

The UN Secretary General Travels for Fundraising: How State Visits by UNSG Influences Official Development Assistance Flows

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Abstract

Where do UN Secretary Generals (UNSG) travel and what are consequences? As one of the most important political figures in global politics, UNSGs travel quite frequently in any given year. These visits by UNSGs are often much-anticipated, advertised, and celebrated, but few systematic analyses of UNSG travels and their consequences have been studied. In this project, we assemble the original dataset of UNSG travels: we take all UNSG travel documents and, utilizing automated text analysis, distill information including where they go, who they meet with, and what purposes of the travels are. The dataset (version 1.0) includes all the travels the UNSGs in the past 25 years have made, including Kofi Annan, Ban Ki-moon, and Antonio Guterres. After providing a broad set of descriptive analyses, we examine how UNSGs' visits affect aid activities of foreign aid donors in the second part of this paper. We find that most ODA donors are willing to follow the lead of the UNSGs and increase their aid commitment to those countries that received the UNSGs in the previous year. This pattern is especially salient to state donors and private donors. In comparison, multilateral development banks and the IMF do not respond to the UNSGs' state visits in a timely manner as their aid amount is not influenced by the UNSGs' visits.

Introduction

Where do United Nations Secretary Generals (hereafter UNSG) travel and what are the consequences? As chief administrative officer and head of the United Nations secretariat, UNSG is one of the most important political figures, both substantively and symbolically, holding influence over global affairs. As the UN describes, UNSG serves as “[a symbol of United Nations ideals](#)”, taking a special representative role as a guardian of the UN Charter and its principles and values. Kofi Annan, the seventh UNSG, highlighted that “impartiality does not—and must not—mean neutrality in the face of evil. It means strict and unbiased adherence to the principles of the Charter ([SG/SM/6865](#), UN 1999).” In addition to their representative and public role, the UNSG often takes a mediation role to resolve international disputes and prevent conflicts as well as the role of a norm entrepreneur (Chesterman 2007).

While the majority of UNSGs’ activities take place behind the scenes, their official travels are more publicly visible and widely reported as they represent an important signal in global politics. In light of the recent war waged by Russia, the current Secretary-General, António Guterres traveled to Moscow to meet with Putin and negotiated a cease-fire, followed by a trip to Ukraine to meet with Zelenskyy and discuss the scale up of humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian people (UN 2022). The visit drew great attention from many including UN skeptics, which reflects the widespread expectations for UNSG’s role as a messenger of peace and neutral mediator¹.

UNSGs travel quite frequently in any given year and these visits are often much-anticipated, advertised, and celebrated. However, few systematic analyses of UNSG travels and their consequences have been studied. Despite the burgeoning literature on state leader visits in international relations, scholars have paid little attention to the official travels made by UNSGs despite their major role as the top official of the UN and world’s chief diplomatic. To the best of our knowledge, there is no dataset on UNSG, which is probably one of the main reasons for the dearth of study on UNSG visits compared to the trips made by state leaders and other key figures in politics². The absence of

¹ There are approximately 13530 news articles on Guterres’ travel to Moscow based on available Nexis Uni data (search term: Antonio Guterres and Moscow or Russia / date: Apr 25, 2022 to Jun 16, 2022 / accessed Jun 16, 2022).

² Wang and Stone (2022) reported that there are different 10 datasets on leaders’ visits with different time and country coverage (see Wang and Stone 2022, p.6)

comprehensive data on UNSG activities, moreover, may impede us from having a more complete understanding of the UN as one of the world's most influential organizations.

We aim to address these gaps by systematically analyzing the UNSG official travels using the original dataset of UNSG travel that includes all the official travels the UNSGs in the past 25 years have made including Kofi Annan, Ban Ki-moon, and Antonio Guterres. We exploit the data from the official UN website in which various activities of the Secretary-General including daily agendas, statements and reports and press releases are regularly updated. Per every visit made by the UNSG, a travel document (SG/T) is updated accordingly that provides information about where the UNSG goes, who the UNSG meets with, and what the purposes of the travels are. We document UNSG travel records and the associated information to build a comprehensive and publicly available dataset on UNSG travels. Being able to document the activities of UNSG would provide additional insight into the UNSG's role as well as the impact of UNSG activities.

We find that, after accounting for the selection, foreign aid increases to aid-recipients UNSGs visit. The effect is more pronounced for non-traditional, emerging state donors and private philanthropies. We also find that the effect changes across the three UNSGs covered in the analysis: the effect is the strongest for the Kofi Annan era and the weakest for Ban Ki-moon era. Lastly, there are some subtle changes of sectoral allocations of aid, generally matching what the presiding UNSG emphasizes during their tenure at the office.

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we review the literature on the role of UNSG and interstate visits by key political figures including state leaders, diplomats, and religious leaders. We then introduce the UNSG travel dataset and provide a broad set of descriptive analyses. Next, we analyze how UNSGs' visits affect aid activities of foreign aid donors to explore the effects of UNSG travels. Finally, we discuss the results and future direction of the study.

Interstate Visits

A body of literature has examined the economic, political, and social effects of interstate visits by key figures including state leaders, diplomats, and religious leaders. First, a substantial portion of the studies has discussed the interaction between state visits and international trade, showing mixed results. Nitsch (2007) finds that presidential visits from France, Germany, and the United States have an export-promoting effect, increasing exports to the visiting country by eight to ten percent. Rose (2007) also concludes that diplomatic missions a country has in another country increase the volume of exports to that country; additional consulate in a foreign country increases exports to the country by six to ten percent. Not only trade but also foreign aid responds to the leader visits. In a more recent study, Malis and Smith (2021) find that state visits to the U.S. but not from the U.S. are reciprocated with increased exports to the U.S. and economic and military aid from the U.S. In an analysis of the Japanese ODA between 1969 and 2015, Hoshiro (2021) shows that diplomatic travels of leaders from recipient countries to Japan increase the amount of aid they have been receiving.

More studies confirm the trade-promoting effect of state visits within the Chinese context. State visits to China increase the volume of bilateral trade, with the effects heavily biased towards the sectors that hold greater importance for China – including transport equipment, arms, and high-tech products (Beaulieu et al., 2020; Fan & Lu, 2021; Lin et al., 2017). Fan and Lu (2021) find that summit visits of and to Chinese leaders with developing countries promote trade more significantly than visits with developed countries. However, the trade-promoting effect has also been questioned. Head and Ries (2010) fail to find empirical evidence that Canadian trade missions cause an increase in trade, raising questions on the linkage between state visits and trade facilitation.

Political leaders' reception of visits from religious leaders also influences economic relationships (Fuchs & Klann, 2013; Lin et al., 2019). Widely known as the 'Dalai Lama Effect', Fuchs and Klann (2013) find that countries where government members receive Dalai Lama experience a decline in exports to China by 12.5 percent, with the trade-reducing impacts greatest if it is the head of state or governments that the Dalai Lama visits than government officials. The effect is also observed in the firm-level analysis. Lin et al. (2019) find that Chinese importers, mostly state-owned enterprises, reduce their imports of machinery and transport equipment following foreign government officials' meetings with the Dalai Lama. However, Sverdrup-Thygeson (2015) concludes that in the

Norwegian version of the Dalai Lama Effect –2010 awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Chinese dissident Liu Xiabao – the Norwegian exports to China was not reduced in the sector of machinery and transport equipment and chemicals, the key industrial inputs to the Chinese economy.

State-level visits are also found to strengthen the alliance and the probability of leader survival. States that receive a visit from major power leaders including the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, and France, are less likely to be targeted in an interstate military dispute. The effect of such credible deterrence is greatest when the visits come with supportive statements from the leaders and when the two countries also have a defense pact (McManus, 2018). At the within-country level, state visits from U.S. presidents also reduce the risk of removal from office by 51 to 70 percent (Malis & Smith, 2021). Goldsmith et al. (2021) find that high-level diplomatic visits make citizens evaluate the performance of the leadership of the visiting country more positively, which is driven by wide media coverage of public-diplomacy activities.

