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International Conference on Social Cohesion and
Sustainability. Greek and Turkish Public
Opinion on Poverty and Foreign Aid**

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Even though the foreign aid figures of European countries have grown substantially in the last two decades, there is little systematic research on the public perceptions of the foreign aid policies of governments and almost all focus on the US and Western European countries. This is an important shortcoming, as public opinion in donor countries, particularly those under the strain of economic crises, can easily turn against allocating any resources to foreign aid programs, which to a large extent are driven by normative concerns rather than economic cost-benefit analyses. As such, the failure by incumbent governments to determine public preferences and understand their root causes carries the risk of losing a portion of votes in future elections.

This study analyzes the domestic sources of support for foreign aid programs in Turkey and Greece, two donor countries - though at modest levels - suffering from declining economic growth rates and increasing unemployment. On the data obtained by nationally representative surveys with 1,596 and 566 respondents, respectively, this paper investigates first the factors that result in attitudes on foreign aid, and two, whether the civilizational identity of the recipient country exerts any influence on individual preferences.*

***NOTE: The survey in Greece is currently ongoing and only the Turkish data will be analyzed in this paper.**

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According to OECD figures, in 2015, Greece spent 280 million dollars, or 0.14 percent of its GNI, on foreign aid. This figure indicates an increase from the previous two years, which were 240 million and 247 million dollars in 2013 and 2014, comprising 0.11 and 0.11 percent of the GNI, respectively¹. The increase in Turkish foreign aid figures in recent years is even more striking: While Turkish aid volume in 2002 was only 67 million dollars, in 10 years it rose to 2.5 billion and in 2015 to 4.5 billion dollars². This figure corresponds to 0.54 of Turkish GNI, a figure that far surpasses the Development Assistant Committee (DAC) average of 0.3 for 2015.

The Greek and Turkish governments' decision to allocate budget for foreign aid, whose material benefits, if any, are much more indirect and enjoyed over a longer term raises the question of how the incumbent governments justify their decision to spend money on such costly endeavors, particularly given the fact that both are developing countries under the strain of economic hardships, though to different degrees. This is a risky decision for any policymaker operating in democratic systems as public opinion can easily turn against allocating any resources for particular policies and consequently punish the incumbent government for its decisions

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all of the data on ODA are taken from OECD / DAC Statistics at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/data.htm>

² <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm>

in the next election. Thus, uncovering what the public actually thinks, how it forms its opinion on specific foreign policy areas - foreign aid in this case - and what factors drive its preferences becomes an important task for scholars and politicians alike.

This paper focuses on the question of public opinion on foreign aid in Turkey and Greece, with the objective of exposing the underlying factors affecting the level of support for foreign aid. Controlling for domestic political and economic conditions, this paper also hypothesizes that individuals who believe their home country and target country belong to the same civilizational group are more likely to support foreign aid programs to the target country and tests to what extent the identity of the target country receiving foreign aid affects individual attitudes in the donor countries.

The first part of the paper will review the literature that studies the dynamics of public preferences on foreign aid policies. The second part will briefly introduce the research methods adopted in this study. The third part will present and discuss the findings while the fourth part will conclude the paper.

Literature

Even though aid policy is a much less salient policy area compared to high-profile foreign policy areas like foreign intervention or international trade policy, and thus lending certain credence to the critique that public opinion has little to no effect on actual decision making, several studies find evidence that policymakers are responsive to public opinion in allocating foreign aid and that the aid budget of donor countries is positively supported by public support (e.g. Mosley 1985, Stern 1998, Lumsdaine 1993). Furthermore, Milner and Tingley add, in many countries national aid organizations like USAID care about popularity of aid programs and thus actively monitor public opinion (Milner and Tingley 2013, 392, ACVFA 2008). Deriving from the rational choice model, there are also a number of studies that show aid intensifies trade relations between the donor and recipients (Arvin et al. 2000), as such some domestic groups have an incentive to support aid delivery if they are able to receive material benefits from such flows (e.g. Fleck and Kilby 2001, Brakman and Marrewijk 1998).

