  - **Include non-important votes? Are they noisy?**

    *The United States doesn’t have high stakes in many of the issues put to a vote in UNGA, and pressuring countries is costly, in terms of both resources and political capital.*

  - **Is abstain “non-oppositionary” to US?**

    *“Abstaining or declining to vote may be a politically palatable way for countries to assuage citizen demands at home while also not actively opposing the United States. The United States may welcome abstention or absence from a country that would otherwise actively oppose its position”*[1]

https://www.cgdev.org/publication/linking-us-foreign-aid-un-votes-what-are-implications

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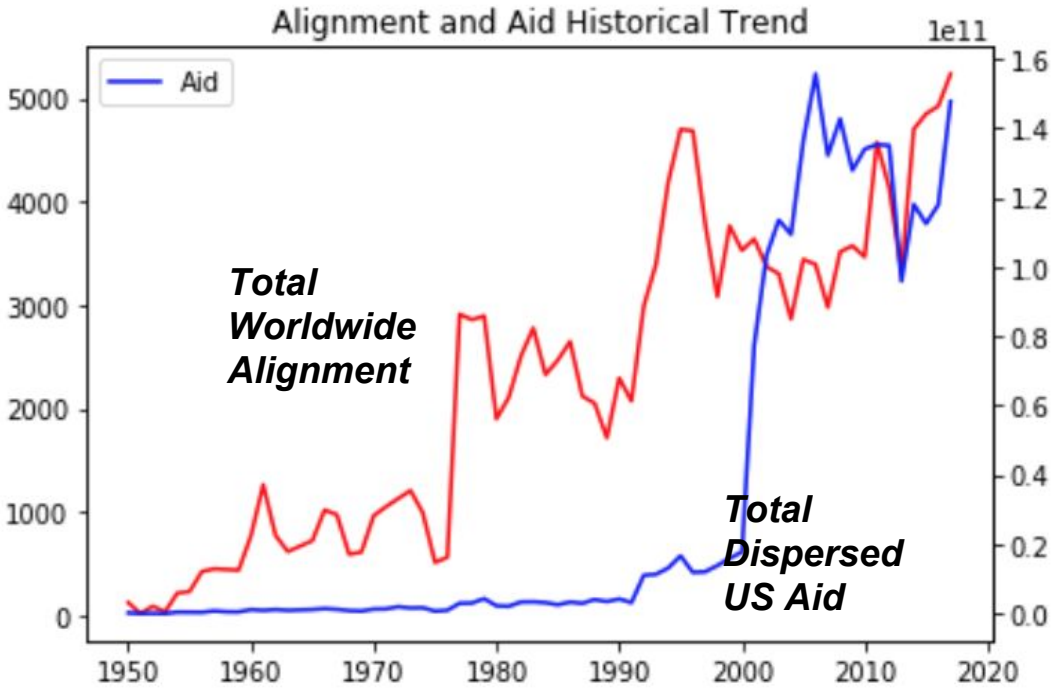
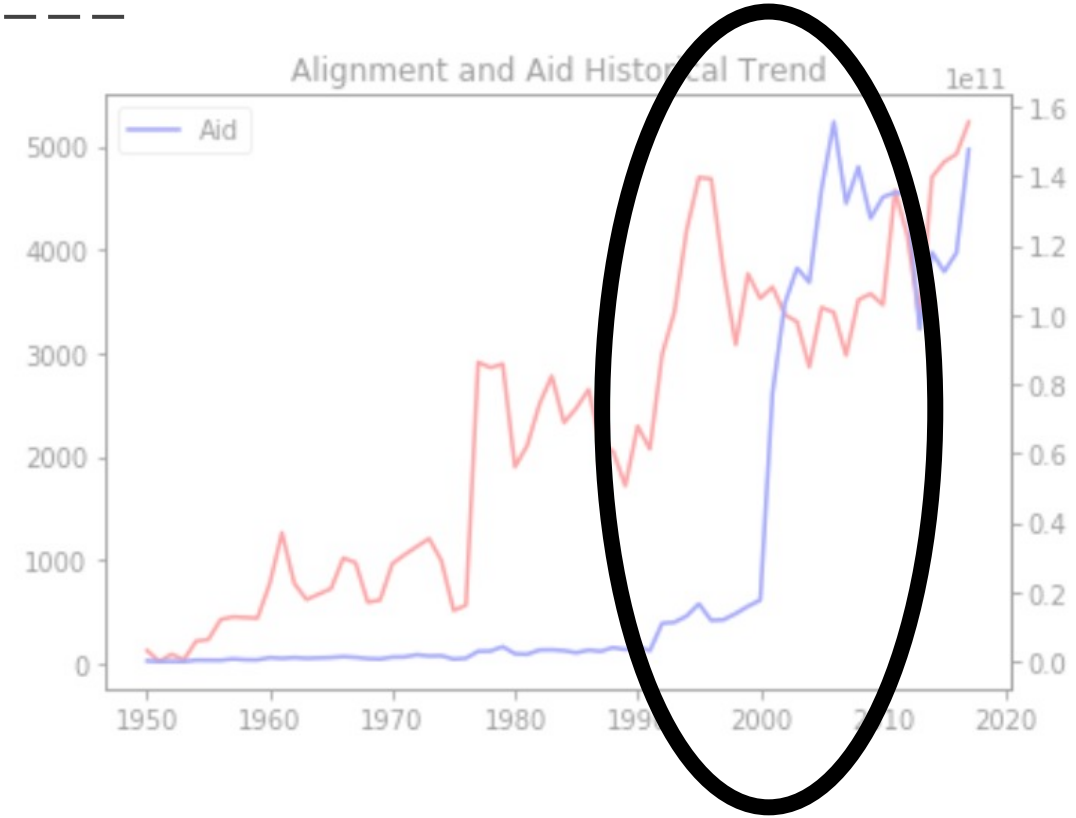
# Exhibit I: Smush All Countries -- By Year