Visits from the influential religious figure, the pope, also influence public perception on main social issues by increasing media attention. Pope Francis’s visit to the U.S. increased the perception of Americans on the climate change agenda as a pressing moral issue, referred to as the ‘Pope Francis Effect’ (Landrum & Vasquez, 2020; Maibach et al., 2015; Schuldt et al., 2017). Studies on papal visits to Brazil and Italy respectively find that the pope’s visit not only reduced the intention to contracept (Bassi & Rasul, 2017) but also the number of abortions by ten to twenty percent, made possible via exposure to the pope’s speeches and intense local media coverage (Farina & Pathania, 2020). Human rights conditions in countries improve before the pope’s visit, as governments fear global media coverage on national human rights violations; but the effect disappears after the papal visit (Endrich & Gutmann, 2020).

In terms of addressing the determinants of countries that political leaders choose to visit, Lebovic and Saunders (2016) extensively examine the strategic, domestic, and international factors that affect the decision of which countries and when the U.S. President and Secretary travel. The leaders visit countries of significant strategic importance to the U.S.: countries where the U.S. directs more military spending, and that receive more US military aid, have greater bilateral trade volume, and vote similarly at the UN. Domestically, the U.S. leaders travel more in the second presidential term, and the travel frequency and destinations are not affected by the executive’s party ideology (Lebovic

& Saunders, 2016). Ostrander and Rider (2019) further analyze the U.S. presidential trips and find that the Presidents travel less during presidential election years, but more during divided government and large legislative majority size in Congress.

Role of UN Secretary-General

Despite the mounting evidence concerning the substantive effects of leader visits, to the best of our knowledge, no extant research has explored visits by UNSG. The existing literature largely revolves around assessing the role and legal duties of UNSGs (Johnstone, 2003; Szasz, 1991), or even the personal backgrounds and characteristics of UNSGs themselves (Adebajo, 2007; Kille, 2007; Newman, 1998).

Current literature largely emphasizes the role of UNSGs as norm entrepreneurs who introduces new norms, such as democratic governance, and as conflict mediators (Gordenker, 2013; Johnstone, 2007; Rushton, 2008; Skjelsbæk & Fermann, 1996), and as brokers between the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the broader community. Such roles mainly lie in how the literature understands the UNSG to hold moral authority somewhat comparable to papacy; UNSGs, like the pope, wield no material power, but their roles are largely normative, speaking for the welfare of global citizens and their human rights (Adebajo, 2007; Kille, 2007; Troy, 2017).

Normatively, UNSGs are messengers that globally communicate the core values of the UN and engage in agenda-setting to spread such norms (Gordenker, 2013; Johnstone, 2007; Rushton, 2008). Johnstone (2007) illustrates how Kofi Annan, the former UNSG, helped to generate the “responsibility to protect” or R2P norm and strived to propagate the norm through speeches and reports. Another pillar of UNSG’s role is to maintain peace and security. The UN peacekeeping operations are one of the central missions of the UN Secretariat, and UNSGs are understood to have the influence to mediate conflicts and encourage peace (Kille & Hendrickson, 2010; Skjelsbæk, 1991; Skjelsbæk & Fermann, 1996). UNSGs hold a special position in such political negotiations in that they wield no economic or physical power but stand on a moral and impartial base of influence (Skjelsbæk, 1991). For this reason, they serve as an effective communication channel when direct means of interaction between adversaries are limited or absent.

The roles of UNSGs are not only normatively understood but they are also carried out during their visits. During their visits, UNSGs meet with state leaders, high-level government officials, leaders of civil society organizations, and other key stakeholders to convey messages of core UN values. Human rights advocacy is one essential aspect of UNSG travels. As an illustration, in the former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), he expressed concerns over freedom restrictions in DRC, urging all political parties to participate in an inclusive dialogue³. During his visit to South Sudan, he also publicly denounced human rights violations including killings, rapes, and displacement, as well as widespread corruption in the country⁴. He also denounced the imprisonment of political detainees, journalists, and human rights activists, urging for their release in his visit to Kuwait⁵.

UNSGs are also committed to securing the resources – both material and normative – necessary to propagate the core values of UN. The former Secretary-General Kofi Annan is referred to as “a travelling salesman” where he vigorously raised necessary funds to carry out UN causes at campuses, business forums, and town halls (Adebajo, 2007). As a result of his arduous campaigns, Washington started repaying its \$1.3 billion overdue debt to the United Nations related to peacekeeping operations; it was also at this time that business magnates Ted Turner and Bill Gates started generous contributions to a number of UN programs (Adebajo, 2007). UNSGs leverage their influence to raise the necessary fund and contributions to carry out the projects at the UN.

UNSG travels are one of the ways they use to publicly announce the organizational priorities and focus the public attention to the agendas. It also works as an effective measure to put pressure on related stakeholders to take further actions. During Mr. Ban's travel to South Sudan, he announced that the UN would contribute \$21 million for crises in South Sudan from the Central Emergency Response Fund and further urged the international community that humanitarian assistance are further provided to South Sudan⁶. During the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 where heads of

³ <https://press.un.org/en/2016/sgt3075.doc.htm>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2016-02-25/secretary-generals-remarks-press-conference-south-sudan>

⁵ <https://press.un.org/en/2016/sgsm17883.doc.htm>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2016-02-25/secretary-generals-remarks-press-conference-south-sudan>

State and Government, stakeholders from civil society, private sector partners, and academics are convened, Mr. Ban strongly urged for the scale-up of funding to humanitarian assistance. He addressed the underfunding situation saying, “We need to provide more direct funding to local people and communities, fix the persistent humanitarian funding gap, and invest in building stable and inclusive societies.”⁷

Based on this existing literature on the roles and traits of UNSGs, we see many responses to suspect that UNSGs could influence political outcomes through their visits, including influencing human rights practices and funding allocations.

Data Sources and Collection

In this paper, we introduce the original dataset of UNSG official travel (version 1.0). The data is collected from the official website of the UN. The website provides [the travel documents](#) for each trip made by UNSG, which include information about the destination country, date, people UNSG met with, and various activities UNSG engaged in during the itinerary. Per each visit as identified in the official travel document on the website, we code country and year variables which constitute the unit of analysis. Specifically, we extract the destination country and date information from the title of each document which is formatted fairly consistently throughout the period of our interest. For example, the official travel document for Guterres’ recent trip to Russia is titled “Activities of Secretary-General in Russian Federation, 25-26 April” (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Data Included in UNSG Travel Document on UN Website

⁷ <https://press.un.org/en/2016/sgt3103.doc.htm>



Activities of Secretary-General in Russian Federation, 25-26 April

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres flew from Ankara, Turkey, to Moscow, Russian Federation, on Monday, 25 April.

The Secretary-General first held a meeting in Moscow on Tuesday morning with Foreign Minister [Sergey Lavrov](#).

[Speaking to the press during a joint stakeout](#), after meeting with the Foreign Minister, the Secretary-General reiterated his deep conviction that the sooner we end this war, the better – for the people of Ukraine, for the people of the Russian Federation, and those far beyond.

He warned that today, across the Donbas, a violent battle is under way with tremendous death and destruction. He expressed his concern about the repeated reports of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and possible war crimes, which require independent investigation for effective accountability.

We use web crawling to collect UNSG travel information and create a number of variables including UNSG name, country, year, total visits per year, ID, duration, and region. The dataset also includes several other country-level variables such as gdp per capita and polity score. The current version of dataset includes visits by Kofi Annan (1997-2006), Ban Ki-moon (2007-2016) and Antonio Guterres (2017-2021). The dataset is provided at both country-year and visits level so that researchers can readily use and merge the data with other datasets to conduct their own analyses.

