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## Who cares about human rights? Public opinion about human rights foreign policy

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### ABSTRACT

Literature on foreign aid and human rights often presupposes that constituents favor using foreign policy to promote human rights abroad and lead elected policymakers to pursue such policies to retain electoral support. This assumption, although frequently asserted, has not been empirically evaluated. And there are reasons to be skeptical about whether public opinion supports human rights foreign policy compared to other policy objectives. This article explores US public opinion about human rights, by asking two questions: Does the public think human rights should factor in foreign aid decisions and does the context—the strategic or economic relationship between the donor and recipient—affect this? This article uses results from a nationwide experimental survey to evaluate these questions. I find that the majority of respondents support cutting aid to punish human rights violators and that this depends minimally on the importance of the recipient.

I always suspected the United States wouldn't stay with human rights too long. It never did play in Peoria. — American humorist Art Buchwald (1981: 2)

The above quote by humorist Art Buchwald notwithstanding, much of the existing literature on foreign aid and human rights assumes that public opinion favors using foreign policy to promote human rights abroad and that decision makers take this into account when formulating foreign policy. The following quotes illustrate this assumption at work in the scholarly literature:

[The practical justification is that] US citizens deserve to know how their tax dollars are spent. Some segments of the US public appear to want human rights to be considered when foreign aid is allocated, yet anecdotal evidence indicates that the United States has spent immense amounts of aid to prop up regimes that violated the human rights of their citizens. (Poe et al. 1994: 541)

Finally, making aid conditional on respect for basic human rights helps donors justify the expense of aid to their taxpayers, as financing repressive regimes is unlikely to find support among voters in their own countries. (Carey 2007: 450)

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 Data used in the study can be obtained for purposes of replication at: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jhr>. Supplemental data for this article can be accessed on the publisher's website.

Congress and the American public believed that U.S. foreign policy should reflect the moral principles of the nation. (Apodaca 2006: 34)

[P]eople in states care about people in other states, and sometimes, especially in democracies where voter preferences matter, these cares influence government action. (Goldsmith and Posner 2005: 109)

Although often incorporated into a discussion of foreign policy and human rights, these assumptions of public opinion have not been empirically evaluated. As a result, we lack a comprehensive understanding of how the public views the role of human rights in foreign policy. Is it true that voters would prefer to cut foreign aid to repressive regimes? Does the public care enough about human rights in other countries to have these assumed policy preferences? Rather than assuming that the US public universally and unconditionally favors conditioning foreign aid on human rights, this article evaluates this assumed preference. In particular, this article unpacks US public opinion about human rights by asking the following questions: Does the public think human rights should be a factor in foreign aid decisions? And, secondly, does the context—for instance, the strategic or economic relationship between the donor country and potential recipient—affect this? To answer these questions, I developed and administered a survey experiment with over 1500 respondents using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk platform. I find that respondents overwhelmingly favor punishing human rights violators by cutting foreign aid and that the importance of the donor to the recipient matters in only in small ways. This finding provides strong support for the underlying assumption that constituents do not want foreign aid going to repressive regimes.

This article proceeds as follows. First, I discuss the relevant literature linking human rights and foreign aid. As mentioned above, this literature often assumes that the public wants a foreign policy conditioned on human rights. What little public opinion data exist on human rights foreign policy do not directly evaluate this assumption. I briefly address the role of public opinion in foreign policy more generally to frame the relevance of this question. Next, I outline my expectations and hypotheses. I then describe the research design used in this article, a new survey experiment designed to investigate public opinion about human rights and foreign aid. Finally, I present my results and discuss the implications of this research.

## Human rights and foreign policy

Scholars have studied for decades the connection between human rights and US foreign aid at the national level, asking whether the United States restricts aid to human rights violators as required by US law (Stohl et al. 1984; Cingranelli and Pasquarello 1985; Carleton and Stohl 1985; McCormick and Mitchell 1988; Poe 1992; Regan 1995; Apodaca and Stohl 1999).<sup>1</sup> Much of the early work in this field found that, despite pro-human rights rhetoric and laws forbidding aid to states that do not respect human rights, US foreign assistance continued to flow to human rights-violating regimes. Why would the United States make laws, like the Section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act (Foreign Assistance Act of 1974: 1815), that nominally link foreign aid to human rights and then fail to consistently apply it? One answer is that donor interests matter. The United States is unlikely to punish human rights violators that are economically or strategically important to national interests. Put differently, while policymakers may want to limit foreign aid to human rights violators *in*

*general*, they are willing to make exceptions if the would-be recipient is important. The literature on foreign aid supports this notion; scholars consistently find that donor interest is a significant determinant of foreign aid (Alesina and Dollar 2000).

The comparative literature on foreign aid and human rights similarly finds that recipients who are strategically or economically important to donor countries can generally abuse human rights with little to no impact on their foreign aid inflows. In other words, donors are unlikely to punish important recipients with foreign aid cuts. Gillies (1996) find that states only act assertively in response to human rights violations when the costs of doing so are perceived to be low relative to other national interests. Barratt (2008) similarly finds that human rights concerns do not trump economic and strategic concerns. Recipients that are less important, on the other hand, may find that certain types of aid are conditioned on human rights. In particular, Nielsen (2013) finds that donors are more likely to condition foreign aid to economic sectors than to human rights or social sectors. In sum, the literature provides a reasonably robust understanding of the conditions under which aid would not be conditioned on human rights, namely when the donor depends on the recipient country for advancement of its national interests.

The extant literature seems to assume that if the donor country does not have a security or economic dependence on the recipient country, then one would expect the donor to punish the recipient for human rights violations. What is missing is an explanation for why this would be. In other words, in the absence of a valuable donor–recipient relationship, why would the donor choose to condition foreign aid on human rights? Some literature (e.g., Nielsen 2013) considers the role of media reporting and finds that recipients whose violations are under media criticism are more likely to face sanctions. Theoretically, however, the presence of media coverage by itself does not answer the question of why decision makers would condition aid on human rights. The literature rests on the assumption that media coverage creates an incentive for leaders to punish human rights violators to avoid appearing complicit with violations. As Nielsen puts it:

If aid recipients come under sharp criticism, elected officials in donor countries could risk electoral retribution for implicitly supporting rights violations abroad. To preempt criticism, politicians might adopt rights-orientated aid policies to assure citizens that their tax dollars are not funding repression. (2013: 793)

Other literature considers the role of human rights organizations (HROs), arguing that these HROs can “name and shame” donor countries into sanctioning human rights violators (Murdie and Peksen 2013). This provides some insight into the role that HROs play in providing information to international actors and mobilizing pressure to “do something” in response to repressive regimes. The assumption that HROs can, in fact, pressure decision makers in donor countries to “do something” continues to rely on the assumption that decision makers see some political benefit to acting in the face of HRO pressure. At least one source of this benefit is public opinion; as I will discuss more below, leaders may respond to this pressure to avoid appearing complicit with repressive regimes, a politically unpopular position.

Despite the commonly held assumption that the public wants foreign policy to consider human rights, little existing data actually explore public attitudes about the role of human rights in foreign policy. One exception is the Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey. In 2012, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey found that 87% of respondents believe that “promoting and defending human rights” is a very important (28%) or somewhat important (59%)

foreign policy objective (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2012: 16). To compare to other foreign policy objectives, nearly all (97%) respondents consider protecting the jobs of American workers very important (83%) or somewhat important (14%) goals. Combating international terrorism also ranks very highly, with 96% of respondents listing it as a very important (64%) or somewhat important (32%) foreign policy objective. What this survey does not do, however, is ask respondents to consider *relative* importance or to evaluate the importance of various foreign policy objectives when they clash. Other studies find that support for human rights as a foreign policy goal is “volatile and substantially influenced by major events” and “depends strongly upon the costs of doing so” (McFarland and Mathews 2005: 366). In their own survey, McFarland and Mathews find that “Americans strongly endorse human rights as abstract principles, but their commitment to human rights, their willingness to invest national resources and to take risks on behalf of human rights, is much weaker” (2005: 379).