Yet, when we analyze the factors that drive citizen preferences on foreign aid, the literature becomes much 'thinner,' as Milner puts it (2006). Analyzing individual attitudes in 22 industrial donor countries using the World Values Surveys for the 1995-1997 and 1999-2000 waves, Chong and Gradstein concluded that both satisfaction with domestic government and the relative income are positively correlated with the level of support for aid. Similarly, Diven and Constantelos (2009) processed a cross-national multivariate analysis on the WVS data of the six countries and found that public support for aid is closely associated with political knowledge, satisfaction with personal financial situation and political belief regarding the governments' role in the management of economy. Accordingly, respondents who believe in the state's responsibility in addressing poverty and providing services for its citizens tend to be more likely to support foreign aid programs.

The role of partisanship and ideology is considered a significant factor in several studies (e.g. Hurwitz and Peffley 1987, Kull and Destler 1999, Chong and Gradstein 2008, Noel and Therien 2008, Tingley 2010). Having analyzed 17 donor countries, Paxton and Knack (2012) concluded that partisanship is strongly correlated with aid support. Left-right affiliation is also used as an explanatory tool to understand aid preferences (Milner and Tingley 2013, Bayram 2016). Because the left is associated more with

redistribution of wealth (McCarty et al. 2006), state intervention to address market failures and poverty as well as international solidarity (Tingley 2010, 42), those who define themselves more with leftist values will be more likely to support aid. Those who are on the right, conversely, will be more opposed to aid in conformity with the right ideologies preference of individual efforts and dislike of a regulatory state and increased tax load (Thornton 2002).

In addition, students, the young, and the well educated are more likely to support foreign aid, surveys show (Lumsdaine 1993, 43). Strong religious faith is also found to be an important contributor of a positive stance towards foreign aid as most of the major religions preach helping those in need, sometimes even explicitly compelling its believers to do so (Lumsdaine 1993, Paxton and Knack 2012).

Finally, the identity of the aid recipient country is argued to be factor in driving individual preferences in some studies. In a relatively modest survey with less than 200 American university students who were asked on American aid policies towards nine countries, Wetherell et al. (2015) found out that perceptions of value similarity indeed resulted in a much more favorable disposition on foreign aid towards target countries on a wide spectrum. In another experimental study conducted among American respondents, Baker and Fitzgerald (2012) discovered the presence of racial paternalism in driving aid preferences. Using experimental data on a nationally representative sample of the US, they found that white Americans are more supportive in sending aid to black African countries compared to Eastern European ones.

The question of who the aid is intended for can also be analyzed under the broader debate between the cosmopolitanists and communitarianists (Caney 2006). Proponents of the cosmopolitan school of thought believe in redistributive justice applied equally for every individual regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, race or gender (Barry 1989; Beitz 1999). Communitarians, in contrast, contend that one has special obligations as well as responsibility towards those in his/her own community (Walzer 1983; Tamir, 1993, Kymlicka, 2001). However, where to draw the boundaries of the community remains an open question. While national affiliation is an obvious choice, it is possible that individuals can construct a more encompassing identity to define who their fellow community members are, yet still be shy of adopting a global, cosmopolitan outlook. Drawing from the extensive literature on civilizations (Huntington 1993, Katzenstein 2009, etc.) one can hypothesize that individuals who believe their home country and target country belong to the same civilizational group are more likely to support foreign aid programs to the target country. As such, as long as the home country and the target country are considered belonging to the same community, sending aid to those worse-off is only considered as the appropriate and right thing to do.

Research Methods

To expose the causal factors behind the support for foreign aid in this project, a large-scale survey was conducted in Turkey on a national representative sample with 1,596 respondents and is currently being conducted in Greece with a sample size of 566 respondents³. The stratified sampling procedure with quotas based on age, gender, city and SES (socioeconomic status groups) was used in the surveys. The interviewees are randomly selected based on their addresses within the predefined pools and face-to-face interviews are conducted on a wide variety of topics related to foreign policy.

³ As stated, Greek survey data has yet to be obtained.

The dependent variable, support for foreign aid, is measured using the question that is regularly utilized in previous World Values Survey (WVS-2006):

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 The same amount we do now
- 4 Somewhat less than we do now
- 5 A lot less than we do now

Within the survey, a novel experiment is also being conducted: Respondents in the treatment groups are given the information that the target country is either a European or a Middle Eastern country in the Turkish survey, and either a Western European or Eastern Orthodox European in the Greek survey. Following these treatments, a short scenario is read to the respondent⁴ and questions are then asked whether the respondent supports giving foreign aid to the hypothetical country under specified conditions⁵. The data collected is analyzed using the ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis to explain the general support for foreign aid and t-test analyses to expose the significance of ideational treatment on individual attitudes.