- Ca. 2000
  - Iraq
  - Afghanistan
- **BIAS**
- **SKEW**

# Ethnographic/Historical/Human-Centered Considerations

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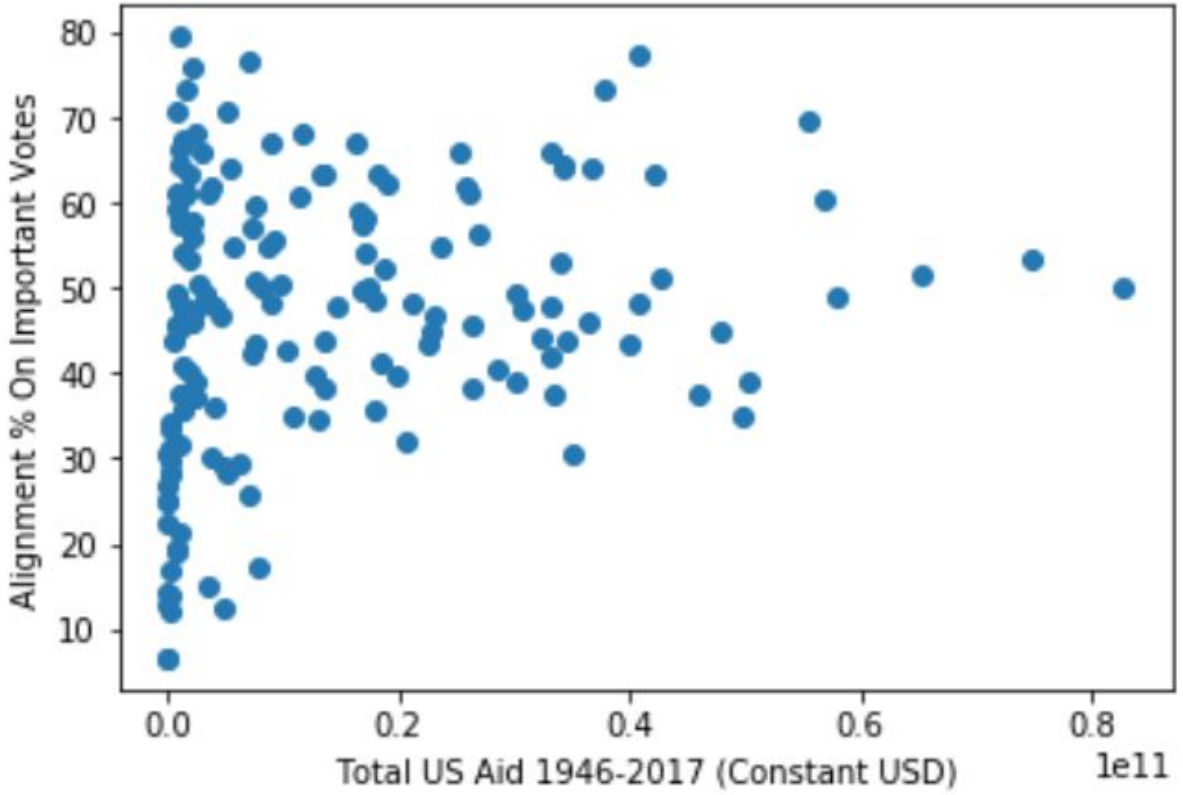