## Public opinion and human rights

This article explores a key microfoundation of the foreign aid and human rights literature, one that assumes donors would condition foreign aid on human rights. Given the findings of the existing literature, it is still puzzling that politicians in donor countries would, at least under certain conditions, use foreign aid as a tool to punish human rights violations. We have a better understanding of the conditions under which donors would *not* condition aid—when the recipient is strategically or economically important—than of the incentives *for* conditioning aid on human rights. To answer this question, I investigate public opinion about human rights and seek to understand the support for the underlying assumption that a rights-oriented foreign policy is good politics.

Although a detailed review is outside the scope of this article, it is important to briefly highlight the debates in the American politics literature about the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy. This literature provides some insight into the extent that public opinion about human rights matters for actual foreign policy decision making. Early literature on public opinion and foreign policy was pessimistic that public opinion mattered at all for foreign policymaking. Scholars initially questioned whether the public could hold rational opinions about foreign policy compared to domestic policy. The Almond-Lippman consensus concluded that public opinion on foreign policy was “volatile and lacked a coherent structure” (Baum and Potter 2008: 44). Since the Almond-Lippman consensus, however, scholars have found that public opinion regarding foreign policy issues is “rational and reasonable” (Shapiro and Page 1988: 222). Further, scholars find that the public possesses “general orientations that help to inform and anchor its opinion” (Hurwitz and Peffley 1987: 1114) and that Americans have accessible attitudes about foreign policy (Adlrich et al. 1989). Further, in response to the volatility of public opinion, changes in public opinion are largely logical results of “changing circumstances or changing information” (Shapiro and Page 1988: 243) or a process of deliberation (Kriesi 2004).

Beyond the question of whether Americans have stable foreign policy preferences is whether policymakers respond to public opinion regarding foreign policy. Some scholarship has found that public opinion influences foreign policy (Page and Shapiro 1983). Sobel (2001), for example, highlights Bush’s attempts to court public opinion to support the Persian Gulf War as evidence that public opinion matters to policymakers. Page (1994), however, highlights the empirical difficulties in parsing out the causal relationships between

public opinion and foreign policy, concluding that there is a great deal of uncertainty. He points out that findings are “consistent with a rather high level of democratic responsiveness” (Page 1994: 28). Yet, it remains “difficult to sort out whether public opinion has influenced policy, or policy has influenced opinion” (Page 1994: 26). A comprehensive review of the public opinion and foreign policy literature summarizes the state of the scholarship as such: “the public is able to develop and hold coherent views on foreign policy, that citizens can and do apply their attitudes to their electoral decisions, and that this leads politicians to consider the electoral implications of their overseas activities” (Baum and Potter 2008: 44).

Most of the existing literature on public opinion and human rights focuses on public support for humanitarian interventions, rather than foreign aid or sanctions. Examining the relationship between public opinion and Congressional votes for intervention in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, Hildebrandt et al. find that public opinion does influence Congressional votes. They note that “[i]f legislators choose to ignore public opinion on issues of foreign policy, they do so at their own peril” (2013: 249). In a similar vein, Sobel notes that “the public’s attitudes set the parameters within which policymakers operate” (2001: x). In one of the few studies of public opinion on foreign aid, Milner and Tingley find that “publics in donor countries in the aggregate may have fairly stable preferences about aid and that these are driven by both material and cultural factors” (2013: 394).

Research has further pointed to the informational disadvantage that the public has in foreign policy (Baum and Potter 2008). Areas of human rights and foreign aid are likely to exemplify this informational disadvantage: The public is unlikely to have much independent information about these foreign policy issue areas. Individuals often use heuristic cues or cognitive shortcuts when evaluating policies (Baum 2003). As a result, elite cues and framing can shape public opinion on these issues (Chong and Druckman 2007). Framing entails communicating information and presenting the reader with a “central organizing idea” with which to make sense of relevant events (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 3). Berinsky and Kinder conclude that “[f]rames not only enhance understanding; they influence opinions” (2006: 654).

Another relevant strand of this literature considers latent public opinion and foreign policy. Foreign aid policy and human rights policy are different from military policy, the focus of most of the existing literature. Americans pay more attention to questions of military force, especially in the post-Cold War era (Baum 2003), while Americans know “virtually nothing about foreign aid” (Milner and Tingley 2013: 390). Absent some prompt, most Americans are unlikely to have a knee-jerk opinion about foreign aid policy or human rights policy, as compared to fighting a war or otherwise using military force. Public opinion on these issue areas is likely to be latent, with the potential to be activated. Decision makers would, in general, want to avoid taking any action that would activate public opinion in opposition to policies. They take the pulse, so to speak, of public opinion and make decisions in anticipation of the tide of public opinion. In the area of human rights and foreign policy, there is a danger in complicity; all else equal, politicians would prefer not to appear to support repressive regimes.

As Baum and Potter suggest, “latent [or ‘prospective’] public opinion exerts a constant influence as leaders anticipate future public reactions to their current policies” (2008: 55). When evaluating the relationship between human rights and foreign aid, scholars typically assume that latent public opinion favors conditionality. Sikkink (1993) highlights the role of latent public opinion on human rights policy. In fact, she is skeptical that mass public

opinion drove the change in human rights foreign policy that occurred in the United States in the late 1970s. She focuses instead on the importance of changes in elite opinion. She references US House Member Donald Fraser (D – MN) saying that “there was ‘very little’ interest in human rights in his liberal Minnesota district and ‘no demand’ for his human rights work from his constituency” (Sikkink 1993: 161). However, she continues, policy-makers “were aware that concerns for human rights could be framed in ways that strongly appealed to the American public” (Sikkink 1993: 161). The underlying assumption is that the American public would, if given the opportunity, prefer foreign policy that promotes human rights to a foreign policy that supports repressive regimes. This article evaluates this assumption.

## Hypotheses

My claim is not that the assumptions made by the existing literature are wrong but that they lack empirical support. Assessing this longstanding claim will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how — and if — constituents care about human rights abroad, and will provide clarity on the conditions under which it holds. To assume that the public universally wants foreign policy to promote human rights abroad is a strong assumption. Constituents may put higher priority on other foreign policy objectives. Alternatively, constituents may care little for human rights and disregard them across the board. The human rights conditions in another country are an abstract and distant concern; even in the absence of competing foreign policy claims, constituents may see little reason to condition foreign aid on human rights. What is more, existing literature demonstrates that donors do not always condition foreign aid on human rights but instead follow donor interests (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Nielsen 2013). Is this deviation from human rights foreign policy consistent with public opinion? Does latent public opinion, in general, support using foreign aid as a tool to punish human rights violators? This survey is designed to evaluate these two important questions.

I expect that, all else equal, voters will favor cutting aid to human rights violating regimes. As the existing literature assumes, voters prefer that foreign policy reflects the values and “moral principles of the nation” (Apodaca 2006: 34) and that financing repressive regimes is politically unpopular (Nielsen 2013). The Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey, mentioned above, finds that respondents generally consider “promoting and defending human rights” a very important or important foreign policy goal (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2012: 16). Supporting human rights abroad using foreign aid policy as a punishment tool is low cost, compared to the use of military force. Further, polls suggest that Americans believe the United States gives too much in foreign aid (World Public Opinion 2010) and, thus, may support any rationale for cutting back on aid commitments. I hypothesize that respondents will want to decrease or eliminate foreign aid to recipient countries that violate human rights:

*Hypothesis 1:* Respondents are most likely to favor decreasing aid to recipient countries that violate human rights.

I refine this hypothesis by considering the relationship between the donor and the recipient country. Again, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey finds that promoting human rights is important, but it falls far down the list of priorities. Other goals, such as

protecting American jobs and combating terrorism, find nearly universal support (The Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2012). What happens, then, when promoting human rights comes into conflict with other foreign policy goals? I expect that respondents will be less willing to punish human rights-violating recipients that are economically or strategically important to the United States. In this case, the costs of using foreign aid as a punishment tool are higher if such punishment damages the relationship between the donor and recipient and could hurt other foreign policy goals. On the other hand, when the recipient is not important, cutting foreign aid as a punishment for human rights violations is essentially costless. I expect to see the most support for cutting or eliminating foreign aid if constituents favor human rights foreign policy in the abstract and when costs are low:

*Hypothesis 2:* Respondents are more likely to favor decreasing aid to recipient countries that violate human rights, but only when the recipient country is neither economically nor strategically valuable to US interests.