Drawing from the literature on foreign aid, several factors are hypothesized to affect aid preferences. These are generalized trust, financial satisfaction, ideology, cosmopolitanism, nationalist predisposition, interest in politics, education, income and religion. Other than these, standard control variables, age and sex are also included to the model. Table 1 shows the questions and coding that are employed to measure these variables.

Table 1: Questions and Coding used in the survey

Age Respondent's age

Sex Respondent's sex. Female=1, Male=2

Income A scale of incomes in which the household falls into divided by the number of occupants in the household

Education What is the highest educational level that you have attained? From 1=Msc/Phd to 8=Incomplete primary in Greece, From 1=Msc/Phd to 9=Incomplete primary in Turkey

Ideology In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right." How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking? 1=right; 10=left.

Religion What is the importance of religion in your life? 5=Very important, 1=Not at all important

Generalized Trust Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?" 1="Most people can be trusted", 2="Need to be careful."

⁴ Country B, despite its high population, has been suffering from poverty and hunger for many years now. Driven by the political instability, limited resources and underdeveloped economic infrastructure, every year a substantial number of people die either due to the malnourishment or contagious diseases, or try to find ways to migrate developed countries illegally.

⁵ Three questions are posed as followed: 1-Turkey should send foreign aid to the country B to prevent a humanitarian tragedy. 2- Turkey should send foreign aid to the country B only as a part of international coalition. 3- Turkey should send foreign aid to the country B in accordance with its national interests.

Interest in Politics How interested are you in politics? 1=Not at all interested, to 4=Very interested

Financial Satisfaction How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? 1=Not at all satisfied, to 5=Very satisfied

View on Immigration What should be done towards immigrants coming from other countries to Turkey/Greece in order to work? 1=Anyone should be able to come without any restrictions, 2=Immigrant should be allowed to come as long as there are available jobs, 3=There should be serious restrictions for immigrants, 4=Immigration for work should be completely forbidden

State Role Index= State Role towards Poverty - Individual Responsibility

State role towards poverty State should decrease its aid towards the poor 1=Disagree strongly, to 5=Agree strongly

Individual Responsibility Individuals should take more responsibility for providing themselves 1=Disagree strongly, to 5=Agree strongly

National Pride How proud are you to be a Turkish/Greek citizen? 1=Not at all, to 4=A great deal

Patriotism People should support their country even if it is in the wrong 1=Disagree strongly, to 5=Agree strongly

Assertiveness Generally, the more influence Turkey has on other nations, the better off they are. 1=Disagree strongly, to 5=Agree strongly

Satisfaction with Turkey/Greece's influence in the World How satisfied are you with Turkey/Greece's influence in the World? 1=Not at all satisfied, to 5=Very satisfied

Support for Ethical Rules There are clear and absolute standards for right and wrong in states' relations. 1=Disagree strongly, to 5=Agree strongly

There are several points to note: First, it is reported that nationalist predisposition is rather a broad concept that encompasses several forces that might affect attitudes on aid through different mechanisms. Thus, a finer analysis on the influence of nationalism on the dependent variable is warranted. In order to provide that, in the model a distinction between national pride and patriotism is introduced. While the former aims to measure how proud an individual is with his/her national affiliation, the latter sets to determine the level of devotion to one's country.

Another variable analyzed in the model is view on immigration. The attitudes of individuals towards immigrants who come to the home country for work could also influence their attitudes on sending aid to those who chose to stay in their country or did not have the means to migrate. On the one hand, those who welcome immigrations can be argued to be more cosmopolitan and accept the home country's responsibilities to address others' problems, and consequently be more pro-aid. On the other hand, however, those who are against immigration to the home country could view foreign aid as a foreign policy tool to ensure that the poverty and hardship in depressed areas of the world are adequately addressed so that immigrants do not have any reason to come in the first place. In that case, a negative correlation between two variables would be expected.

Third, an index on the state's role in economic management is included in the analysis. The index is composed of two questions: one, on the state's role in correcting poverty, and two, individuals' responsibility in providing for themselves. Those who believe in individual responsibility rather than the state's in economic management should be more likely to project the same reasoning on the issue of foreign aid and be more opposed to aid efforts.