Description of Key Variables

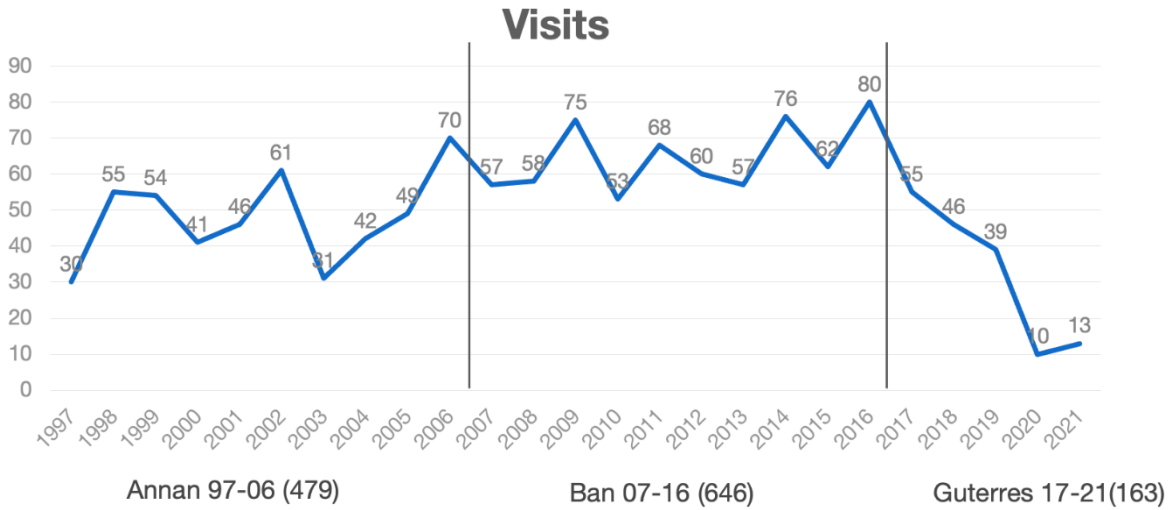
We identified a total of 1288 official visits made by UNSG between 1997 and 2021. Annan made 479 travels from 1997 to 2006 (10 years), Ban made 646 travels from 2007 to 2016 (10 years), and Guterres made 163 travels from 2017 to 2021 (5 years) (Table 1), which results in an average of approximately 48 visits for Annan, 65 for Ban, and 33 for Guterres⁸. Figure 2 shows the number of visits per year. While we do not see any clear patterns from UNSG's yearly number of visits, both Annan and Ban travelled the most during the final year of their tenure in office (maybe they care about their performance evaluation, maybe not).

⁸ 47 before 2020 when COVID-19 broke out.

Table 1. UNSG's Yearly Number of Visits

UNSG	Year	Visits
Annan	1997	30
	1998	55
	1999	54
	2000	41
	2001	46
	2002	61
	2003	31
	2004	42
	2005	49
	2006	70
	Total	479
Ban	2007	57
	2008	58
	2009	75
	2010	53
	2011	68
	2012	60
	2013	57
	2014	76
	2015	62
	2016	80
	Total	646
Guterres	2017	55
	2018	46
	2019	39
	2020	10
	2021	13
	Total	163

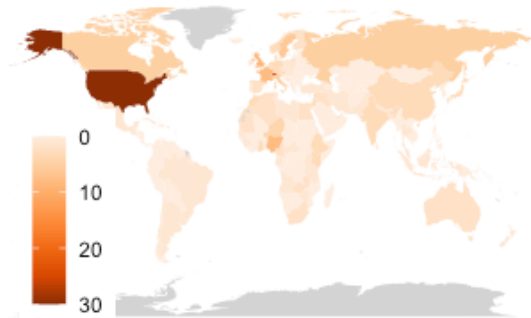
Figure 2. Number of Visits (1997-2021)



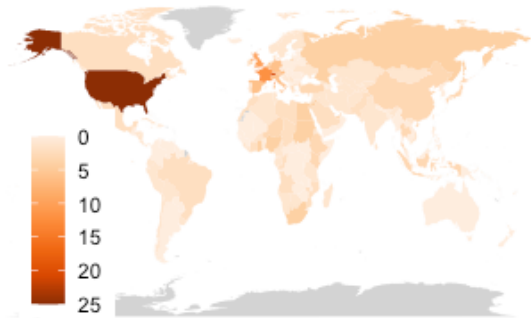
Not surprisingly, the two most frequently visited countries are the United States (126) and Switzerland (107), where the UN headquarters are located, followed by France (50), United Kingdom (40), and Italy (32). Furthermore, all three UNSGs visited Europe the most, but Annan most frequently visited Sub-Saharan Africa while Ban most frequently visited the MENA region, and Guterres, up until 2022, visited the Asia-Pacific region. This observation further highlights the importance of systematic study of UNSG, and specifically individual-level differences in how they define their role.

Figure 3. Total Visits by Country by 5-Year Period

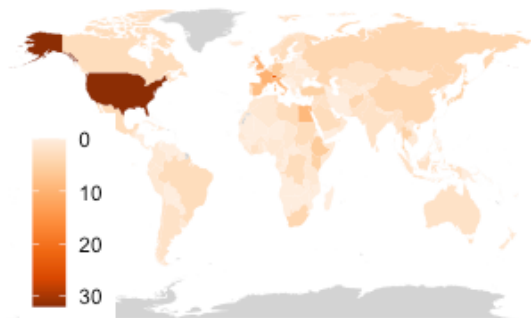
Kofi Annan (1997-2001)



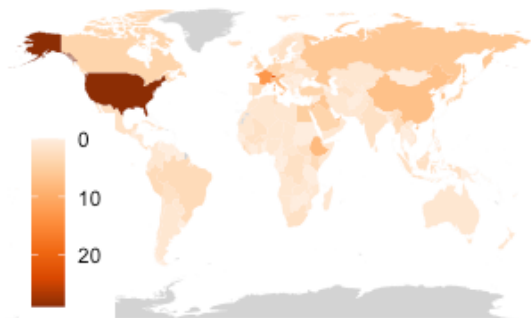
Kofi Annan (2002-2006)



Ki-moon Ban (2007-2011)



Ki-moon Ban (2012-2016)



Antonio Guterres (2017-2021)

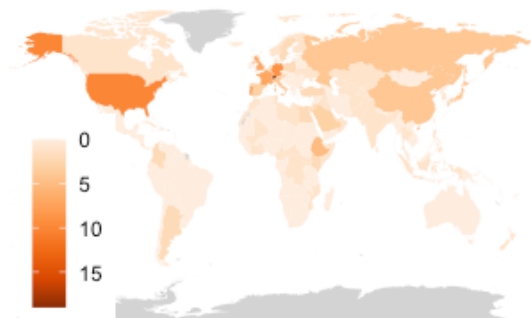


Table 2. Number of Visits to Continents by UNSG

(Left: Full countries, Right: Drop US, Switzerland)

UNSG	Region	Visits
Annan	Americas	84
	Europe	187
	SSAfrica	89
	MENA	71
	AsiaPacific	48
Ban	Americas	120
	Europe	218
	SSAfrica	84
	MENA	128
	AsiaPacific	96
Guterres	Americas	22
	Europe	77
	SSAfrica	17
	MENA	22
	AsiaPacific	25

UNSG	Region	Visits
Annan	Americas	29
	Europe	142
	SSAfrica	89
	MENA	71
	AsiaPacific	48
Ban	Americas	59
	Europe	175
	SSAfrica	84
	MENA	128
	AsiaPacific	96
Guterres	Americas	12
	Europe	58
	SSAfrica	17
	MENA	22
	AsiaPacific	25

