

# Love Thy Neighbor: Social Identity and Public Support for Humanitarian Aid

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## Abstract

Foreign policy that focuses on humanitarian assistance, such as disaster assistance, foreign aid and intervention in civil conflicts, can be contentious. Proposals of such policies usually give rise to significant political debates in the donor country. Should national resources be devoted to helping those in need abroad or should the use of finite resources be focused at home? What causes people to support sacrificing national resources for the benefit of those abroad? This paper investigates a previously unexplored connection between individual-level characteristics and the level of public support for humanitarian aid allocation. We argue that support levels are in part determined by ones identification with a world community. Social identity theorists argue that when individuals identify with a super-ordinate group, in this case, the larger world community, they are more likely to display stronger support for policies that will benefit the larger group, even if it involves sacrifices to be made by the subordinate group, or in this case the nation (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). This study empirically investigates this hypothesis using World Values Survey observations of respondents from Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member countries.

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