Diplomatic Leverage and Political Signaling: Recipient Strategy in Securing ODA Commitments

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Abstract

This study investigates the strategic actions aid-recipient countries take to influence Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments from Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members. Focusing on diplomatic behavior of recipients at the United Nations (UN), the study analyzes the impact of delegation size and composition at the UN General Assembly (UNGA), and voting alignment with the United States (US). Using an OLS model on ODA data for 93 developing countries, it finds that both channels are significant. Results reveal a diplomatic division of labor in the delegation, where specific delegate types successfully target distinct aid forms (e.g., non-advisers secure high-value grants, national leaders correlate with loans). Crucially, voting alignment with the US on general votes is a significantly stronger determinant of ODA commitments than delegation size, while alignment on issues the US deems important is largely unrewarded by the DAC community. These findings demonstrate that recipients strategically leverage UN activities to optimize diplomatic resources, advancing the aid conditionality literature by isolating the powerful, collective political signal sent to the donor community.

Keywords: Foreign Aid, Official Development Assistance (ODA), United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Voting Alignment, Delegation Size, DAC Donors

JEL Codes: F35, F53, O19

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1 Introduction

The ongoing, large-scale restructuring of international development assistance, exemplified by the significant contraction of programs within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), clearly demonstrates the powerful influence donors retain over the allocation of foreign aid. This raises a critical question for development scholarship: Beyond the well-documented role of donor self-interest, what strategic actions can aid-recipient countries take to demonstrably influence the volume and composition of the assistance they receive? This study builds upon existing literature on the determinants of foreign aid allocation to provide a comprehensive answer by examining two specific, observable diplomatic channels available to recipient states through the United Nations (UN): the size of their diplomatic delegation at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the alignment of their votes with the United States (US).

The UNGA serves as the main policy-making and representative organ of the UN, providing a crucial, high-stakes platform for annual interaction between potential donors and aid recipients. Sending a larger delegation to these meetings is thus a strategic investment for recipient countries aiming to maximize their aid receipts. As Vlcek (2023) theorizes, a greater diplomatic presence provides enhanced visibility and a larger capacity to engage with and lobby a wide audience of donors, thereby increasing the effectiveness of their case for aid and securing funding for economic development. This delegation size represents the first key channel through which developing countries strategically influence the amount of aid they receive.

The second channel of interest is voting alignment at the UN. Existing studies affirm that donors are not entirely altruistic in their allocation decisions, often leveraging aid to advance national interests (e.g., Dreher et al., 2008 and Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2009). Historically, major donors like the US have explored policies linking the allocation of aid to political support in the form of voting alignments (see Kegley and Hook, 1991; Woo and Chung, 2018; and Rose, 2018 for examples). While previous research often views this mechanism through a lens of "buying votes," this study emphasizes that aligning votes with major donors allows recipient countries to demonstrate shared geopolitical interests and multilateral diplomatic support. This strategic signal of partnership, in turn, influences the amount and type of aid they receive from the donor community.

This study employs the OLS model of aid determination to evaluate these two strategic channels. Using Official Development Assistance (ODA) data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for 93 developing countries across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), and South and Central Asia (SCA), the study finds that both delegation size and voting alignment are material and statistically significant determinants in the allocation of foreign aid.[1] Specifically, an increase in a country's aggregate delegation size at the UNGA is associated with a tangible, though marginal, increase in the amount of total ODA it receives in the subsequent year. However, the study uncovers a significant diplomatic division of labor within the delegation, where specific delegate types (like non-advisers) are associated with large, targeted increases in high-value aid forms (like grants), providing evidence of highly effective strategic lobbying. Furthermore, an increase in a country's general voting alignment with the US at the UN is associated with a much larger and economically significant increase in total ODA commitments the following year. That being said, there is a dichotomy in alignment effectiveness, where general voting alignment is highly rewarded by the DAC community, while alignment on issues important to the US is not. These results unequivocally demonstrate that recipient countries possess and strategically leverage their activities at the UN to influence the amount and type of aid they receive.

