

A Study on the Role of Human Rights in the Aid Allocations of China and the United States

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Abstract : The study is motivated by a desire to investigate whether there is substance to claims that, relative to traditional donors, China disregards human rights considerations when allocating overseas aid. While the stated policy of the U.S. is that consideration of potential aid recipients' respect for human rights is mandatory, some quantitative studies have cast doubt on whether this is reflected in actual allocations. There is a lack of academic literature that formally assesses the extent to which the two countries' aid allocations differ; which is essential to test whether the criticisms of China's aid policy in comparison to that of the U.S. are justified. Using data on two standard human rights measures, 'Political Terror Scale' and 'Civil Liberties', the study analyse the two donors' aid allocations among 125 countries over the period 2000 to 2014. The bivariate analysis demonstrated that a significant share of China's aid flow to countries with poor human rights record. At the same time, the U.S. seems little different in providing aid to these countries. The empirical results obtained from the Fractional Logit model also provided some support to the general pessimism regarding China's provision of aid to countries with poor human rights record, yet challenge the optimists expecting better targeted aid from the U.S. These findings are consistent with the split between humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid and in the sample of countries whose human rights record is below some threshold level.

Keywords : China's aid policy, foreign aid allocation, human rights, United States Foreign Assistance Act

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