In addition to considering the support for foreign aid as a tool for punishing violators—a “stick”—I am also interested in the conditions under which respondents favor using foreign aid as a reward or a “carrot.” Most of the existing literature focuses on foreign aid conditionality as a punishment strategy: cut foreign aid to violators. Yet, conditionality is a two-way street: If countries improve human rights, we would expect foreign aid to increase as a reward. Just as I expect opinions about punishing violators to be contingent on the importance of the recipient to the donor, I expect voters to favor increasing aid as a reward for improvements to depend on the recipient’s importance:

*Hypothesis 3:* Respondents are most likely to favor increasing aid to recipient countries that show improvements in human rights and are economically or strategically valuable to US interests.

To evaluate the above hypotheses, it is necessary to establish a baseline category: a recipient country that is not important to US interests and with no mention of human rights conditions. This captures a “neutral” case. In addition, the null hypotheses implied in the above hypotheses suggest that human rights would have no influence on opinions about foreign aid to the recipient. In the analyses that follow, then, I will compare the hypotheses above to the following baseline and null hypotheses:

*Baseline hypothesis:* People will favor keeping aid about the same when the recipient is neither economically nor strategically important and human rights are not mentioned.

*Null hypothesis:* There will be no difference in preferences for foreign aid based on the recipient country’s human rights record.

## Research design

I use a survey experiment to evaluate respondents’ opinions about foreign aid based on the potential recipient’s human rights with various levels of economic and strategic importance to the United States. I focus on foreign aid as the policy of interest in this study because the bulk of the literature on foreign policy and human rights focuses on foreign aid, allowing this survey to fill an important gap in this literature. Other policy options—such as humanitarian intervention or economic sanctions—are less commonly used foreign policy tools. Foreign

aid as a foreign policy tool is more flexible: Aid can be increased, decreased, eliminated or kept the same. The dependent variable in this study is the respondent’s preferred level of aid for Chad: increase aid, keep aid the same, decrease aid, or eliminate aid. I selected Chad, rather than a fictional country, for two reasons.<sup>2</sup> First, using a real country makes the treatment seem more believable, as some respondents will have heard of Chad. At the same time, it is not a country that was in the news at the time of the survey and many respondents are unlikely to have strong preexisting beliefs about US foreign policy towards Chad.

Using foreign aid as the policy tool does present challenges; in particular, Americans vastly overestimate the percentage of the US budget allocated to foreign aid. In a 2010 survey, respondents estimated that 25% of the US budget was allocated to foreign aid, while aid is actually only 1% (World Public Opinion 2010). A 2013 Pew Research Center survey found that nearly 50% of respondents believe foreign aid to the world’s needy should be cut (Pew Research Center 2013). Combined, these two findings raise the concern that respondents would suggest cutting foreign aid regardless of human rights or economic/strategic context simply to cut government spending. The nature of the experiment should mitigate the effect of these perceptions on my data by randomizing which treatments these respondents receive. To further address this concern and to capture preconceived ideas about foreign aid, I include two additional questions. I ask respondents to estimate the percent of the US budget that goes to foreign aid. Next, I give them the real number and ask if they think this percentage is too high, too low, or just right.

The treatment prompt provides details about Chad’s human rights conditions—either an Amnesty International (AI) report on violations, an AI report on improvements, or no mention of human rights. I use AI reports because it is the largest nongovernmental organization (NGO) dedicated to human rights and has a reputation for being a reliable and trustworthy source of information (Ron et al. 2005). Although this survey design does not compare the effect of different sources of information, Amnesty International’s credibility is important for potential framing effects. In the public opinion literature on framing, the credibility of the frame’s source matters significantly for successful framing (Druckman 2001). If respondents perceive Amnesty International as a credible source of information, the prompt is more likely to affect their opinion. Next, the relationship between the United States and Chad varies for treatment groups. Chad will either be relatively unimportant for US interests or economically and strategically important. Table 1 summarizes the resulting six treatment groups.<sup>3</sup>

This research design manipulates the wording of the treatment prompts to frame the scenario along two different dimensions: human rights in the recipient country (Chad) and the recipient country’s importance to the United States. A comprehensive literature review on framing explains it as “the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (Chong and Druckman 2007: 104). Of particular relevance to this research design, the wording of the survey questions shapes what

**Table 1.** Treatment groups.

	Recipient is Strategically & Economically Important to United States	No Importance
AI report on human rights abuses	A	B
AI report on improvements	C	D
No AI report	E	F (Baseline)

respondents understand as important about the issue at hand (Kinder and Sanders 1990; Entman 2004). In four of the six treatment prompts, respondents read a scenario that includes a human rights frame with an Amnesty International report highlighting either worsening human rights conditions or improving conditions.<sup>4</sup> After framing the US relationship with Chad and the human rights conditions in Chad, respondents are asked their opinion on foreign aid allocations to Chad.<sup>5</sup>

It is also important to identify whether respondents are using a particular frame in their analysis of policy decisions. Framing effects occur if “a given consideration—say free speech in the evaluation of a hate group’s right to rally—needs to be stored in memory to be available for retrieval and use.... In addition to being available, the consideration must be accessible, meaning its activation potential must exceed a certain threshold so that the consideration is retrieved from long-term memory” (Chong and Druckman 2007: 110). To assess whether respondents considered human rights in their responses, I asked a follow-up question: “On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning ‘not at all important’ and 5 meaning ‘very important,’ how important is Chad’s human rights record in the decision to give or not to give foreign aid?” Over half of the respondents (58%) selected a 4 or 5, suggesting that the human rights frame was influential in their foreign aid policy preference. Another 27% selected the middle category, while less than 15% indicated human rights was not very important (a 1 or 2 response).

I begin each treatment prompt with two or three sentences about Chad. Respondents in Groups A, C, and E are told that Chad is an important ally and trading partner to the United States, using the following phrase:

Chad has been a longstanding ally and valuable trading partner to the United States. As such, Chad plays an important role in US national security and economic well-being. If the United States cuts foreign assistance to Chad, it is likely to negatively affect the US economy and its security interests in the region.

Respondents in Groups B, D, and F receive the following neutral statement about Chad’s relationship with the United States:

Chad is a mid-sized country in sub-Saharan Africa. Like many countries in Africa, the United States has diplomatic relations with Chad.

Next, some respondents are presented an excerpt of a fictional Amnesty International report on the human rights conditions in Chad. Respondents in Groups A and B are informed of worsening human rights conditions in Chad with the following statement<sup>6</sup>: Evidence gathered by Amnesty International indicates that villages in northern Chad, in an area held by the rebel group United Front for Democratic Change, endured multiple scorched earth offensives carried out by the Chadian military in 2012. Witnesses also described bombing attacks as recent as April 2013 that killed children and other civilians:

“This systematic and deliberate targeting of civilians follows a disturbing pattern that was used by the Chadian government to a devastating effect in northern Chad,” said XXXX, Amnesty International’s Chad researcher.

“Deliberately attacking civilians is a war crime. Given the scale, as well as the apparently systematic nature of these attacks, they may also constitute crimes against humanity.”

To evaluate the “carrot” hypothesis that respondents would want to increase foreign aid to countries that are improving their human rights conditions, respondents in Groups C and D are given the following statement:

Amnesty International welcomes the improvements made in Chad towards fulfilling its human rights obligations and strengthening the rule of law. President Idriss Deby’s government continues to improve conditions for the country’s population.

“After decades of civil war and rampant human rights abuses, the Chadian government has made great strides towards respecting human rights,” said XXXX, Amnesty International’s Chad researcher.

Finally, the remaining two groups, E and F, receive no information about human rights conditions in Chad. Respondents in Group E are still given information about Chad’s importance to the United States as noted above, while Group F serves as the baseline group and is given a neutral statement about Chad as noted above. Varying along these two dimensions—recipient–donor relationship importance and recipient human rights conditions — results in the six treatment groups presented in [Table 1](#).