These findings are particularly revealing given the fundamentally altered landscape of foreign assistance. With over 80 percent of USAID's programs canceled and traditional development channels disrupted, the US has signaled that its aid will be more directly tied to foreign policy priorities rather than tied to its development mandate. Similarly, both the EU and China have recently cooled off in their developmental support for regions like Africa (French, 2025). For recipient countries, these transformations heighten the importance of diplomatic behavior as a tool for securing aid. In particular, delegation size to the UNGA and voting alignments at the UN represent two of the most immediate and observable ways in which recipients can influence donor perceptions and position themselves for favorable treatment. By incorporating both channels, this study provides a more comprehensive account of how the diplomatic strategies of recipient states within the UN framework translate into material benefits. In doing so, it not only updates existing scholarship with contemporary evidence but also sheds light on the continued strategic importance of aid in

[1] These regions, particularly SSA and SCA, comprise the leading recipients of ODA.

twenty-first century international relations.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the relevant literature and outlines the contribution of the study. Section 3 introduces the variables and sources of the data used in the study. Section 4 then outlines the empirical strategy whose results are presented in Section 5, before Section 6 concludes.

2 Related Literature and Contributions

The literature on foreign aid allocation typically categorizes the determinants of assistance into two primary groups: factors that primarily reflect the needs or merits of recipient countries and those that satisfy the political or economic interests of donors. Rabehajaina et al. (2023) provides a comprehensive review of the various studies that have analyzed the influence of these factors. On the one hand, factors that represent the needs and merits of recipients include humanitarian needs, governance quality, and political and civil stability (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Berthélemy & Tichit, 2004; Claessens et al., 2009; Harrigan & Wang, 2011; Neumayer, 2003). On the other hand, factors reflecting the interests of donors encompass historical or political ties, economic interests (such as trade or investment), and shared values like respect for the rule of law or cooperation in the fight against terrorism (Boutton & Carter, 2014; Macdonald & Hoddinott, 2004; Scott & Carter, 2019; Younas, 2008).

Of the two channels of aid determination that this study investigates, delegation size can be interpreted as a proxy for the needs or merits of recipients countries. Delegates function as diplomatic lobbyists who advocate for the needs and merits of their respective countries for more aid to potential donors. Voting alignment, in contrast, clearly aligns with factors concerning donor interests. It serves as a mechanism for recipient countries to endorse and provide tangible support for the geopolitical stances and multilateral priorities of donor nations, thereby potentially securing favorable aid allocation.

The current study makes several substantial contributions to the literature on aid allocation and international diplomacy. First, it introduces delegation size and composition to the econometric

analysis of aid determinants, providing a novel measure of recipient-side diplomatic effort and resource deployment at the UNGA. Second, by disaggregating the delegation, it uncovers a diplomatic division of labor, showing that specific delegate types (e.g., advisers, national leaders) are associated with the subsequent receipt of distinct categories of aid (e.g., overall ODA, loans). Third, the study shifts the focus from the dominant donor perspective—which frames aid as a tool for 'vote-buying' (Dreher et al., 2008; Rai, 1980; Wang, 1999)—to the strategic agency of recipient countries. By analyzing the recipient's motives, the study moves beyond the passive 'vote-taker' view to demonstrate how recipient states strategically optimize their diplomatic assets. Finally, this paper introduces critical nuance to the political channel by demonstrating that the impact of voting alignment is not uniform; instead, general voting alignment is a significantly more powerful predictor of aid commitments than alignment on issues the US deems important. This finding suggests that aid rewards reflect a recipient country's ability to send a powerful, collective political signal to the wider DAC donor community, rather than merely accommodating the specific foreign policy demands of a single major donor.