Fourth, two variables are included to appraise the assigned role the donor country plays in world politics. The first of these variables, assertiveness, aims to determine how much the respondent envisions an influential and proactive home country in world affairs. It is theorized

that the more a respondent supports an assertive foreign policy, the more likely s/he will be supportive of foreign aid. The second of these variables, satisfaction with the current level of influence, derives from the argument that a satisfying foreign policy performance by the home country will increase the probability of support for foreign aid policies set by the government.

Finally, five, a variable is included to assess the effect of belief in ethical rules regulating international affairs. In accordance with the premises of liberal school in IR, it is assumed that those who believe in the existence of ethical standards on right and wrong would be more likely to support aid efforts as a 'good deed.' In contrast, the proponents of the realist world view giving little to no place for ethical concerns in international affairs, foreign aid would be considered as an option only if/when there is a prospect of material benefits for the donor country.

Findings

Figure 1 summarizes the aggregate data for support for foreign aid without any treatment. Accordingly, almost half of the respondents believe that foreign aid should neither be increased nor decreased. This is an understandable position given the relative lack of knowledge on actual aid figures. However, when we compare the two sides of the spectrum, 34.5 percent support an increase in spending on aid, while only 15 percent oppose it. The quick conclusion one can draw is that Turkish respondents predominantly take a pro-aid stance.

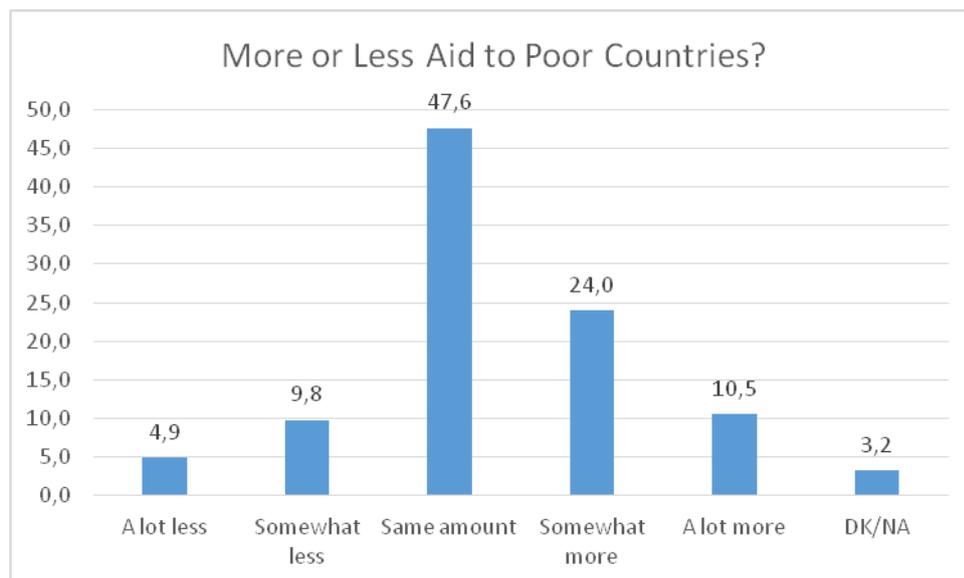


Figure 1

For the individual level of analysis, Table 2 summarizes the finding of the Model I, OLS regression analysis with the general support for foreign aid as the dependent variable.

Table 2: OLS Regression Results for the General Support for Foreign Aid

| | Support for Foreign Aid |
|-----|-------------------------|
| Age | -0,01 (0,00) |
| Sex | -0,01 (0,05) |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Income | 0,22 (0,02) |
| Education | 0,02* (0,01) |
| Ideology | 0,01 (0,01) |
| Religion | -0,03 (0,03) |
| Generalized Trust | -0,13* (0,08) |
| Interest in Politics | -0,13*** (0,03) |
| Financial Satisfaction | 0,10*** (0,03) |
| View on Immigration | -0,24*** (0,03) |
| State Role | -0,01*** (0,02) |
| National Pride | -0,05 (0,04) |
| Patriotism | -0,09*** (0,03) |
| Assertiveness | 0,12*** (0,03) |
| Satisfaction with Turkey's role | 0,09*** (0,03) |
| Support for Ethical Rules | 0,14*** (0,03) |
| | |
| _cons | 3,19*** (0,29) |
| R-squared | 0.1525 |

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
 $N = 1295$

According to the findings, several variables are found to be very highly significant. These are interest in politics, financial satisfaction, view on immigration, the state's role, patriotism, assertiveness, satisfaction with Turkey's role and finally support for ethical rules. Two variables, on the other hand, are found to display modest statistical significance: generalized trust in people and education.