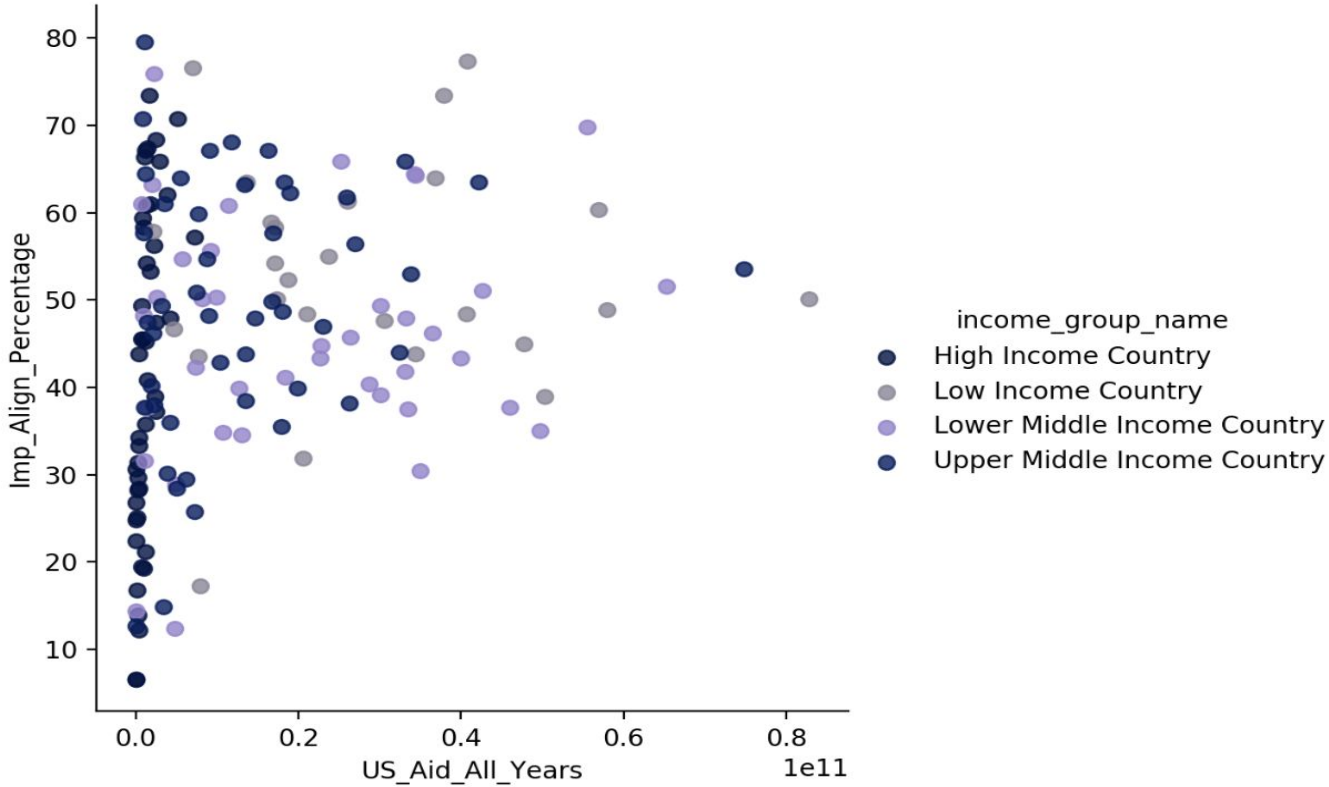
- Relationships are country-dependent!
- War-torn? Drought? Political unrest? Cultural grounds?
- Pre-existing global alliances
    - NATO
    - Former Soviet bloc?
    - OPEC and oil incentivizing