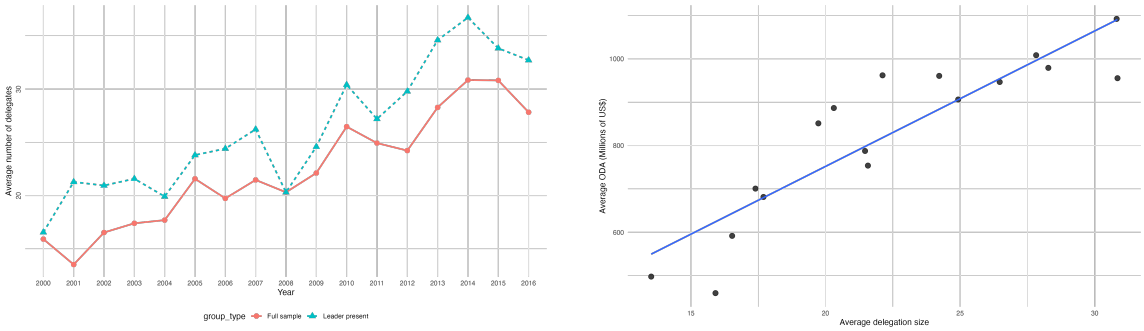
3 Data

3.1 Variable Measures and Sources of the Data

The primary outcome variables are four measures of Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments, sourced from the OECD's DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS) database, with all values measured in constant (2023) prices. The choice of aid commitments over disbursements, following the convention in the literature, because commitments reflect the donor's policy will at the time of allocation(Neumayer, 2003; Rabehajaina et al., 2023), which aligns precisely with this study's focus on diplomatic actions intended to influence donor intent. ODA is a concessional form of assistance (comprising at least a 25% grant element) provided by DAC members to promote economic development. This study analyzes four specific categories: total ODA, ODA grants, ODA loans, and aid for technical cooperation. Grants are financial transfers with no repayment obligation, whereas loans require repayment on concessional terms (to qualify as ODA, a loan must retain a grant element of at least 25%). Technical cooperation captures the cost of transferring knowledge

and skills through activities like training or sending experts.

Data on delegations to the UNGA is retrieved from official records available at the United Nations Digital Library. Consistent information across the sample of countries is available for the years ranging from 2000 to 2016, which defines the temporal scope of the study. A country's delegation to the UNGA comprises distinct, measurable components: up to five representatives, five alternative representatives, an unspecified number of advisers, and senior government officials. These government officials often serve as leaders of delegations and include either the head of state or a high-ranking cabinet members.



(a) Delegation sizes over time

(b) Relationship between Delegation Size and Aid

Figure 1: A panel of figures illustrating key trends in the delegation sizes and ODA. Panel (a) plots reveals the increase in the average delegation sizes to the UNGA over time, whether a national leader is in attendance or not. Panel (b) depicts a positive correlation between the average delegation size and the average amount of ODA commitments.

Figure 1 reveals two interesting patterns relating to delegation sizes and aid commitments. First, Panel 1a shows that the average delegation size has increased over time. This trend applies to delegations in general as well as when a national leader is in attendance. According to Vlcek (2023), for developing countries like those in the sample, this increase in delegation sizes over time can be tied to their seeking more aid. Second, Panel 1b shows that there is a strong positive correlation between delegation size and the amount of aid commitments that a country receives. One of the primary goals of this study is to assess the extent to which this pattern goes beyond mere correlation.

Information on voting alignments with the US comes from the United Nations General Assembly

Decision-Making (UNGA-DM) dataset, which was developed by Fjelstul et al. (2025). The focus on US alignment is appropriate given that the United States is historically the largest single contributor of ODA and is broadly considered the geopolitical leader of the DAC donor community. This study utilizes two distinct measures of alignment: general alignments and alignments on votes identified as important by the US State Department in its annual report to Congress. In both cases, the variable is an annual average of voting coincidence between a recipient country and the US, scaled between 0 and 1. A score of 0 indicates complete divergence from the US voting position, while a score of 1 indicates absolute consensus on all votes. For interpretation, a one-unit increase in the voting alignment score represents a theoretical shift from zero agreement to full agreement with the US position in a given year.

In addition to the primary explanatory variables of interest, the study controls for the following variables: human development index (HDI) to capture the aid needs of a country; population as a proxy for its size; merchandise trade to GDP to account for how open it is to trade; political stability and absence of terrorism to measure its peacefulness; and two variables in rule of law and the Bayesian corruption index (BCI) to capture the perception of the level of corruption. Data for HDI comes from United Nations Development Programme database. The HDI is a composite measure of a country's achievement in human development, taking into account its life expectancy, education, and income. Countries with low values of HDI have a greater need for economic assistance. Data for population and merchandise trade to GDP come from the World Bank's World Development Indicators whereas information on rule of law and political stability and absence of terrorism (PV) come from the Bank's World Governance Indicators.[2] Data on the BCI, which is a composite measure of perceived and overall corruption, is based on the work by Standaert (2015).

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Summary statistics of the variables outlined above are presented in Table 1. All measures of aid are in millions of real (2023 prices) US dollars. Considering that it encompasses the three other

[2]Political stability and absence of terrorism measures perceptions of the likelihood of political instability and/or politically motivated violence, including terrorism. Rule of law captures perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.

measures, the average amount of overall ODA commitments is higher than that of grants, loans, or technical cooperation. The average delegation size for the sample is 22.52. This number is comparable to but slightly lower than figure that Vlcek (2023) has over the overlapping periods.[3] Included in the delegations are advisers whose role is to provide specialized expertise and support to representatives and alternative representatives. In theory, advisers play a crucial role that makes the delegation's work effective.