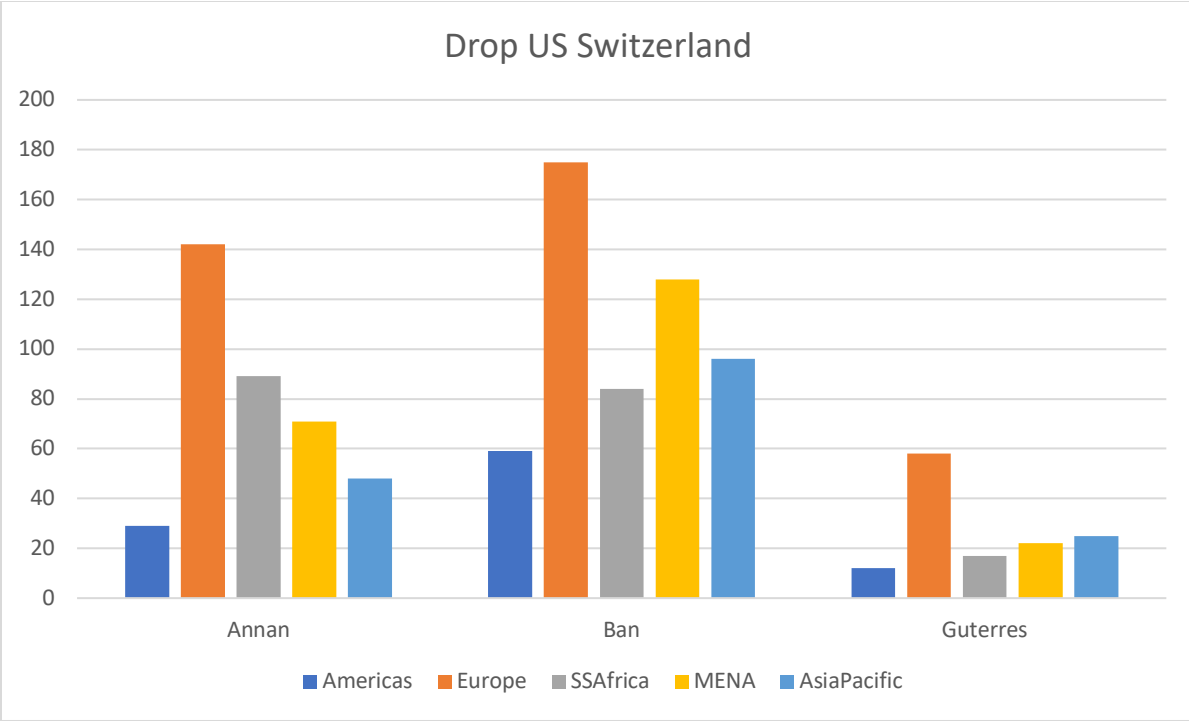
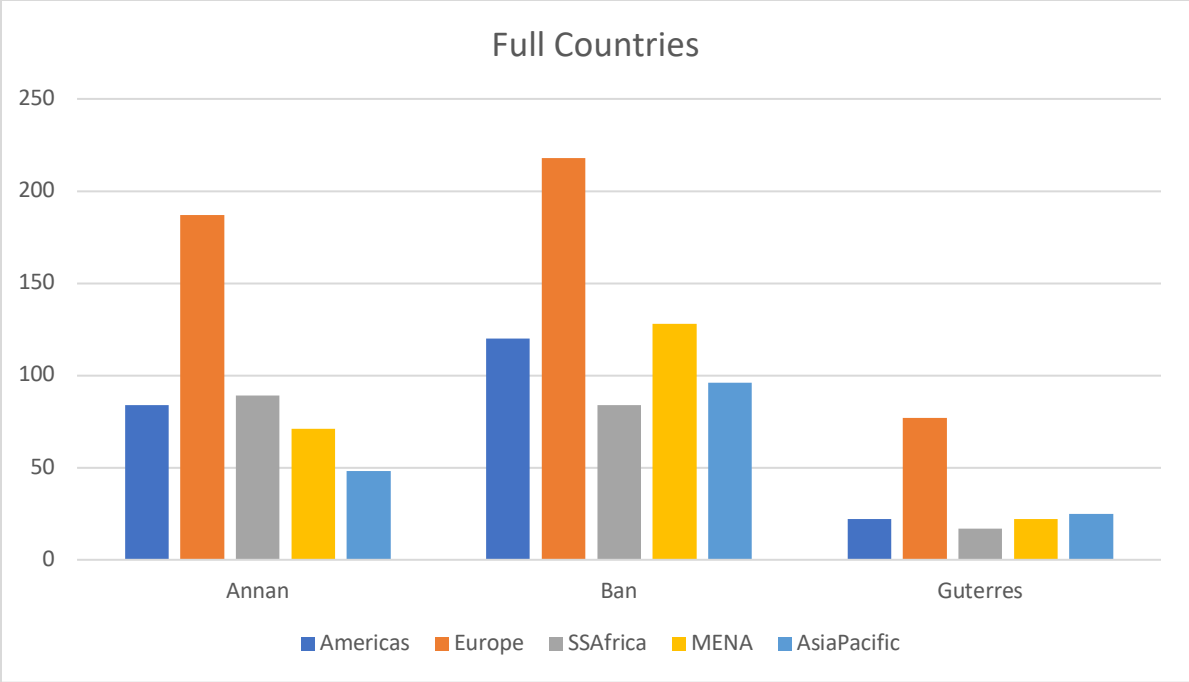
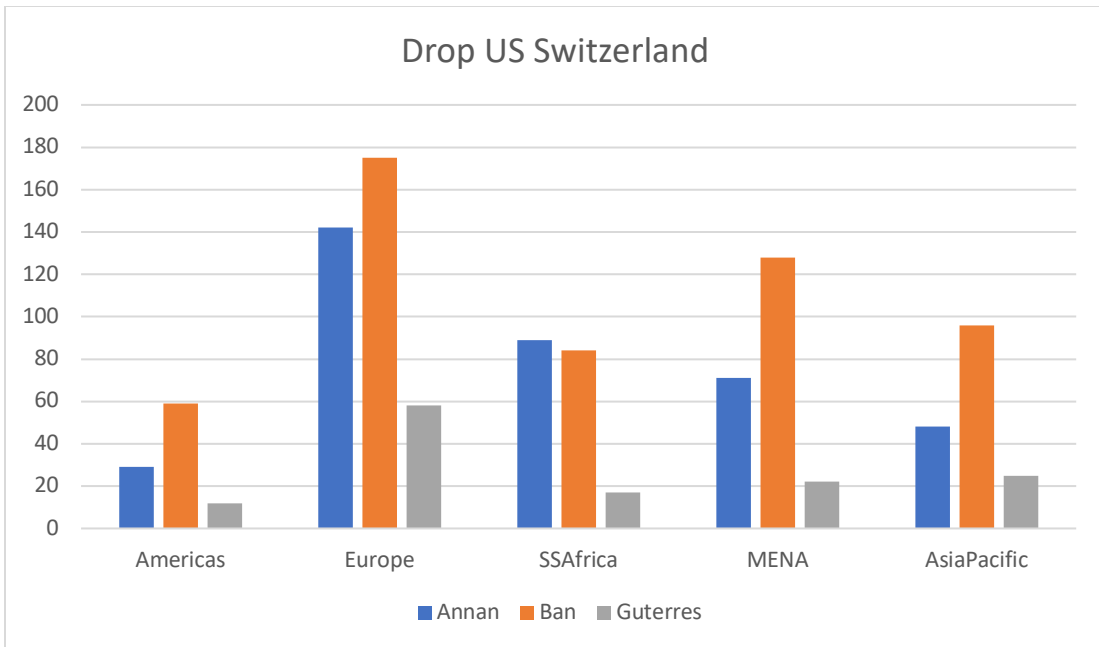
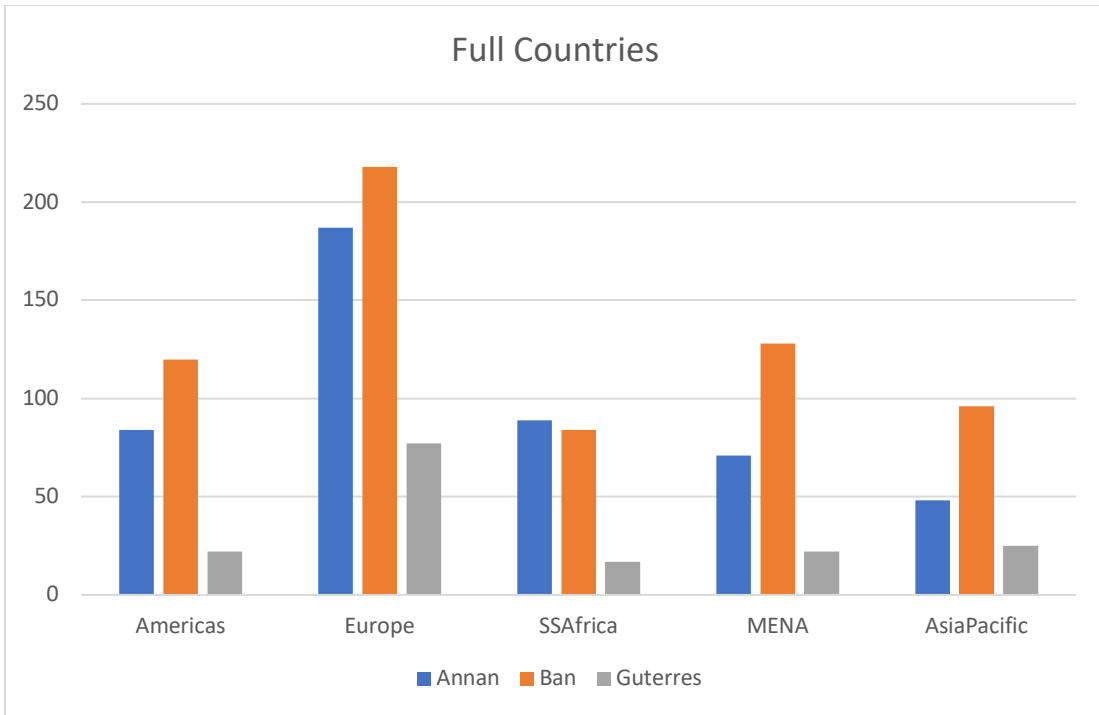