# Exhibit II: Country-by-Country: Alignment % vs. Aid Received



# Exhibit II: Cluster by Income...



# Fixing Bias & Externalities

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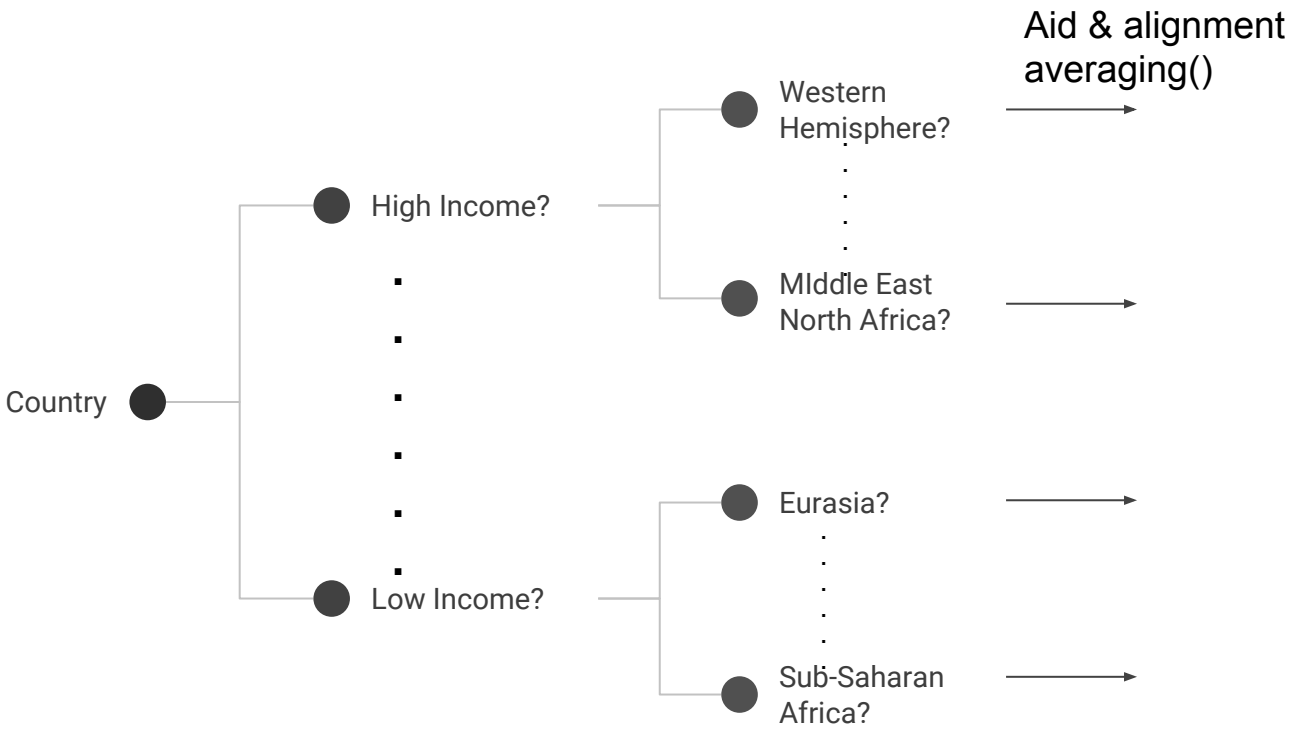
- “Condition away” (condition on) these socio-geo-political-ethnographic factors
- Infinitude of possibilities