In addition to the primary dependent variable question—asking the respondent to identify a foreign aid policy towards Chad—I ask two follow-up questions to help understand the respondent’s opinion about foreign aid in this context. First, I ask how strongly they feel about the level of aid they selected. Second, in the treatments that include a human rights prompt, I ask them to identify how much Chad’s human rights record factored into the decision. Finally, the survey includes a number of standard demographic questions including gender, age, education, income, employment status, political-party affiliation, and political ideology.

The hypotheses outlined in the previous section can be restated in terms of the expected relationships between the treatment groups. In [Table 2](#), I identify these expectations.

I used Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to conduct the experiment in May and June of 2014 and had 1,541 respondents across the six groups. As MTurk is not a nationally representative sample pool, caution is necessary in generalizing these results outside of the sample. Berinsky et al. (2012) find in their analysis that the MTurk respondent pool compares favorably to other survey sampling methods, including samples of convenience (such as

**Table 2.** Hypotheses by treatment group.

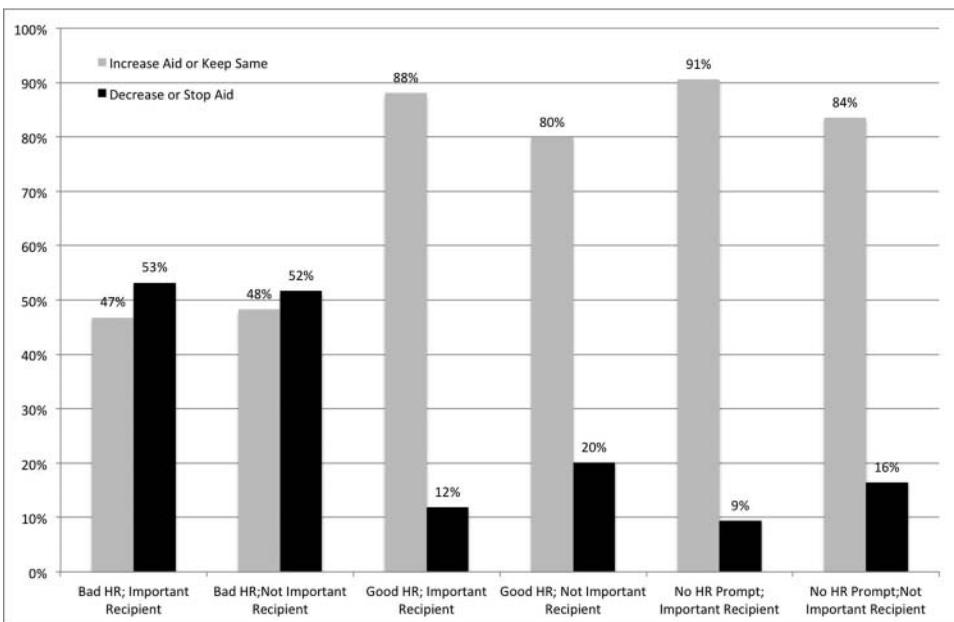
	Recipient is Strategically & Economically Important to US	No Importance
AI report on human rights abuses	A: More likely than baseline to select “Decrease Aid” or “Eliminate Aid” (Hypothesis 1)	B: More likely than baseline to select “Decrease Aid” or “Eliminate Aid” (Hypothesis 1) More Likely than Group A to select “Decrease Aid” or “Eliminate Aid” (Hypothesis 2)
AI report on improvements	C: Most likely to select “Increase Aid” (Hypothesis 3)	D: More Likely than baseline to select “Increase Aid” but less likely than Group C (Hypothesis 3)
No AI report	E: No hypothesis	F: Favor keeping aid about the same (baseline hypothesis)

college students) and the online American National Election Panel Study (ANESP). Compared to the ANESP sample, Berinsky et al.'s MTurk sample was younger and slightly more liberal (2012). There is reason to believe that these demographic characteristics matter for preferences about foreign aid. In general liberals are more supportive of foreign aid when it targets needy recipients, while conservatives favor aid when it goes to countries of significance to the United States (Milner and Tingley 2013). To address these concerns, I randomize respondent assignment to treatment groups.<sup>7</sup> I also include a variety of demographic control variables in the multivariate regression analyses to control for potential demographic differences. Republican respondents are a small proportion of my MTurk sample; approximately 17% identify as Republican or lean Republican. To better capture how party affiliation might condition responses to the treatment prompts, I include an interaction term in the analyses.<sup>8</sup> This will allow for a more nuanced discussion of the generalizability of the results given the ideological bias of the MTurk sample.<sup>9</sup>

## Results and discussion

A first look at the findings highlights some key differences between the treatment groups. In Figure 1, I collapse the four potential responses into two: decrease/eliminate aid and increase/keep aid the same. The darker shaded bars in the bar chart represent respondents who favor eliminating or decreasing aid after reading the prompt. The lightly shaded bars represent respondents who favor keeping aid the same or increasing aid after reading the prompt.

The first finding illustrated in Figure 1 is the vast difference between respondents who read a prompt with Amnesty International's condemnation of human rights and those that



**Figure 1.** Frequencies by treatment group—responses collapsed to decrease/stop aid or increase/keep aid the same.

did not. Over 50% of those respondents favor punishing the recipient country by either eliminating aid or decreasing aid. The highest percentage in any of the other groups is 20%. A difference of proportions test indicates that these differences are significant ( $p < .05$ ). These simple differences provide strong preliminary support for Hypothesis 1: Respondents who are prompted with deteriorating human rights conditions in the recipient country are more likely to favor cutting foreign aid than respondents in any other treatment group. A second noteworthy finding is that, contrary to my expectations, the finding that 50% of respondents want to punish violators does not vary depending on the importance of the recipient. In other words, when told that the recipient country is violating human rights, respondents do not seem to care if the recipient is economically or strategically important to US national interests; over 50% of respondents in both Groups A and B favor cutting aid.

In Figure 2, I provide the frequencies for all four response options. The differences between groups are all statistically significant. Again, a stark difference emerges between the two groups that read about Chad’s deteriorating human rights conditions and the other four groups. Considering each response option separately highlights the nuanced difference between Treatment Groups A and B. As Figure 1 illustrated, respondents in both groups are in favor of punishing the human rights-violating recipient country. Figure 2, however, illustrates that the donor–recipient relationship matters slightly for the severity of the punishment. Respondents who are prompted with information about the recipient country’s value to US economic and security interests (Group A) are more likely to favor decreasing aid (over 30%) than stopping aid (20%), while respondents in Group B who receive no information about this relationship are more inclined to select stopping aid (nearly 30%) than decreasing aid (just over 20%). At first glance, this is some evidence that respondents are willing to punish a recipient that violates human rights regardless of its importance to the United States, but that the preferred form of punishment may differ.

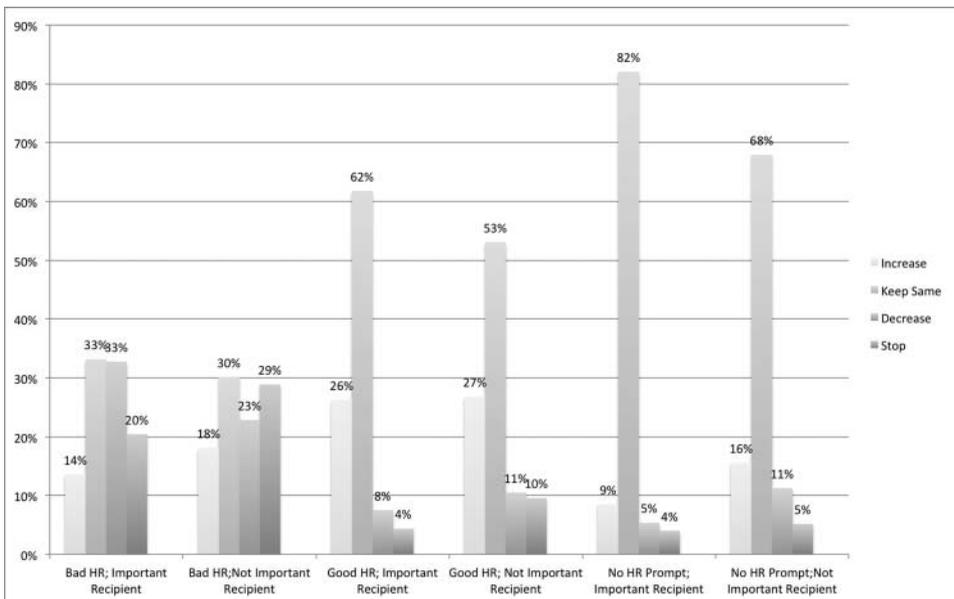


Figure 2. Frequencies by treatment group for all four responses.