For voting alignments, Table 1 shows that the votes of the countries in the sample at the UN do not align with those of the US on average, with an average of 0.34 on general issues and an average of 0.39 on issues important to the US. The low voting alignments are in part simply reflects differing national interests and priorities between developing countries and the richest country in the world. The gap in alignment with the US is not limited to developing countries alone. Despite being the global superpower, the US is isolated in many international organizations, including the UNGA (Voeten, 2013). In fact, the average alignments depicted in the table are higher than those found in the literature. For example, Adhikari (2019) demonstrates that from 2004 until 2011, the US received an average of less than 20% support in all contentious resolutions that were put to vote. In a different study, Balla and Reinhardt Yannitell (2008) incorporate 122 aid recipient countries in their sample and find that on average, their voting alignment with the US was only 0.25. With the sample used in this study coming from regions that are recipients of aid, the higher average alignments may suggest a stronger link between voting alignments and aid.

Looking at the population variable, there is variation in the sizes of the countries in the sample. With an average of 54.15% for the merchandise trade to GDP, these countries are generally less open to trade than the global average. Their average HDI value is 0.59, which matches with the one in Rabehajaina et al. (2023). While this value is higher than 0.55, which is the threshold below which countries are characterized to have low human development, it shows that the countries in the sample have a strong need for development assistance. The average BCI is 54.10, which is higher than 44.95, the global average over the same period. The countries in the sample have a higher perception of corruption.

PV, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, has a theoretical range of -2.5 to 2.5,

[3]The samples used by the two studies are different.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Primary Variables of Interest

Variable	**Obs**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Min**	**Max**
Delegates	1564	22.52	20.73	0	253
Advisers	1564	12.83	20.02	0	241
Align USA	1572	0.34	0.09	0.11	0.59
Align USA important	1568	0.39	0.15	0.00	0.82
ODA	1572	823.68	1239.10	0.55	13467.02
ODA grants	1572	569.20	909.31	-0.85	12730.81
ODA loans	1294	292.10	646.60	0.02	6480.78
Technical cooperation	1572	95.21	141.57	0.10	1866.12
HDI	1414	0.59	0.14	0.27	0.86
BCI	1439	54.10	13.48	16.80	78.13
PV	1492	-0.37	0.93	-3.31	1.36
Rule of law	1494	-0.53	0.75	-2.59	1.52
Merchandise trade to GDP	1596	54.15	27.41	7.81	175.38
population	1445	35.05	133.73	0.07	1343.94

Summary statistics of the variables used in the study

with a higher score indicating greater political stability and a lower perceived risk of violence and terrorism.[4] On average, the countries in the sample have a score of -0.37, which indicates that they are relatively unstable. Similarly, rule of law is measured on a -2.5 to 2.5 theoretical scale, with a higher score indicating a stronger perceived rule of law. On average, the countries in the sample score lower on rule of law than on PV.

4 Empirical Strategy

To investigate the relationship between a recipient country's UN engagement and its subsequent receipt of developmental assistance, this study employs a linear regression model with country and

[4]It is possible for countries that are very unstable, for example Somalia, to have a score outside the range.

year fixed effects. This econometric approach is essential for controlling for unobserved heterogeneity and time-specific confounding factors, allowing for a more robust estimation of the causal effect of diplomatic behavior on aid allocation.

The baseline model is specified as follows:

$$log(oda_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1\ delegates_{i,t-k} + \beta_2\ vote\_align\_usa_{i,t-k} + X'_{i,t-k}\gamma + \alpha_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{i,t-k}$$

where:

- $log(oda_{it})$ is the natural logarithm of aid commitments received by country i in year t. The log transformation helps to normalize the skewed distribution of ODA data and allows for the interpretation of our coefficients as percentage changes.
- $delegates_{i,t-k}$ represents the size of country i's delegation to the UNGA in year $t-k$.
- $vote\_align\_usa_{i,t-k}$ measures the proportion of voting alignment between country $i$and the US at the UN in year $t-k$.
- k denotes the lag structure, chosen to address potential issues of reverse causality and to allow time for diplomatic actions to influence aid allocations.
- $X'_{i,t-k}$ is a vector of control variables for country i in year $t-k$, including economic, political, and social indicators that may influence aid. These variables are also lagged to prevent simultaneity bis. The full set of control variables includes a country's Human Development Index (HDI) and its square, population and its square, rule of law, political stability and the absence of terrorism, the ratio of merchandise trade to GDP, and a Bayesian corruption index. The inclusion of quadratic terms for HDI and population is to capture any potential non-linear relationships.
- α_i and δ_t are the country and year fixed effects, respectively. These account for time-invariant country-specific factors and time-specific global trends that might affect the aid landscape.
- $\varepsilon_{i,t-k}$ is the idosyncratic error term.

A key concern in this type of empirical analysis is endogeneity, arising from potential reverse causality or omitted variable bias. This study employs two strategies to mitigate these threats, thus strengthening the internal validity of the estimates.

First, the primary identification strategy against omitted variable bias is the use of country fixed effects (α_i), which accounts for any unobserved, time-invariant characteristic that is correlated with both UN behavior and aid receipts. Similarly, the year fixed effects (δ_t) absorb global, time-specific factors common across all countries.

Second, the study addresses potential reverse causality—where past aid levels might influence a country's present diplomatic effort—by following the convention in the foreign aid literature of regressing current aid on past diplomatic actions (e.g. Alesina and Dollar, 2000; Dreher et al., 2008; Rabehajaina et al., 2023). Specifically, it sets the number of lags for the primary explanatory variables, delegation size and voting alignment, to $k = 1$ or $k = 2$. This methodological choice rests on a robust theoretical foundation: foreign aid is allocated via annual budgetary and administrative processes, meaning aid commitments made in year t must be based on observable political behavior, such as a country's final voting record or observed diplomatic effort, from preceding years, $t - 1$ or $t - 2$. Modeling with short lags also avoids confounding the specific effect of a recipient's timely diplomatic actions with other, more generalized geopolitical shifts that only become apparent over longer time horizons.

5 Results

5.1 Delegation size and voting alignments

Table 2 presents the results of the impact that lagged measures of overall delegation size to the UNGA and voting alignments with the US at the UN have on the the four measures of aid: aggregate ODA, grants, loans, and technical cooperation. Of these outcomes variables, the only one that responds statistically significantly to both primary explanatory variables of interest is overall ODA.[5]

[5]Recall that ODA includes other measures of assistance besides grants, loans, and technical cooperation.

Specifically, a one-unit increase in delegation size is associated with a 0.21% increase in the commitments of ODA that a country receives the following year, ceteris paribus. This translates to an an average additional ODA commitment of $1.73 over the sample period.[6] Such an amount can have a tangible impact for many recipient countries of aid, which are mostly low- to lower-middle-income countries.[7] While this finding underscores the potential diplomatic leverage of a larger delegation, it is critical to interpret this effect within the broader context of international development finance. The linear relationship between delegation size and ODA commitments represents a marginal effect and should not be extrapolated to predict the effects of large-scale changes, such as a 10-unit increase in delegation size. Such an extrapolation would overlook the fundamental constraints that govern aid allocation, including the limit in the amount of funds donors can allocate towards aid their budgets, the principle of diminishing returns, and the complex interplay of political and economic factors that may not be fully captured by empirical model used in this study. Therefore, this finding should be understood as evidence that subtle increases in diplomatic presence can yield tangible benefits, rather than a scalable strategy for exponentially increasing aid.

Beyond delegation size, the results in Table 2 indicate that increased voting alignments with the US at the UN is also positively rewarded with increased ODA commitments. A coefficient of 0.9878 implies that a one-unit increase in voting alignments in a given year is associated with an approximate 168.5% increase in ODA commitments in the following year.[8] This magnitude represents a highly theoretical shift from a country having no alignment on any vote to complete alignment on all votes in the subsequent year. However, such a large change is rare in practice. To better contextualize the magnitude of this effect, consider a hypothetical shift from the sample average of 0.34, as detailed in Table 1, to 0.35. Such a one-hundredth increase in alignment is associated with a 0.99% increase in aid commitments.[9] Based on the sample's average ODA, this translates to approximately $8.15 million in additional ODA commitments. This finding provides robust evidence that a country's diplomatic positioning and support for US foreign policy at the UN play a material and economically significant role in securing development assistance.