- Assumption: ‘income group’ and ‘geographic region’ as a suitable, best-effort proxy

# Data Model


Aid & alignment averaging()
Western Hemisphere?
High Income?
MIddle East North Africa?
Country
Eurasia?
Low Income?
Sub-Saharan Africa?

# Research Question is Determining Causality

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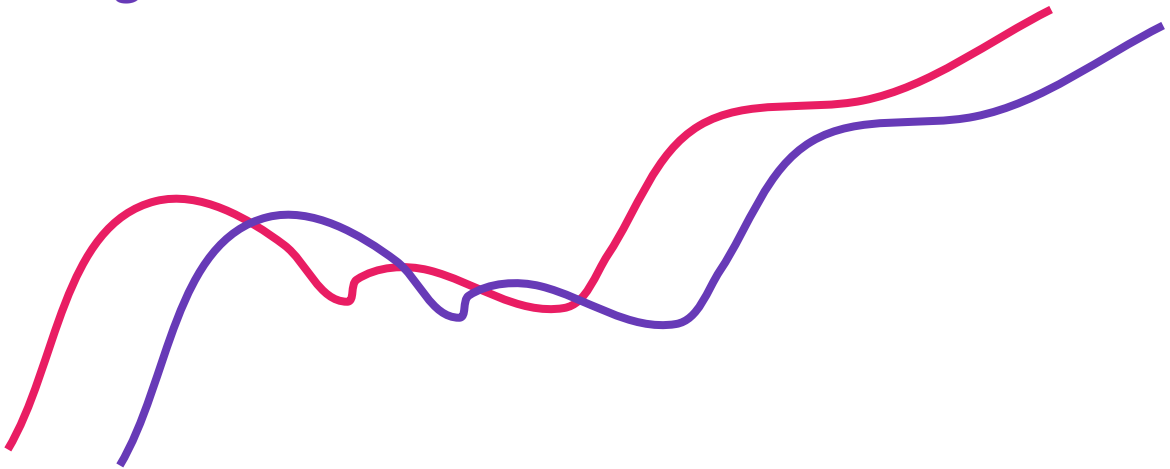
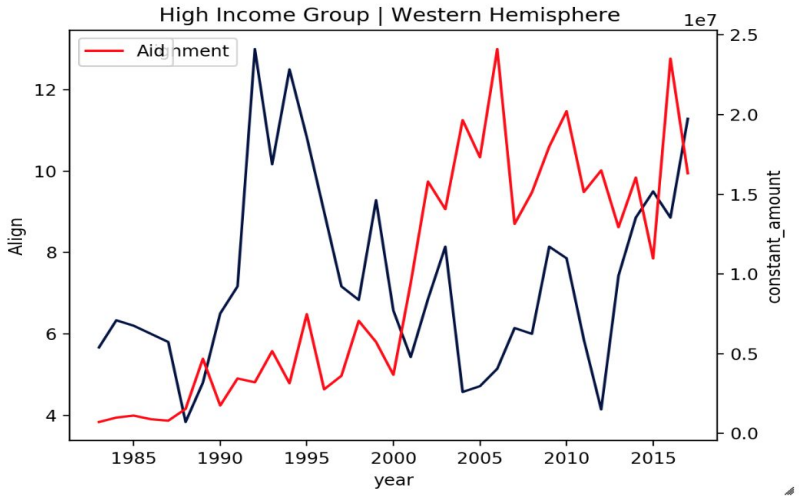
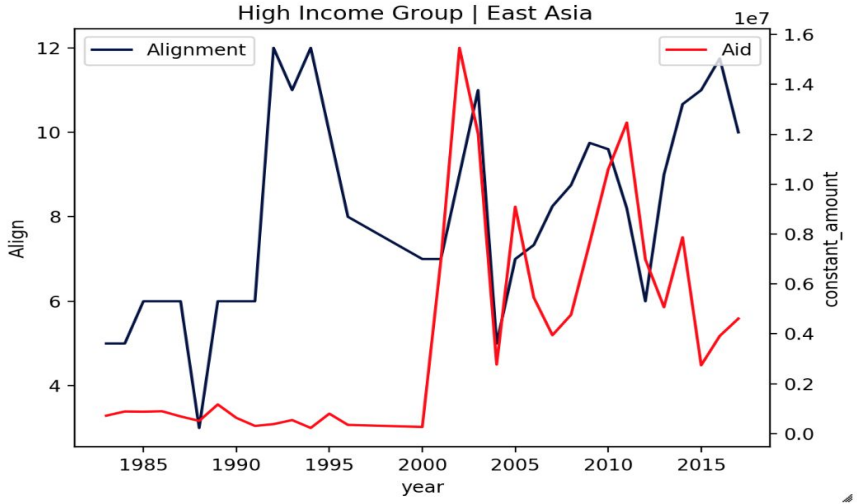
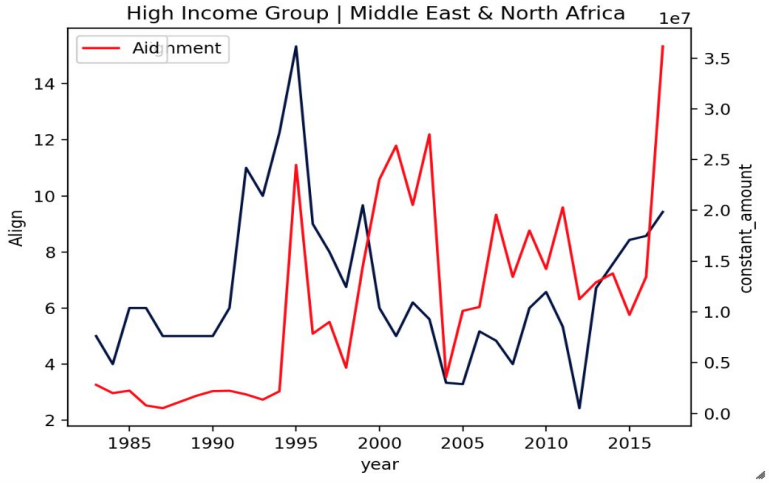
With this final quasi- “unbiased” end product:

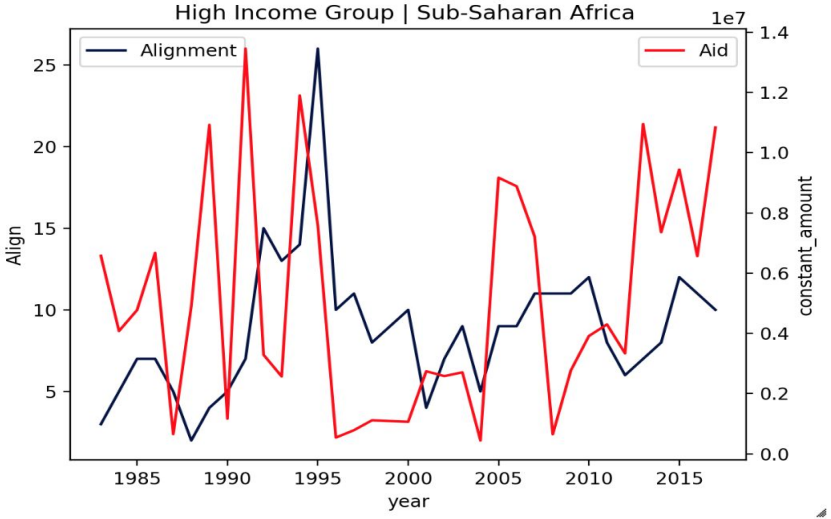
- **Does alignment follow aid**: *blue after red*