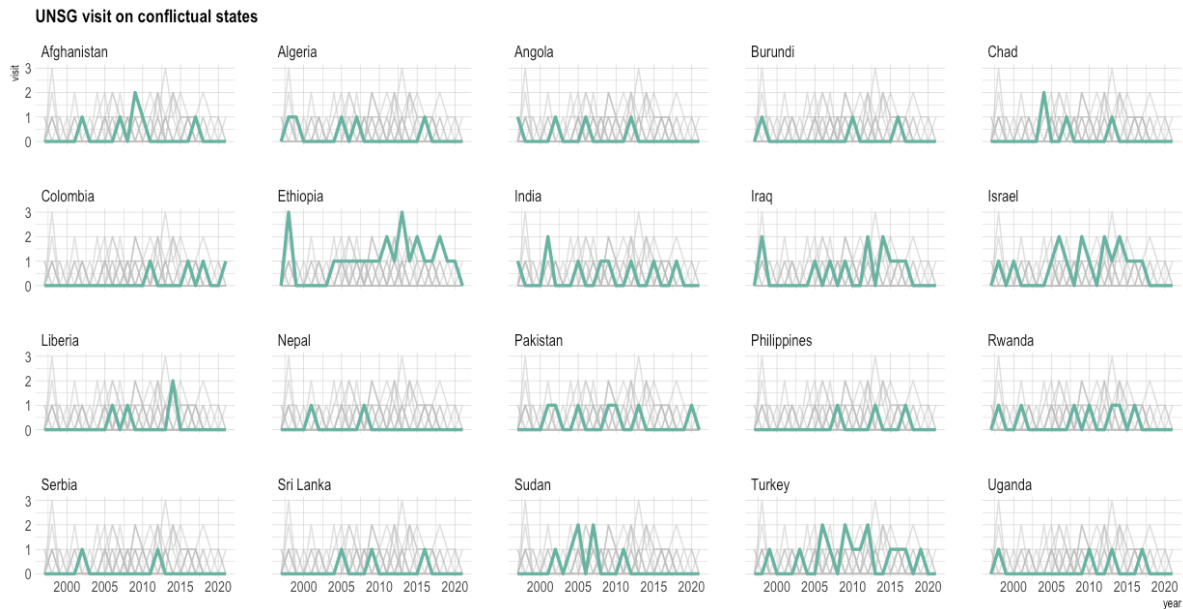
Table 3. Number of Visits to Continents by UNSG

(Left: Full countries, Right: Drop US, Switzerland)

Region	UNSG	Visits
Americas	Annan	84
	Ban	120
	Guterres	22
	Total	226
Europe	Annan	187
	Ban	218
	Guterres	77
	Total	482
SSAfrica	Annan	89
	Ban	84
	Guterres	17
	Total	190
MENA	Annan	71
	Ban	128
	Guterres	22
	Total	221
AsiaPacific	Annan	48
	Ban	96
	Guterres	25
	Total	169

Region	UNSG	Visits
Americas	Annan	29
	Ban	59
	Guterres	12
	Total	100
Europe	Annan	142
	Ban	175
	Guterres	58
	Total	375
SSAfrica	Annan	89
	Ban	84
	Guterres	17
	Total	190
MENA	Annan	71
	Ban	128
	Guterres	22
	Total	221
AsiaPacific	Annan	48
	Ban	96
	Guterres	25
	Total	169





Empirical Analysis

In this empirical section, we systematically investigate the effects the UNSG visits have on aid allocation. The UNSGs have played a crucial role in garnering international support for foreign aid whenever deemed necessary. For example, in the face of gang war violence in Haiti in 2022, Guterres condemned the lack of international humanitarian support and said, “On the humanitarian front, the needs are increasing, but the international response is not.”⁹ Similarly, during the same year, when Moldova faced the repercussions of the Russian war, he publicly stated that “I urge all countries to give generously. In global terms, these are miniscule sums”, also calling on all countries to consider strengthening their economic cooperation with Moldova (June 2022)¹⁰. Therefore, we can expect that UNSG visits may successfully attract the attention to the humanitarian needs and thereby influence the donors’ decision for aid allocation. As a result, our baseline expectation is that when a UNSG visits a country, the amount of aid that country receives increases.

Data & Methods

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/un-chief-guterres-visits-gang-ravaged-haiti-2023-07-01/>

¹⁰ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1117862>

The main outcome of interest is a change in the amount of aid that the country receives measured by the amount of Official Development Assistance (logged, million USD). The data is obtained from the OECD statistics and the World Bank Open Data. To understand how the UNSG visits lead to different responses from distinct types of donors, we look at not only the aggregated amount of ODA in total but different types of aid from state and private donors as well as multilateral aid from the IMF, Regional Development Bank, United Nations, and World Bank.

For our main independent variable, we use the number of UNSG visits per year. The description of this measure is provided in the previous section as well as in the appendix. We include a set of control variables that could confound the relationship among the key variables of our interests when excluded. To account for possible domestic factors that might affect the decision of aid allocation, we control for political regime type using the Liberal Democracy Index from V-Dem as well as GDP per capita. Next, since the aid allocation is generally concentrated in the disaster or war-affected regions, we control for the number of disaster deaths and location of conflicts. We also control for the economic, social, and political dimensions of globalization using the KOF globalization index (Dreher, 2006). Finally, we include regional dummies to account for geographic fixed effects.