Among the highly significant variables, four variables have positive coefficients. The first of these is financial satisfaction. Those who are more satisfied with their current economic situation are more likely to support foreign aid. This outcome supports the argument that individuals would only consider helping others when they feel financially secure. Given the extensive literature on rational choice model in economic decision-making, this is a rather expected conclusion. One can also argue that this situation should be especially valid in countries with much less sound economic structures and under the risk of economic crisis such as Greece and Turkey.

The second and third variables with positive coefficients are assertiveness and satisfaction with Turkey's role in world politics. Those who believe it would be better for them if Turkey has more influence over other countries and those who are satisfied with the current level of influence Turkey has in world affairs are more likely to support sending foreign aid. This finding supports the hypothesis that among respondents, foreign aid is considered as a foreign policy tool that can enhance donor countries'

influence in world politics and thus, those who want a more assertive foreign policy are more likely to support aid efforts. Similarly, those who are currently satisfied with Turkey's role in world politics may be argued to have higher levels of trust in the existing government's foreign policy and evaluate foreign aid efforts much more positively.

The fourth variable with a positive coefficient is support for normative rules. Those who believe there are rules that regulate right and wrong in international relations are more likely to support foreign aid. This finding is yet another form of support for the argument that ethical concerns matter in world politics, at least for public opinion. Individuals who believe that ethical standards exist in world affairs evaluate foreign aid according to the criteria they uphold and with little reason to object to helping others on ethical grounds, they take a much more positive stance on foreign aid.

Four highly significant variables, on the other hand, have negative coefficients: interest in politics, view on immigration, state role and patriotism. Those who are more interested in politics, have more patriotic views, are more opposed to immigrants and more critical of the state's involvement in the economy are less likely to support foreign aid. Among these variables, both the view on immigration and patriotism derive from similar concerns: higher levels of devotion to one's country and a more restrictive attitude towards foreigners reduce the likelihood of having positive attachments to other parts of the world and as such hinder developing positive attitudes towards aid efforts. This explanation is also supported by the fact that generalized trust in people was negatively correlated with support for aid. In short, those who are less trusting of other people are also less likely to support aid.

The third variable with a negative coefficient is state role in the economy, as expected. Respondents who envision a much more restrictive role for states in economic management are much less supportive of foreign aid. The explanation here derives from the traditional dichotomy between free market economics vs. regulative economics. Proponents of the former assert that in order to maximize economic efficiency, states should not intervene in how the economy works but rather the economic responsibility should be borne by individuals, who after all are rational utility maximizers. Thus, the argument continues, if some members of society - whether at the domestic level or at the international level, referring to countries as members of the international community - experience poverty and hardship, it should not be the system that is blamed, but the members themselves as it was their decisions and actions that caused this outcome. Given this, states should not help those in need as this will not only distort the general economic efficiency but would also be simply wrong and unfair to those who do not receive the same level of benefits.

Our final variable with a positive coefficient is interest in politics. Accordingly, and to our surprise, those who are more interested in politics are actually less supportive of foreign aid. This is puzzling on several grounds: First, it conflicts with certain studies, such as Diven and Constantelos based on the WVS data on six donor countries. Second, hypothetically one could argue that given the modest amounts donor countries allocate for foreign aid, those who are more interested in politics and thus, more knowledgeable about the actual amount spent on aid, would be expected to be more supportive of further aid. One account to explain this anomaly could be the dramatically increased aid budget in Turkey in the last few years accompanied by deteriorating economic conditions that could cause those who are more informed about the increased state expenses to critically question the utility of such aid programs. This suggests that the dynamics that hold true for donor countries with

advanced economies may not apply perfectly to developing ones. In any case, this finding deserves further investigations.

Finally we should note that education was also found to be a weakly significant determinant of aid preferences, namely the more educated a person is, the more likely s/he will support foreign aid. This behavior is rather expected and in line with the extensive literature on positive correlation between education and cosmopolitanism and cultural openness (Inglehart 1997).