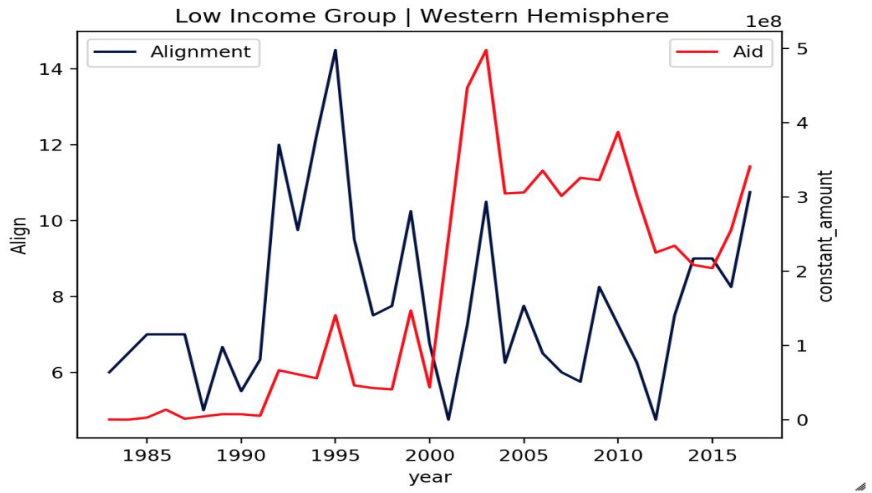


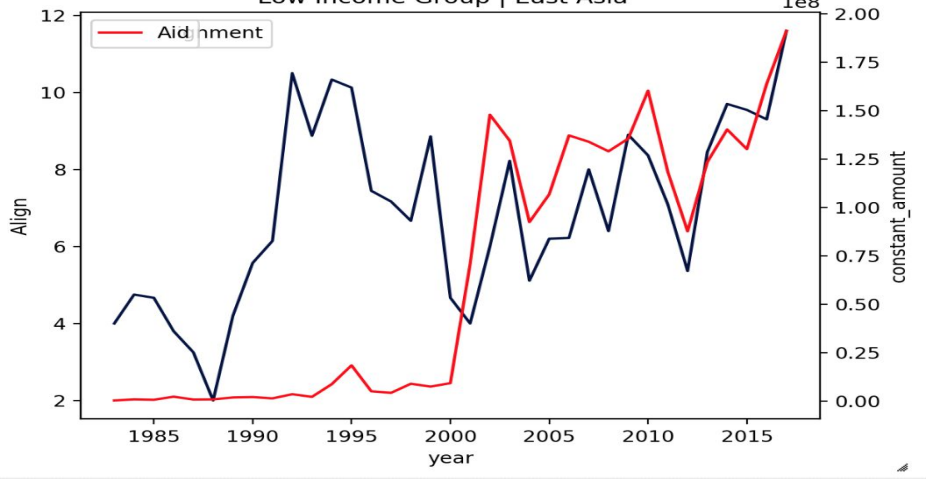

High Income Group | Western Hemisphere
Aid
1e7
Align
constant_amount
year

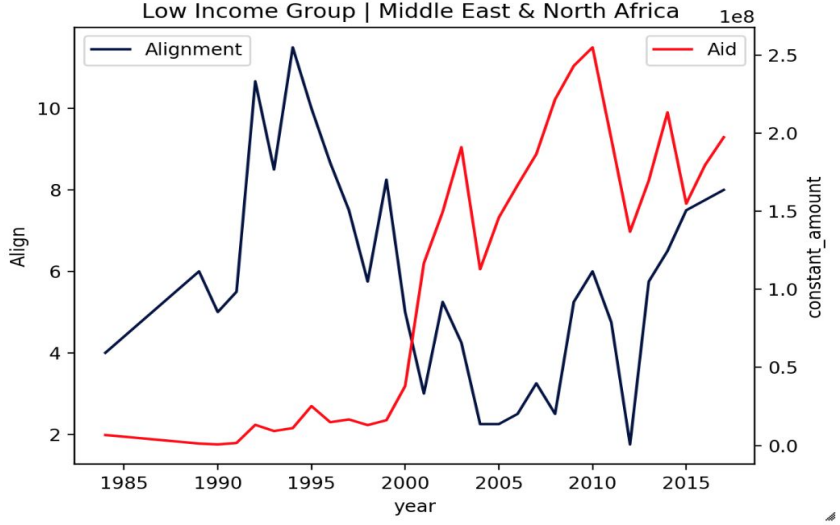

High Income Group | East Asia
Alignment
Aid
1e7
Align
constant_amount
year

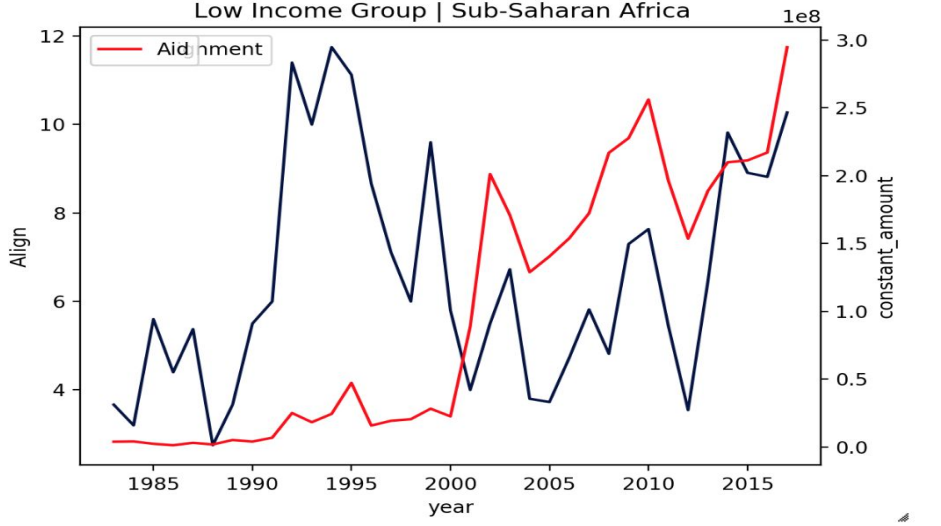

High Income Group | Middle East & North Africa
Aid
1e7
Align
constant_amount
year


High Income Group | Sub-Saharan Africa
Alignment
Aid
1e7
Align
constant_amount
year


Low Income Group | Western Hemisphere
Alignment
Aid
1e8
Align
constant_amount
year


Low Income Group | East Asia
Aid
1e8
Align
constant_amount
year


Low Income Group | Middle East & North Africa
Alignment
Aid
1e8
Align
constant_amount
year


Low Income Group | Sub-Saharan Africa
Aid
1e8
Align
constant_amount
year

# Conclusion

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- Low income, lower-middle income (not shown), upper-middle income (not shown):
  - exhibit behavior suggesting aid does lead to increased alignment!
- U.N. can/has been coerced into following preferences of United States
- Future work: use RNN, time-series models, join more datasets to quantify causation