To test our expectations, we employ error correction models (ECMs) (De Boef & Keele, 2008). This modeling choice allows us to consider both the changes and the levels of the amount of ODA, as ECMs simultaneously model both changes in ODA amount and levels of ODA amount. Using ECMs, we regress the first difference of our dependent variable on its lagged level, the lagged levels of all covariates, and the first differences of all covariates ($t - t-1$) except for the dummy variables (i.e., regional dummies). We also use robust standard errors to account for potential heteroskedasticity. Our model specification, using regional dummies that restrict our analysis to within-region effects, ECMs, and robust standard errors therefore generates conservative results.

Results

Figures 7 and 8 visualize the results showing the relationship between UNSG visits and aid allocation. Figure 7 shows the results using *Visit A* as our main independent variable, while Figure 8

shows the results using *Visit (lagged)* as our main independent variable. The full results with all the covariates specified in our models are provided in Tables 4 to 7.

Our results suggest that most ODA donors are willing to follow the lead of the UNSGs and increase their aid commitment to those countries that received the UNSGs in the previous year. These donors include DAC and non-DAC members as well as international organizations such as the United Nations and World Bank. We also find the strong effects from state donors, as shown in figures 7 and 8, especially from Global North countries. In contrast, multilateral development banks and the IMF do not respond to the UNSGs' state visits in a timely manner as their aid amount is not influenced by the UNSG visits.

Figure 7. Effects of Δ UNSG Visits on Aid Allocation by Donor

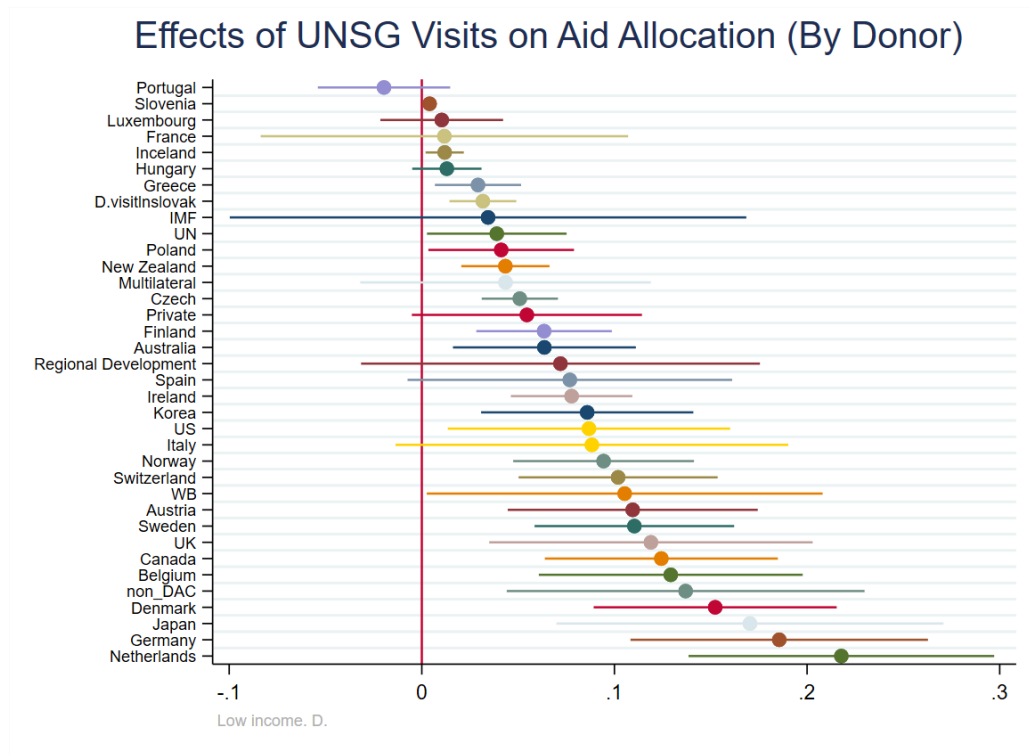


Figure 8. Effects of Lagged UNSG Visits on Aid Allocation by Donor
Effects of UNSG Visits on Aid Allocation (By Donor)

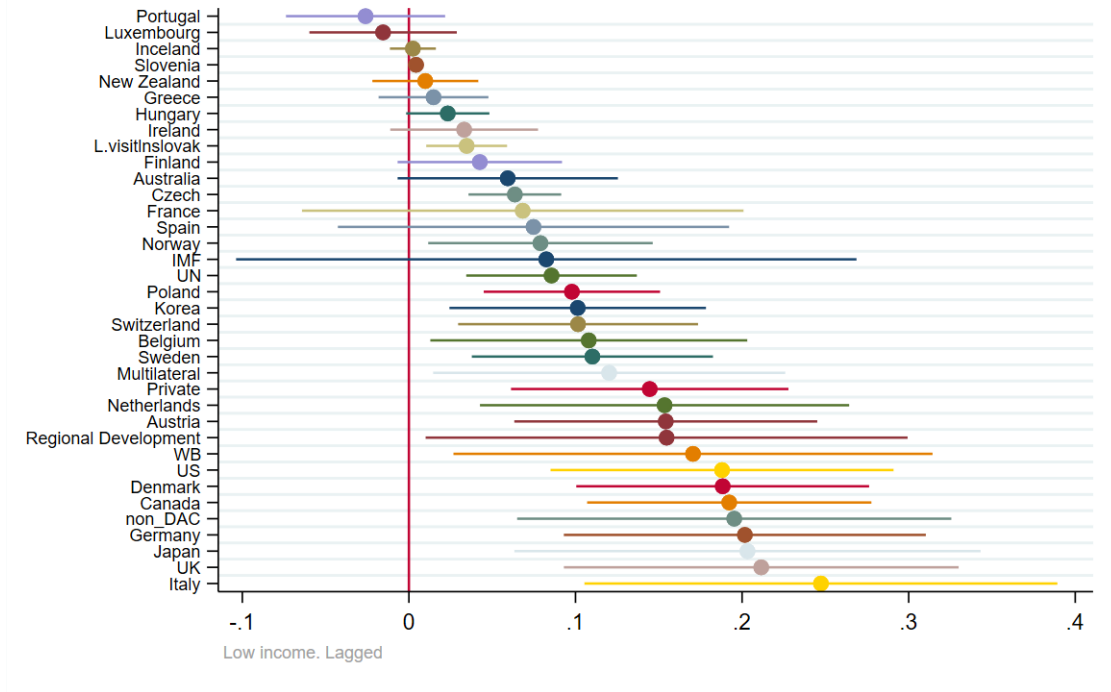


Table 4. UNSG Visits and ODA Allocation (Total ODA, DAC, Non-DAC, Private, Multilateral)

VARIABLES	(1) Δ Official ODA	(2) Δ DAC	(3) Δ Non-DAC	(4) Δ Private Donor	(5) Δ Multilateral ODA
Lagged DV	-0.139*** (0.028)	0.178*** (0.029)	-0.270*** (0.033)	-0.094*** (0.009)	-0.211*** (0.037)
Visit Δ	0.079*** (0.026)	0.113*** (0.041)	0.133*** (0.044)	0.056 (0.037)	0.040 (0.057)
Visit (Lagged)	0.101** (0.047)	0.159*** (0.049)	0.155** (0.060)	0.139*** (0.054)	0.107 (0.078)
Liberal democracy index Δ	0.475 (0.310)	0.285 (0.257)	0.328 (0.500)	-0.582* (0.346)	0.302 (0.628)
Liberal democracy index (Lagged)	-0.029 (0.100)	0.014 (0.104)	-0.441*** (0.151)	0.002 (0.056)	-0.165 (0.148)
Logged GDPppc Δ	-1.033 (0.629)	-0.909** (0.457)	-0.727 (0.619)	-0.136 (0.193)	0.022 (0.782)
Logged GDPppc (Lagged)	-0.133***	-0.138***	-0.059	-0.055***	-0.237***