[6] In Table 1, the average ODA commitments received was $823.68 million.

[7] For context, the median GNI per capita for the sample was $1,470; the World Bank identifies lower-middle-income countries as those whose GNI per capita is betwee$1,136 and $4,495.

[8] The interpretation of estimated coefficients is based on the following formula: $Percentage\ Change \approx (e^{coefficient} - 1) \times 100\%$.

[9] $\%\Delta \approx 100 \times coefficient \times \Delta X = 100 \times 0.9878 \times 0.01$.

Table 2: The impact of delegation size and voting alignments with the US on measures of ODA

	Dependent Variables in Logs			
Independent Variables	ODA	Grants	Loans	Technical
Delegation size, 1-year lag	0.0021**	0.0005	0.0028	0.0006
	(0.0010)	(0.0008)	(0.0020)	(0.0008)
Voting alignment, 1-year lag	0.9878**	1.3258**	1.2688	1.0688**
	(0.4929)	(0.5208)	(1.0456)	(0.4563)
Log HDI, 2-year lag	-6.5414**	-8.5959***	-5.3393	-3.9932*
	(2.8722)	(2.9486)	(4.5728)	(2.0073)
Log HDI, 2-year lag squared	-3.4614***	-4.6830***	-1.6413	-2.3393**
	(1.2391)	(1.2642)	(2.1815)	(0.9691)
Log population, 2-year lag	-3.1509	-1.0769	-8.0582	-0.5961
	(3.4071)	(3.2838)	(6.1863)	(2.6867)
Log population, 2-year lag squared	0.0914	0.0424	0.2004	0.0379
	(0.1057)	(0.1021)	(0.1882)	(0.0815)
Political stability, 2-year lag	0.0943	-0.0112	0.2657*	-0.0907
	(0.0752)	(0.0677)	(0.1467)	(0.0549)
Log trade to GDP, 2-year lag	-0.0027	-0.0863	0.3058	0.0188
	(0.1008)	(0.0992)	(0.1969)	(0.0943)
Rule of law, 2-year lag	0.0349	0.2068	0.1299	0.0448
	(0.1008)	(0.1713)	(0.3646)	(0.1122)
Log BCI, 2-year lag	-1.4709*	-0.8017	-2.0021	-1.2304**
	(0.8213)	(0.8727)	(1.4074)	(0.5754)
Observations	1178	1177	995	1178
R-squared	0.908	0.910	0.714	0.919
Adjusted R-squared	0.899	0.901	0.682	0.912
Country FE	X	X	X	X
Year FE	X	X	X	X

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

The results of estimating the model in Section 4. The dependent variables – overall aid (ODA), grants, loans, and support for technical cooperation – are all in logs.

Furthermore, increased voting alignments not only boosts ODA commitments but, unlike delegation size, also significantly raises the committed amounts of grants and aid for technical cooperation.[10] The greater number of statistically significant coefficients across the four outcome variables and the larger magnitude of the estimated effects demonstrate that voting alignment is a stronger determinant of foreign aid commitments compared to the recipient country's delegation size to the UNGA. The difference in impacts is not entirely surprising. The UNGA is a once in a year event whereas numerous votes are cast throughout the year. In other words, voting alignments offers recipient countries more visibility to potential donors than meetings at the UNGA.

The outcomes depicted in Table 2 prove robust to several modification of the empirical model, specifically when using 1-year lags for all explanatory variables and using 2-year lags for all explanatory variables. The results of these robustness checks are presented in Table 6 in Appendix A

5.2 Different types of delegates

When the delegation size is split its components, interesting patterns image, as depicted in Table 3, suggesting a division of labor within the delegation that mirrors the different types of aid provided. First, the impact that overall delegation size has on the ODA commitments appears to be driven by the number of advisers. The estimated impact of advisers have on ODA commitments is 0.2%, all else constant. While only statistically significant at the 10% level, this value is similar in magnitude to that of the overall delegation. This finding demonstrates the beneficial role of specialized expertise and support provided by advisers in lobbying efforts for increased ODA.

In contrast, the presence of a national leader at the UNGA does not yield a significant impact on ODA. Instead, the presence of a national leader is associated with higher loan commitments, specifically an increase of about 0.35%, ceteris paribus. This finding may be driven by tow primary mechanisms. First, leaders may prioritize securing any form of commitment, viewing a loan as a political achievement. It also helps that national leaders possess the necessary authority to approve the long-term, repayable nature of such commitments. Second, donor countries, aware of

[10] Specifically, grants are associated with an increase of 276.5%, and technical cooperation with 191.2%.