Although this survey experiment randomizes the treatments, respondent demographic characteristics may possibly influence responses. Appendix I (see supplemental material) contains a table of descriptive statistics. My sample, similar to Berinsky et al.'s (2012), is younger than national adult samples and is more liberal. Unlike Berinsky et al.'s MTurk sample, mine is majority female. I conduct a series of multivariate analyses to control for demographic characteristics. In addition to these demographic controls, I also analyze an interactive relationship between political-party affiliation and the treatment prompts to capture whether political-party affiliation conditions responses to the treatment prompts. In the first analysis, I collapse the responses into a dichotomous variable (similar to Figure 1) for a probit analysis. The dependent variable is equal to "1" if the respondent indicates stopping or decreasing aid (punishing the violator) and "0" otherwise. I include an independent variable for each treatment group, with Group F (the baseline group) as the excluded category. I present these results in Table 3.

Table 3 presents the marginal effects of the various treatment groups compared to the baseline group, while holding the demographic variables constant at their means (continuous variables) and modes (dichotomous variables).<sup>10</sup> Respondents in the baseline group (Group F) read a neutral statement about Chad's relationship to the United States and no human rights prompt. The results again show strong support for my first hypothesis. In particular, Democratic and Independent/Undecided respondents prompted with human rights abuses in Chad are most likely to favor decreasing or eliminating aid compared to the baseline treatment group. Contrary to my expectations, however, this is not dependent on Chad's importance to the United States. The marginal effects of being in Group A (where Chad is important to the United States) and B (where Chad is not) are similar. For Democratic respondents, reading an Amnesty International report on abuses in Chad leads to an over 40% increase in the probability a respondent indicates cutting foreign aid, compared to the baseline group regardless of Chad's importance to the United States. For Independent/Undecided respondents, it led to an over 30% increase compared to the baseline group. In contrast, Republican respondents were more likely to favor decreasing or eliminating aid—compared to the baseline group—only when Chad was not identified as important to US strategic and economic interests (Group B). This suggests that Republican respondents

**Table 3.** Marginal effects after probit regression (Dependent variable: Stop/decrease aid).

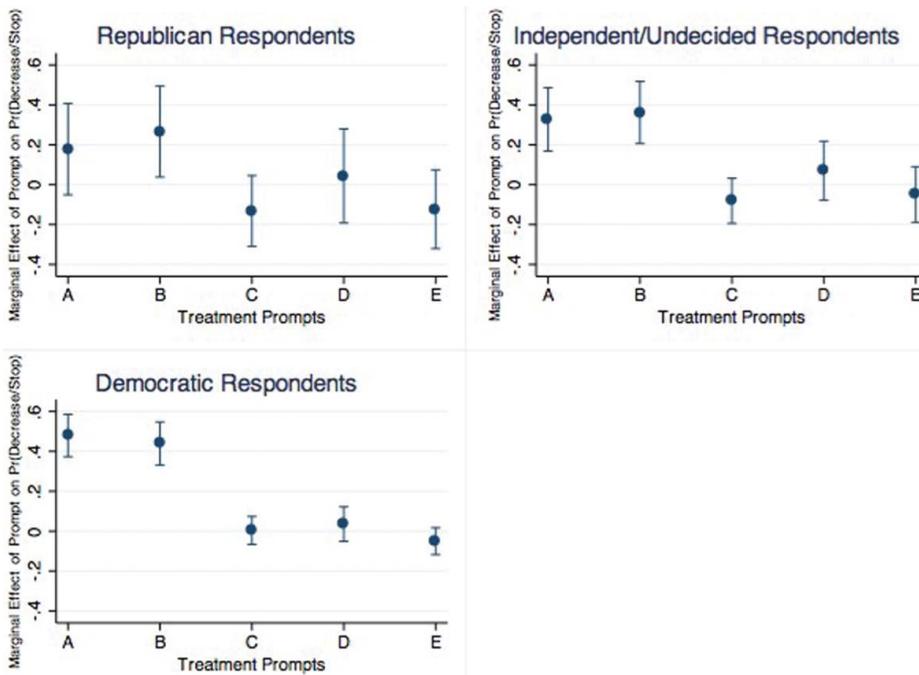
	Marginal Effect of Treatments (Compared to Baseline Group F) – Democrats	Marginal Effect of Treatments (Compared to Baseline Group F) – Independents/Undecided	Marginal Effect of Treatments (Compared to Baseline Group F) – Republicans
Treatment A (Bad; Important)	0.479 (0.054)***	0.327 (0.081)***	0.178 (0.117)
Treatment B (Bad; Not Important)	0.439(0.055)***	0.362(0.079)***	0.267(0.117)*
Treatment C (Good; Important)	0.004(0.036)	−0.081(0.058)	−0.132(0.091)
Treatment D (Good; Not Important)	0.035(0.044)	0.070(0.075)	0.044(0.120)
Treatment E (No Human Rights mention; Important)	−0.050(0.034)	−0.049(0.071)	−0.123(0.101)
Number of Observations	1429		
R <sup>2</sup>	.1875		

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

are more sensitive to the potential costs in punishing an important partner. Regardless of political-party affiliation, all respondents in Groups C and D, which read an AI report on improvements in Chad, showed no significant difference than the baseline group. Group E, which read no human rights prompt but was told that Chad was important to the United States, was less likely than the baseline group to suggest decreasing or stopping foreign aid. Figure 3 illustrates these marginal effects. In sum, respondents prompted with poor human rights conditions in the recipient country are much more likely than others to favor cutting foreign aid. The only exception is Republican respondents in Group A, who were prompted with an important recipient.

The above analysis collapses responses into a dichotomous variable: decrease/eliminate aid or not. I also estimated a multinomial logit model to show a complete picture of how respondents evaluated the four options that they were given. Table 4 presents the marginal effects of the treatment prompts compared to the baseline Group F (no human rights prompt and no mention of economic or strategic importance to the United States) for each possible response of the dependent variable, divided by political-party affiliation.<sup>11</sup>

Democratic respondents that read about human rights improvements are 11–14% more likely than the baseline group to favor increasing aid. Republican respondents are nearly 20% more likely to favor increasing aid to a country that is improving its human rights



**Figure 3.** Marginal effect of treatment groups on respondent selects decrease or stop aid, compared to “neutral” prompt (Group F). Note. Marginal effects calculated after probit model in Table 3. Dots represent the marginal effect estimate, with line representing the 95% confidence interval. Note on x-axis labels: Group A prompt: Bad human rights, important recipient; Group B prompt: Bad human rights, not an important recipient; Group C prompt: Good human rights, important recipient; Group D prompt: Good human rights, not important recipient; Group E prompt: No human rights mention, important recipient; Group F prompt (neutral statement, comparison category): No human rights mention, not an important recipient.