The second part of this study aims to determine if the identity of the recipient country affects individual attitudes on foreign aid. As part of the experiment conducted with this objective, respondents are divided into two groups and asked whether they support sending aid to a hypothetical country - either a European or a Middle Eastern one in the Turkish survey - in a fictional scenario⁶. Table 3 below presents the t-test comparisons across groups for all three sub-scenarios.

Table 3: t-test Results

| | Treatment | n | Mean | SD | t | df | p | 95% Confidence Interval |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------------------------|
| Q1- Humanitarian reasons | Middle East | 791 | 3,77 | 0,87 | - | - | - | - |
| | European | 805 | 3,73 | 0,92 | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 1596 | 3,75 | 0,90 | 0,77 | 1594 | 0,443 | 3,70 3,79 |
| Q2- International coalition | Middle East | 791 | 3,41 | 0,92 | - | - | - | - |
| | European | 805 | 3,32 | 0,96 | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 1596 | 3,37 | 0,94 | 2,08 | 1594 | 0,038 | 3,32 3,41 |
| Q3-National interests | Middle East | 791 | 3,38 | 0,97 | - | - | - | - |
| | European | 805 | 3,19 | 1,01 | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 1596 | 3,29 | 1,00 | 3,97 | 1594 | 0,00 | 3,24 3,33 |

The t-test results suggest that while there is no statistically significant difference between the treatment groups in the first sub-scenario, there is a weak one for the second sub-scenario and a very high one for the third. This means that when the aid is sent for humanitarian reasons, the fact that the recipient country is located in Europe or the Middle East does not make any difference. Yet, when the stated objective of the aid is said to be national interest, the respondents differentiate between countries in Europe and the Middle East. This differentiation furthermore displays a clear preference for Middle Eastern countries in all three sub-scenarios.

Data obtained from another question that asks respondents which civilization Turkey belongs to helps us to put the apparent preference for the Middle East into perspective. At the aggregate level, 53.5 percent of the population believe Turkey is a Middle Eastern country, whereas 38 percent define Turkey as a European country. When we consider the individual level data, an even clearer picture arises: For those who consider Turkey as belonging to the Middle East, there is a remarkable difference between the levels of support of aiding a hypothetically European country as opposed to a Middle Eastern one, in favor of the latter. The t-test results for the second sub-scenario reveals a significant difference between aiding a Middle Eastern country (M=3,41, SD=0,93) and a European one (M=3,24, SD=0,97) among those who define Turkey

⁶ The details of the scenario are given in the previous section.

as a Middle Eastern country, at $t(836)=2,60$, $p=0,01$. We derive similar results for the third sub-scenario with ($M=3,33$, $SD=1,00$) for aiding a Middle Eastern country and ($M=3,01$, $SD=1,05$) for aiding a European country at $t(836)=0.00$ for those who define Turkey as a Middle Eastern country. These are important findings that suggest ideational parity between the home and recipient countries is a significant determinant of individual support for aid efforts. One could argue that such forces should be even more explicit for countries with much less question marks regarding its civilizational identity.

Conclusion

This paper, based on an ongoing project, aimed to explain individual attitudes towards foreign aid in developing countries. For this objective data obtained from a large-scale survey conducted in Turkey with a nationally representative sample composed of 1,596 respondents was analyzed through two models. In the first model, the influence of several factors that are identified in the only recently populated literature on foreign aid is tested. According to the results of OLS regression model, it is found out that financial satisfaction, satisfaction with the home country's role in the world, support for assertive foreign policy and belief in ethical rules governing international relations show a highly significant positive correlation, whereas interest in politics, a restrictive view on immigration, patriotism and finally support for a smaller state role in addressing poverty in the economy display a highly significant negative correlation with the dependent variable. Finally, education and generalized trust in people are found to be weakly significant determinant on attitudes on foreign aid.

In the second model, based on the experiment conducted within the survey, it is tested to what extent the civilizational identity of the aid recipient country affects individual preferences in the donor country. The t-test results suggest that the identity of the recipient country - either European or Middle Eastern - closely affects the opinion of the Turkish respondents, which display a clear preference for aiding Middle Eastern countries. This preference is particularly significant among those who themselves identify Turkey as a Middle Eastern country. When the recipient country is told to be ideationally close to the home country, respondents take a much more favorable position towards aid efforts. This result can not only be read as support for only very few studies that suggest that the identity of the recipient country matters in aid attitudes but even more, as support for the importance of civilizational and cultural identity in shaping foreign policy attitudes in general.

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