	(0.030)	(0.041)	(0.053)	(0.021)	(0.048)
Logged Disaster Death Δ	0.022**	0.018	-0.006	0.020**	0.024*
	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.014)
Logged Disaster Death (Lagged)	0.025**	0.042***	-0.017	0.011**	0.035**
	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.012)	(0.005)	(0.016)
Conflict Δ	0.083**	0.072	0.115	0.055	0.007
	(0.040)	(0.047)	(0.095)	(0.074)	(0.061)
Conflict (Lagged)	0.083**	0.100**	0.102	0.097**	0.034
	(0.036)	(0.043)	(0.065)	(0.041)	(0.067)
KOF Globalisation Index Δ	0.022**	0.021**	0.017	-0.017*	0.014
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.013)
KOF Globalisation Index (Lagged)	0.006***	0.007***	0.014***	0.011***	0.012***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
Americas	-0.004	-0.019	-0.378***	-0.093**	0.051
	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.077)	(0.042)	(0.077)
Europe	0.190***	0.222***	0.132	-0.102***	0.287***
	(0.060)	(0.067)	(0.120)	(0.036)	(0.084)
Africa	-0.019	-0.070**	-0.134*	0.035	0.103*
	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.075)	(0.027)	(0.053)
MENA	0.157**	0.151*	0.340*	-0.210***	0.194**
	(0.070)	(0.087)	(0.179)	(0.053)	(0.084)
Constant	1.567***	1.650***	0.419	0.017	2.230***
	(0.298)	(0.387)	(0.412)	(0.161)	(0.388)
Observations	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623
Number of Countries	98	98	98	98	98

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5. UNSG Visits and ODA Allocation (IMF, Regional Development Bank, UN, World Bank)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Δ IMF	Δ Regional Development Bank	Δ United Nations	Δ World Bank
VARIABLES				
Lagged DV	-0.489***	-0.201***	-0.211***	-0.146***
	(0.033)	(0.026)	(0.036)	(0.025)
Visit Δ	0.056	0.082	0.043*	0.095*
	(0.078)	(0.059)	(0.025)	(0.057)
Visit (Lagged)	0.109	0.133**	0.083***	0.147*
	(0.113)	(0.067)	(0.028)	(0.077)
Liberal democracy index Δ	1.329	-0.818	0.099	1.275**
	(0.929)	(0.652)	(0.243)	(0.629)
Liberal democracy index (Lagged)	0.170	-0.141	-0.151**	0.038

	(0.220)	(0.164)	(0.064)	(0.162)
Logged GDPppc Δ	0.148	0.747**	-0.048	1.017**
	(0.510)	(0.361)	(0.288)	(0.452)
Logged GDPppc (Lagged)	-0.441***	-0.255***	-0.119***	-0.256***
	(0.068)	(0.059)	(0.028)	(0.056)
Logged Disaster Death Δ	0.021	0.013	0.025***	0.024*
	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.013)
Logged Disaster Death (Lagged)	0.037**	0.006	0.032***	0.020
	(0.017)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.015)
Conflict Δ	-0.090	0.017	0.022	0.084
	(0.138)	(0.085)	(0.034)	(0.111)
Conflict (Lagged)	-0.219**	-0.075	0.111***	0.001
	(0.108)	(0.070)	(0.034)	(0.077)
KOF Globalisation Index Δ	0.020	0.024	0.001	-0.009
	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.007)	(0.013)
KOF Globalisation Index (Lagged)	0.004	0.014***	0.005***	0.007*
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)
Americas	0.227**	0.020	-0.093**	-0.132
	(0.107)	(0.088)	(0.041)	(0.099)
Europe	0.629***	-0.142*	0.166***	0.201**
	(0.162)	(0.084)	(0.062)	(0.085)
Africa	0.235**	0.164**	0.054*	0.020
	(0.093)	(0.067)	(0.032)	(0.067)
MENA	0.057	-0.084	-0.025	-0.302**
	(0.104)	(0.129)	(0.063)	(0.146)
Constant	3.455***	1.737***	1.239***	2.075***
	(0.542)	(0.411)	(0.270)	(0.429)
Observations	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623
Number of Countries	98	98	98	98

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 6. UNSG Visits and ODA Allocation (State Donors: US, Japan, Germany, UK, France)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
VARIABLES	Δ US	Δ Japan	Δ Germany	Δ United Kingdom	Δ France
Lagged DV	-0.127***	-0.222***	-0.201***	-0.126***	-0.191***
	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.035)	(0.020)	(0.034)
Visit Δ	0.069	0.147***	0.188***	0.112***	0.028
	(0.047)	(0.053)	(0.069)	(0.037)	(0.051)
Visit (Lagged)	0.145**	0.188***	0.204***	0.198***	0.068
	(0.060)	(0.062)	(0.059)	(0.055)	(0.058)
Liberal democracy index Δ	0.879**	0.254	-0.903	0.364	0.509

	(0.408)	(0.498)	(0.686)	(0.535)	(0.398)
Liberal democracy index (Lagged)	-0.182	-0.069	-0.117	-0.016	-0.299
	(0.124)	(0.170)	(0.146)	(0.111)	(0.184)
Logged GDPppc Δ	-1.715**	0.713	0.106	-0.350	-0.150
	(0.692)	(0.584)	(0.375)	(0.442)	(0.371)
Logged GDPppc (Lagged)	-0.093**	-0.125***	-0.177***	-0.123***	-0.030
	(0.040)	(0.046)	(0.049)	(0.039)	(0.052)
Logged Disaster Death Δ	0.019**	0.020	0.021**	0.042***	0.028*
	(0.009)	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.014)
Logged Disaster Death (Lagged)	0.040***	0.036***	0.054***	0.036***	0.040***
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.013)
Conflict Δ	0.170**	0.050	0.023	-0.030	0.016
	(0.066)	(0.108)	(0.056)	(0.072)	(0.079)
Conflict (Lagged)	0.160***	-0.029	0.071	0.177***	0.002
	(0.052)	(0.074)	(0.050)	(0.063)	(0.064)
KOF Globalisation Index Δ	0.010	0.028	0.025*	0.008	0.008
	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.012)
KOF Globalisation Index (Lagged)	0.009***	0.007**	0.013***	0.005*	0.008**
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Americas	0.068	-0.297***	-0.043	-0.087	0.026
	(0.055)	(0.088)	(0.067)	(0.061)	(0.072)
Europe	0.415***	-0.228**	0.325***	0.133*	0.158**
	(0.089)	(0.092)	(0.099)	(0.074)	(0.069)
Africa	0.020	-0.256***	-0.024	-0.027	0.221**
	(0.047)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.046)	(0.086)
MENA	0.051	-0.116	0.114	0.044	0.319**
	(0.124)	(0.145)	(0.107)	(0.086)	(0.150)
Constant	0.733**	1.368***	1.221***	0.891***	0.142
	(0.288)	(0.352)	(0.364)	(0.310)	(0.394)
Observations	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623
Number of Countries	98	98	98	98	98

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7. UNSG Visits and ODA Allocation (State Donors: Czech Republic, Hungary, Korea, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
VARIABLES	Δ Czech Republic	Δ Hungary	Δ Korea	Δ Poland	Δ Slovakia	Δ Slovenia
Lagged DV	-0.161***	-0.540***	-0.107***	-0.391***	-0.452***	-0.376***
	(0.037)	(0.154)	(0.019)	(0.062)	(0.111)	(0.088)
Lagged DV	0.038**	0.010	0.089**	0.049**	0.033	0.004