**Table 4.** Marginal effects after multinomial logit regression.

	Marginal Effect of Treatments (Compared to Baseline Group F) – Democrats	Marginal Effect of Treatments (Compared to Baseline Group F) – Independents/Undecided	Marginal Effect of Treatments (Compared to Baseline Group F) – Republicans
<b>Outcome: Increase Aid</b>			
Treatment A (Bad; Important)	–0.076 (0.054)	–0.013(0.061)	0.087(0.049)
Treatment B (Bad; Not Important)	–0.046(0.056)	0.012(0.062)	0.123(0.058)*
Treatment C (Good; Important)	0.113(0.056)*	0.051(0.056)	0.196(0.048)***
Treatment D (Good; Not Important)	0.142(0.065)*	0.071(0.068)	0.075(0.051)
Treatment E (No HR; Important)	–0.128(0.053)*	–0.092(0.052)	– <sup>1</sup>
<b>Outcome: Decrease Aid</b>			
Treatment A (Bad; Important)	0.300(0.052)***	0.191(0.072)**	–0.031(0.097)
Treatment B (Bad; Not Important)	0.180(0.048)***	0.082(0.064)	–0.056(0.095)
Treatment C (Good; Important)	0.010(0.031)	–0.067(0.043)	–0.119(0.81)
Treatment D (Good; Not Important)	0.011(0.036)	–0.034(0.052)	–0.001(0.107)
Treatment E (No HR; Important)	–0.048(0.028)	–0.032(0.055)	–0.137(0.085)
<b>Outcome: Eliminate Aid</b>			
Treatment A (Bad; Important)	0.180(0.042)***	0.137(0.067)*	0.221(0.090)*
Treatment B (Bad; Not Important)	0.270(0.049)***	0.285(0.073)***	0.331(0.100)**
Treatment C (Good; Important)	–0.009(0.016)	–0.012(0.043)	–0.014(0.050)
Treatment D (Good; Not Important)	0.023(0.025)	0.107(0.062)	0.045(0.074)
Treatment E (No HR; Important)	0.001(0.020)	–0.014(0.051)	0.019(0.063)
Number of Observations		1429	
R <sup>2</sup>		.1344	

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

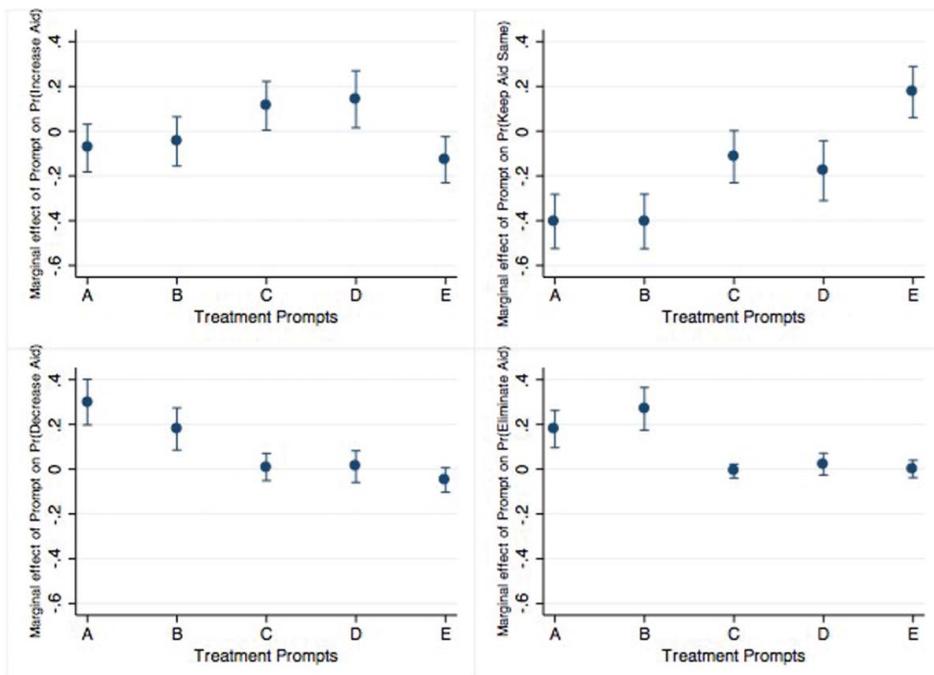
<sup>1</sup>No respondents in this treatment group selected this outcome option.

compared to the baseline treatment, but only if it is economically and strategically important to US interests. These findings provide some support for the “carrot” hypothesis (Hypothesis 3); of all the treatment groups, those prompted with improvements show a preference for increasing aid.

Disaggregating “decrease aid” and “eliminate aid” responses reveals some nuances in how political-party affiliation conditions responses to the treatment prompts. Figure 4 illustrates marginal effect results from the multinomial logit. Democratic respondents are 30% more likely to favor decreasing aid to human rights violators that are important to US interests (Group A) compared to the baseline group, while they are 18% more likely than the baseline group to support eliminating aid. If the prompt does not mention Chad’s value to the United States while noting human rights abuses (Group B), Democratic respondents are 18% more likely to favor decreasing aid (compared to the treatment group) but 27% more likely to favor eliminating aid. The marginal effects of the treatment prompts are noticeably different

for Republican respondents. These respondents are no more likely to favor decreasing aid to any of the treatment groups, compared to the baseline group. They are, however, more likely to favor eliminating aid to a human rights-abusing recipient, compared to the baseline group. Republican respondents are 22% more likely to eliminate aid to important violators (Treatment Group A) and 33% more likely to eliminate aid to the violating recipient that is not important, both compared to the baseline group (with no mention of human rights or importance). Compared to the baseline group, Republican respondents are no more likely to favor decreasing or eliminating aid to Chad if prompted with improving human rights conditions. It is not, therefore, that Republican respondents simply want to eliminate aid regardless of human rights. In other words, Republicans appear to prefer eliminating aid to decreasing aid as a punishment for human rights abuses.

Finally, respondents who identified themselves as Independent or Undecided have similarly stronger results with respect to eliminating aid. Independent/Undecided respondents prompted with bad human rights and an important recipient are 13.7% more likely to select eliminate aid compared to the neutral baseline group, while those prompted with an unimportant recipient violating human rights, 28.5% select eliminating aid. Respondents in this group also favor decreasing aid 19% more than the baseline group but only if the recipient is an important partner.



**Figure 4.** Marginal effect of treatment groups on probability of each response option, compared to neutral prompt (Group F): (a) Democratic respondents; (b) Republican respondents; (c) Independent/Undecided respondents. *Note.* Marginal effects calculated after multinomial model in Table 4. Dots represent the marginal effect estimate, with line representing the 95% confidence interval. Note on x-axis labels: Group A prompt: Bad human rights, important recipient; Group B prompt: Bad human rights, not important recipient; Group C prompt: Good human rights, important recipient; Group D prompt: Good human rights, not important recipient; Group E prompt: No human rights mention, important recipient; Group F prompt (Neutral statement, comparison category): No human rights mention, not important recipient.

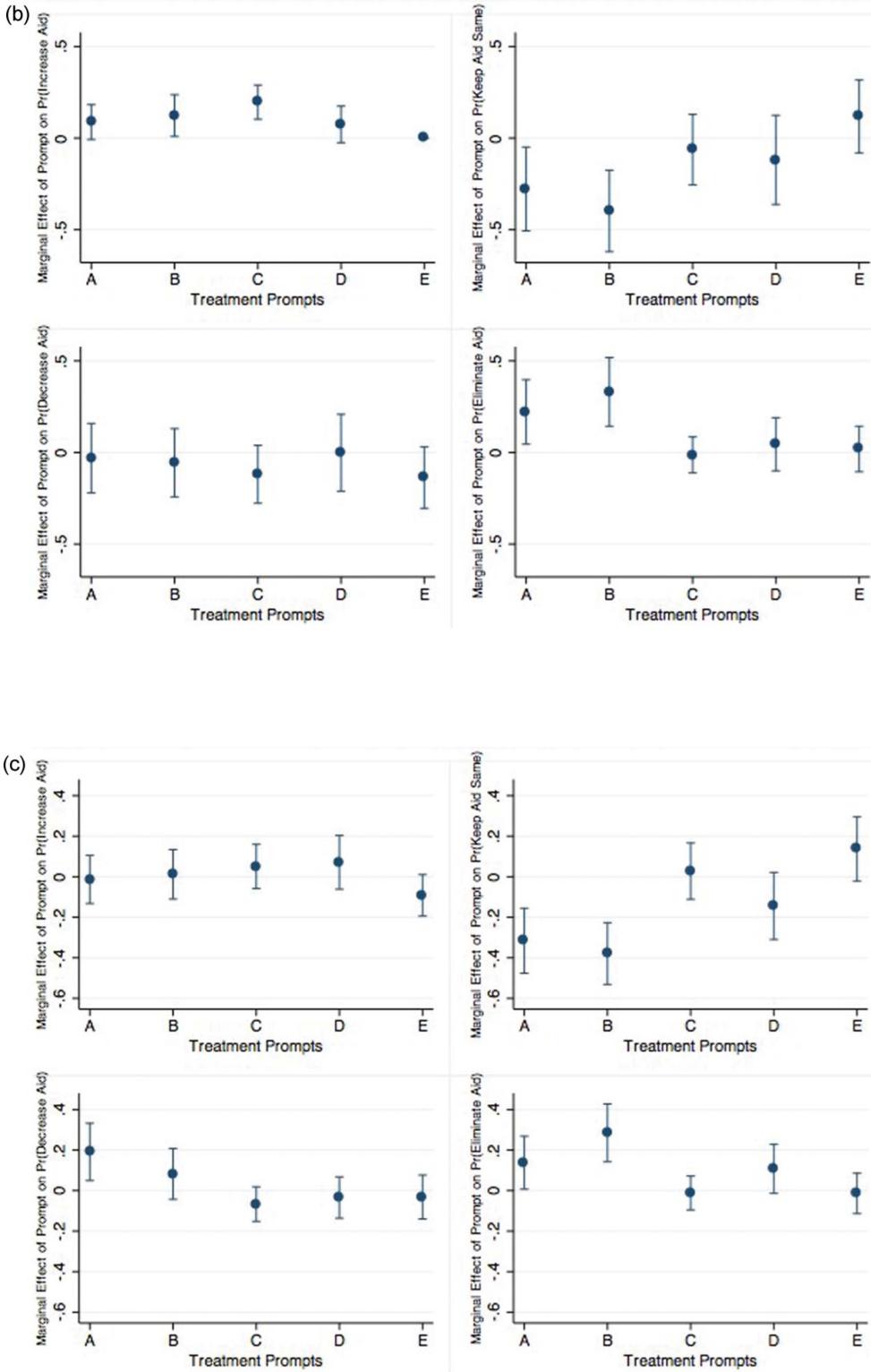


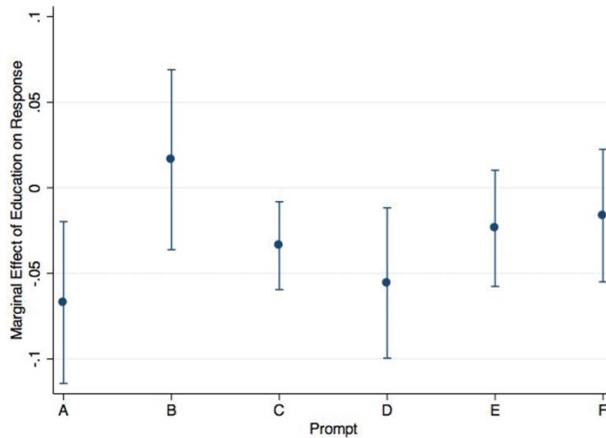
Figure 4. Continued.

Taken together, these results support Hypothesis 1: Respondents are more likely to favor using foreign aid as a tool to punish human rights violators (compared to no human rights mention). This hypothesis is consistently supported for Democratic respondents and with some variation for Republican and Independent/Undecided respondents. The type of punishment—decreasing or eliminating aid—varies based on the recipient country’s importance to the United States and the party affiliation of the respondent. Hypothesis 2 predicted that respondents would be less inclined to punish important recipients. The results do not support this prediction. Most respondents, however, tended to favor a weaker punishment (decreasing rather than eliminating aid) to important recipients; the exception is Republican respondents who were more likely to favor eliminating aid than decreasing aid to both important and unimportant recipients. This provides at least some support for the notion that constituents are sensitive to the potential opportunity costs of eliminating foreign aid to valuable partner countries. Unimportant recipients consistently faced more pressure to eliminate aid entirely, across respondents with all political-party affiliations.

In summary, the results provide strong support for the assumption that conditioning foreign aid on human rights is a popular policy. In the frequency analysis, the majority of respondents thought foreign aid should be decreased or eliminated after reading a news release condemning human rights conditions. The probit and multinomial logit results illustrate some of the nuances of this finding. A few patterns stand out. First, the interactive analysis suggests that political-party affiliation does condition public opinion on foreign aid and human rights. In the probit model, the marginal effects of the treatment prompts were strongest for Democratic respondents and weakest for Republican respondents. The multinomial model further disaggregates the results, finding that Republicans are more likely to favor eliminating aid to human rights violators than decreasing aid. With respect to the “carrot” hypotheses, a small proportion favored increasing aid to the recipient after reading a report praising improvements in human rights.

### ***Robustness checks: Political knowledge interaction***

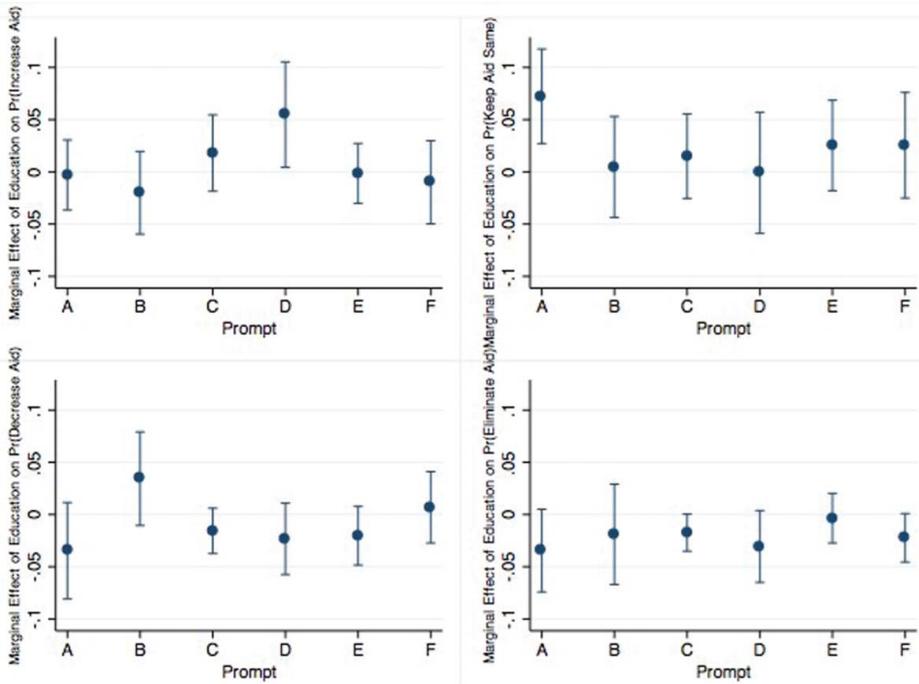
A respondent’s level of political knowledge may affect one’s opinion on foreign aid and human rights. Political knowledge can shape how individuals judge policy options and form policy preferences (Gilens 2001). Respondents who are more knowledgeable about politics, in general, or about foreign policy or foreign aid, in particular, may respond differently to these treatment prompts. To evaluate the robustness of my results to this potential confounding effect, I conducted a series of robustness checks with two proxies for political knowledge. In all cases, I interacted the treatment prompts with the political knowledge variable to investigate whether more politically knowledgeable respondents had different views and different reactions to the prompts than less knowledgeable respondents. All results are available in the Appendix. The first proxy was level of education. Although education is not a perfect measure of political knowledge, evidence shows that more educated individuals are more politically knowledgeable (see, e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Galston 2001; Hillygus 2005). Education level does condition the effects of the treatment prompts in three of the six cases (see Figure 5). In the probit analysis, more educated respondents in Groups A (bad human rights, important recipient), C (good human rights, important recipient), and D (good human rights, not important recipient) are less likely to select “decrease/eliminate aid,” as illustrated in Table 5.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 5.** Marginal effect of education on respondent selections to decrease or stop aid. *Note.* Marginal effects calculated after probit model in Table 5. Dots represent the marginal effect estimate, with line representing the 95% confidence interval. Note on x-axis labels: Group A prompt: Bad human rights, important recipient; Group B prompt: Bad human rights, not important recipient; Group C prompt: Good human rights, important recipient; Group D prompt: Good human rights, not important recipient; Group E prompt: No human rights mention, important recipient; Group F Prompt (Neutral statement, comparison category): No human rights mention, not important recipient.