	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.040)	(0.021)	(0.023)	(0.003)
Visit Δ	0.063**	0.034*	0.096*	0.102**	0.033	0.007
	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.052)	(0.050)	(0.023)	(0.004)
Visit (Lagged)	0.250	0.094	-0.449	-0.568**	0.086	-0.014
	(0.251)	(0.294)	(0.352)	(0.268)	(0.072)	(0.016)
Liberal democracy index Δ	0.019	-0.028	-0.163*	-0.121	0.022	0.006
	(0.040)	(0.047)	(0.098)	(0.077)	(0.019)	(0.006)
Liberal democracy index (Lagged)	-0.621	0.221*	-0.313	0.192	-0.061	-0.014
	(0.400)	(0.114)	(0.407)	(0.192)	(0.129)	(0.016)
Logged GDPppc Δ	0.001	0.019	-0.039	0.043	-0.003	-0.000
	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.008)	(0.001)
Logged GDPppc (Lagged)	0.009**	0.003	0.013	0.006	0.004**	0.001*
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.002)	(0.000)
Logged Disaster Death Δ	0.001	0.004*	0.009	0.007	0.002	0.000
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Logged Disaster Death (Lagged)	0.013	0.012	0.109**	-0.043	0.029*	0.009**
	(0.031)	(0.016)	(0.053)	(0.039)	(0.017)	(0.004)
Conflict Δ	0.029*	0.034	0.038	0.023	0.018	0.004*
	(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.011)	(0.002)
Conflict (Lagged)	0.007**	-0.000	0.020**	-0.004	-0.000	0.000
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.000)
KOF Globalisation Index Δ	-0.000	0.001	0.008***	0.001	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Americas	-0.045**	-0.062***	-0.111**	-0.077**	-0.012	-0.001
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.052)	(0.030)	(0.010)	(0.002)
Europe	0.133***	-0.019	-0.180***	0.118**	0.038**	0.007**
	(0.042)	(0.033)	(0.058)	(0.048)	(0.016)	(0.003)
Africa	-0.049**	-0.031*	-0.130***	-0.018	-0.017	-0.000
	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.046)	(0.028)	(0.016)	(0.002)
MENA	-0.031	-0.034	-0.142*	-0.119**	0.036	-0.001
	(0.024)	(0.044)	(0.074)	(0.048)	(0.036)	(0.002)
Constant	0.050	-0.159	0.166	-0.313	0.048	0.000
	(0.088)	(0.117)	(0.211)	(0.217)	(0.080)	(0.012)
Observations	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623	1,623
Number of Countries	98	98	98	98	98	98

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Conclusion

In this paper, we introduce the novel dataset on UNSG travels, provide a broad set of descriptive analyses, and examine how UNSGs' visits affect the aid activities of foreign aid donors. Critics question the functional role of UNSGs, often characterized as symbolic due to their lack of enforceable authority. However, the UNSG continues to command a high level of credibility and prestige and widespread attention is paid when UNSG embarks on a state visit. Substantial attention is directed towards UNSG state visits, with the media extensively covering their travel itineraries and statements, which are frequently subject to political interpretation. It is therefore crucial question to ask if the UNSG travels make any meaningful impact.

To systematically examine this question, we build the dataset of UNSG travels by extracting information from the UN official documents. The dataset covers all the travels the UNSGs have made in the past 25 years including Annan, Ban, and Guterres. We identify a total of 1288 official visits and find some variations in the number of visits depending on a UNSG. To showcase the value of these data and illustrate how they might be used, we provide an empirical analysis of the effects of the visit on the aid allocation. The results of our error correction models demonstrate that aid donors increase their aid commitment to the countries that received the UNSGs in the previous year. This effect holds across different types of donors, with the exception of the IMF and Regional Development Bank.

Appendix

Table 5. List of Top Visiting Countries

5.1 Total Visits by Country (1997-2021)

Rank	Country	Visits
1	United States	126
2	Switzerland	107
3	France	50
4	United Kingdom	40
5	Italy	32
6	Germany	28
7	Ethiopia	25
8	Austria	23
8	Russia	23
10	Spain	22
10	Egypt	22
12	China	21
13	Japan	19
13	Jordan	19
13	Belgium	19
16	United Arab Emirates	18
16	Qatar	18
18	Israel	17
19	Kenya	16
20	Netherlands	15
20	Turkey	15
20	Canada	15

5-2. Total Visits by Country by 5-Year Period

#	Period	UNSG	Rank	Country	Total Visits
1	1997-2001	Annan	1	United States	30
2	1997-2001	Annan	2	Switzerland	24
3	1997-2001	Annan	3	United Kingdom	9
4	1997-2001	Annan	4.5	France	8
5	1997-2001	Annan	4.5	Nigeria	8
6	1997-2001	Annan	6	Sweden	6
7	1997-2001	Annan	8	Canada	5
8	1997-2001	Annan	8	Italy	5
9	1997-2001	Annan	8	Russia	5
10	1997-2001	Annan	10.5	Niger	4
11	1997-2001	Annan	10.5	Jordan	4
1	2002-2006	Annan	1	United States	25
2	2002-2006	Annan	2	Switzerland	21
3	2002-2006	Annan	3	France	12
4	2002-2006	Annan	4	United Kingdom	10
5	2002-2006	Annan	7.5	Belgium	6
6	2002-2006	Annan	7.5	Austria	6
7	2002-2006	Annan	7.5	Italy	6
8	2002-2006	Annan	7.5	Qatar	6
9	2002-2006	Annan	7.5	Germany	6
10	2002-2006	Annan	7.5	Spain	6
1	2007-2011	Ban	1	United States	32
2	2007-2011	Ban	2	Switzerland	22
3	2007-2011	Ban	3.5	United Kingdom	10
4	2007-2011	Ban	3.5	France	10
5	2007-2011	Ban	5.5	Italy	9
6	2007-2011	Ban	5.5	Egypt	9
7	2007-2011	Ban	7	Spain	8
8	2007-2011	Ban	8.5	Germany	6

9	2007-2011	Ban	8.5	Ethiopia	6
10	2007-2011	Ban	12.5	Austria	5
11	2007-2011	Ban	12.5	Kenya	5
12	2007-2011	Ban	12.5	Turkey	5
13	2007-2011	Ban	12.5	Japan	5
14	2007-2011	Ban	12.5	Thailand	5
15	2007-2011	Ban	12.5	Qatar	5
1	2012-2016	Ban	1	United States	29
2	2012-2016	Ban	2	Switzerland	21
3	2012-2016	Ban	3	France	13
4	2012-2016	Ban	4.5	Italy	8
5	2012-2016	Ban	4.5	Ethiopia	8
6	2012-2016	Ban	9	Kuwait	7
7	2012-2016	Ban	9	Palestinian Territories	7
8	2012-2016	Ban	9	Israel	7
9	2012-2016	Ban	9	Jordan	7
10	2012-2016	Ban	9	United Arab Emirates	7
11	2012-2016	Ban	9	China	7
12	2012-2016	Ban	9	Austria	7
1	2017-2021	Guterres	1	Switzerland	19
2	2017-2021	Guterres	2	United States	10
3	2017-2021	Guterres	3	Germany	9
4	2017-2021	Guterres	4	Portugal	8
5	2017-2021	Guterres	5.5	United Kingdom	7
6	2017-2021	Guterres	5.5	France	7
7	2017-2021	Guterres	7	Ethiopia	5
8	2017-2021	Guterres	9.5	China	4
9	2017-2021	Guterres	9.5	Japan	4
10	2017-2021	Guterres	9.5	Russia	4
11	2017-2021	Guterres	9.5	Italy	4

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