Table 6 presents the marginal effects of education on responses in the multinomial model. Education appears to matter, but in small and inconsistent ways. More educated respondents are more likely to favor increasing aid only to recipients that have improving human rights but are not economically or strategically important (upper left quadrant of Figure 6; Group D); they are also more likely to favor keeping aid the same when human rights conditions are bad but the recipient is important (upper right quadrant of Figure 6; Group A). Finally, more educated respondents are less likely to favor eliminating aid (lower right quadrant of Figure 6) to recipients who are important with improving rights (Group C) and to the neutral Group F (no human rights or importance in the prompt). Although education does appear to condition how respondents react to treatment prompts, its effect is not consistent.

Respondents who are well educated may not necessarily have policy-specific knowledge (Gilens 2001). One measure of policy-specific knowledge relevant to this survey is how much foreign aid the respondent believes the United States gives as a percentage of the federal budget. In my sample, the average response was 15% (while the true number is approximately 1%), consistent with existing literature on perceptions of foreign aid. The standard deviation was 13.87% and the range was 0 to 92%, suggesting that some respondents had a reasonably accurate estimate of foreign aid while others were quite off. Gilens (2001) argues that policy-specific knowledge is a better measure than general political knowledge measures for understanding the relationship between political knowledge and policy preferences. As an attempt to better capture policy-specific knowledge, I created a variable that measured how accurately the respondent estimated the actual percentage of US gross domestic product (GDP) spent on foreign assistance. I created a series of variables to capture respondents' policy-specific knowledge. First, I created a continuous variable where I simply subtracted the actual amount of US aid from the respondents' estimate. I also created two dichotomous variables with different cutoffs for what I considered a "correct" answer. Following Gilens (2001), I considered estimates less than 25% as



**Figure 6.** Marginal effect of education on respondent response after multinomial logit. *Note.* Marginal effects calculated after multinomial model in Table 6. Dots represent the marginal effect estimate, with line representing the 95% confidence interval. Note on x-axis labels: Group A prompt: Bad human rights, important recipient; Group B prompt: Bad human rights, not important recipient; Group C prompt: Good human rights, important recipient; Group D prompt: Good human rights, not important recipient; Group E prompt: No human rights mention, important recipient; Group F prompt (Neutral statement, comparison category): No human rights mention, not important recipient.

“correct” for one dichotomous variable and I changed the cutoff to 10% for the other. In none of the analyses with any of these policy-specific-knowledge variables do I find any interactive effect of policy-specific knowledge (here defined as how close the respondent’s estimate of foreign aid is to the actual foreign aid) and marginal effects of the treatment prompts. In other words, my results suggest that respondents who had policy-specific knowledge about foreign aid levels did not respond differently to the treatment prompts than individuals whose estimates of foreign aid were substantially incorrect.<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

This article makes an important contribution to existing scholarship by testing a foundational assumption made in the broader literature on human rights and foreign policy. The literature on human rights and foreign policy has generally assumed that constituents favor using foreign policy to promote human rights. This survey investigated under what conditions, if any, this assumption holds. The results from this survey provide solid support for the assumption that, when prompted with information about human rights violations, the majority of constituents would support cuts to foreign aid. When prompted with an Amnesty International report on violations in the recipient country, over 50% of respondents wanted to eliminate or decrease

foreign aid compared to 20% or less for other treatment groups. The multivariate regression analyses control for demographic characteristics that may influence respondents' opinions on the relationship between foreign aid and human rights. In addition, I consider whether political-party affiliation conditions responses to the treatment prompts by including an interaction term. In these analyses, I compare the treatment prompts to a neutral prompt where the respondent is not important to the donor and no human rights are mentioned. When compared to this baseline group, Democratic and independent/undecided respondents are over 40% and 30%, respectively, more likely to favor cutting or eliminating foreign aid to respondents that violate human rights regardless of the recipient's importance to the United States. Republican respondents were more likely to favor cutting aid to human rights abusers, compared to the baseline group, only when the recipient was not important to United States interests.

Further, the experimental design of the survey manipulates the relationship between the donor (the United States) and the potential recipient. This creates a tradeoff between pursuing national interests and promoting human rights, demonstrating how constituents prioritize various foreign policy objectives. Contrary to my expectations, the result held most of the time regardless of the recipient's importance to the donor. For Democratic respondents, the difference was in the severity of punishment. When the recipient country was presented as important, these respondents were more likely to favor decreasing aid than eliminating aid. On the other hand, when the recipient country was unimportant, the reverse was true: Democratic respondents were more willing to eliminate aid entirely. This suggests that some respondents are, at least partially, sensitive to the costs of eliminating aid to important recipient countries. Republican respondents were more likely to favor eliminating aid than decreasing aid, regardless of the importance of the recipient.

The results presented here are an important first step towards unpacking the relationship between human rights public opinion and foreign policy. What this article does not do is fully develop the link from public opinion to actual policy and that was not the aim of this article. In particular, my finding that respondents are willing to decrease aid to important recipient countries is puzzling in light of the donor's willingness to turn a blind eye to violations by valuable partners. This policy is not consistent with the public opinion findings in this article. The findings here do suggest that political-party affiliation matters in some important ways. Diving further into this relationship is an important next step. What I have done in this article is to provide support for a longstanding assumption that, all else equal, conditioning foreign aid on human rights is good politics.

## Notes

1. Scholars have also examined the relationship between foreign aid and human rights in cross-national datasets, evaluating Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) donor countries foreign aid patterns. Results, much like in the US context, are largely mixed. In two studies based on case studies, Barratt (2008) and Gillies (1996) argue that donors only punish violators when their own interests—economic or strategic—are not at stake. Results in quantitative work are also mixed; some scholars find that some donors sometimes condition foreign aid on human rights (Neumayer 2003). In a recent article, Nielsen (2013) attempts to explain the mixed findings and argues that OECD donors use foreign aid selectively, reducing economic aid to recipients that violate human rights while not cutting other types of aid (social and humanitarian).
2. Because the survey will include deception—manipulation of Chad's human rights record and the US relationship with Chad—the experiment ended with a debrief informing the respondents of this fact.
3. The full survey is available in the online appendix at the author's website.

4. An important distinction in the framing literature is between equivalency frames (e.g., the difference between 95% employment and 5% unemployment) and emphasis frames (for a review of this literature, see Chong and Druckman 2007). This study is more closely related to the latter type of frame, although not perfectly as the difference between prompts are less about the emphasis of the two dimensions (human rights and recipient importance) but also the content of those dimensions. That said, the framing literature is relevant in thinking about how the survey prompts could affect public opinion about foreign aid by framing the issue of foreign aid in terms of human rights.
5. In this survey, I do not explore how alternative ways of framing human rights abuses affects public opinion or behavior. See McEntire et al. (2015) for work that evaluates the effectiveness of different types of frames.
6. The Amnesty International prompt is adapted from existing language of Amnesty International releases to most accurately reflect the language and tone of such news releases. This one is largely drawn from a 2013 release on Sudan (Amnesty International 2013).
7. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of six treatment groups, using Qualtrics randomization function. Due to an error in the original survey, one treatment was included twice and another omitted. I released the survey again with the originally omitted treatment only. In other words, for Treatment Group D, respondents were not randomly assigned. All respondents on June 10, 2014 were in the same group. There is no a priori reason to believe that all respondents on this given day would have some characteristic that would damage the inferences drawn.
8. The results are substantively similar when political ideology is used in place of political-party affiliation.
9. Concerns about external validity remain if there is reason to believe that MTurk samples behave differently than other samples in ways that affect replicability of these results. In a comparison of three sampling methods — undergraduate students, MTurk, and YouGov—Krupnikov and Levine (2014) do find that MTurk samples can produce different results than the other samples on experiments that require more “buy-in” (i.e., reading an article or trusting information from the experimenter) from the respondent. As my study requires little “buy-in” from the respondent and is most similar to their simple experiment, similar results should be produced across sampling methods.
10. A complete table with probit results is available in Appendix II (Table A2).
11. A complete table with all coefficients is available in Appendix II (Table A3).
12. Full probit and multinomial results tables are available in the appendix.
13. This discussion of policy-specific knowledge is not complete without acknowledging that prior to reading the treatment prompts, I inform the respondents of the actual percent of the federal budget the United States allocates to foreign aid. According to Gilens (2001), providing this policy-specific knowledge may reduce opposition to foreign aid. This may account for the insignificant findings when this measure is used to capture political knowledge.

## Notes on contributor

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