Table 3: The impact of voting alignments and different measures of delegation sizes

Models		Dependent Variables in Logs			
	Independent Variables	ODA	Grants	Loans	Technical
1	Delegation size, 1-year lag	0.0021**	0.0005	0.0028	0.0006
		(0.0010)	(0.0008)	(0.0020)	(0.0008)
	Voting alignment, 1-year lag	0.9878**	1.3258**	1.2688	1.0688**
		(0.4929)	(0.5208)	(1.0456)	(0.4563)
2	Advisers, 1-year lag	0.0020*	0.0002	0.0029	0.0002
		(0.0010)	(0.0008)	(0.0019)	(0.0008)
	Voting alignment, 1-year lag	0.9812*	1.3147**	1.2850	1.0796**
		(0.4949)	(0.5224)	(1.0443)	(0.4567)
3	Leader present, 1-year lag	0.0016	0.0006	0.0035*	0.0010
		(0.0011)	(0.0010)	(0.0018)	(0.0007)
	Voting alignment, 1-year lag	0.9545*	1.2945**	1.1855	1.0335**
		(0.4956)	(0.5232)	(1.0373)	(0.4544)
4	Non-advisers, 1-year lag	0.0152	0.0207**	-0.0015	0.0272***
		(0.0108)	(0.0089)	(0.00237)	(0.0087)
	Voting alignment, 1-year lag	0.9661*	1.2476**	1.3584	0.9893**
		(0.4867)	(0.5143)	(1.0580)	(0.4423)

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

This table summarizes the results of estimating the impact that voting alignments and different measures of delegation sizes have on the four measures of aid. The different measures of voting alignments are identified by the model numbers in the left-most column. Each model incorporates time and year fixed effects and uses 2-year lags of all the necessary control variables, all of which have been suppressed for brevity.

the higher-level engagement, may be more inclined to offer loan commitments, portions of which must be repaid, rather than full grants.

Aid in the form of grants and technical cooperation responds to the size of non-adviser delegates. This group comprises permanent representatives, alternate representatives, and high ranking non-technical government officials such as ministers and even heads of states. The magnitude of the impact that non-advisers exert on these types of aid, particularly grants, is notably larger than the impact observed in the other measures of aid. A one unit increase in this type of delegation increases the amount of grant commitments by about 2%, which translates to an average of $ 11.38 million. Such an amount would have a tremendous impact in meeting the developmental needs of the countries in the sample.

In summation, the disaggregation reveals that each component of the delegation to the UNGA plays a distinct and crucial role in determining the specific types and amounts of foreign aid commitments that a country receives.

5.3 Delegation size and voting alignments on issues important to the US

While the large and mostly highly statistically significant effect of general voting alignments with the US on the measures of aid is depicted in Table 3, Table 4 demonstrates that voting alignments on issues specifically deemed important to the US have a smaller and largely statistically insignificant effect by comparison. In fact, the only statistically significantly effect is observed in aid for technical cooperation, which is the smallest component of the four aid categories. Conversely, general voting alignments exert the largest effect on grant commitments, which is the largest aid component.

A possible explanation for this dichotomy may lie in the difference in what these two measures of voting alignment with the US represent to the broader community of DAC donor countries, as depicted in Figure 2 in Appendix B. The majority of DAC members, especially other major donors like France, Germany and Great Britain, vote in strong alignment with the US on general votes. Thus, when a recipient country votes in alignment with the US, it simultaneously aligns its votes with a majority of other major donors, which then collectively reward the recipient country by increasing their aid commitments. In contrast, the other major DAC donors do not relatively align

Table 4: Voting alignments on issues important to the US

Models		Dependent Variables			
	Independent Variables	ODA	Grants	Loans	Technical
1	Delegation size, 1-year lag	0.0022**	0.0006	0.0030	0.0007
		(0.0010)	(0.0008)	(0.0019)	(0.0008)
	Vote US important, 1-year lag	0.2262	0.4286	0.1731	0.4252**
		(0.2425)	(0.2674)	(0.4462)	(0.2034)
2	Advisers, 1-year lag	0.0021**	0.0004	0.0030	0.0002
		(0.0010)	(0.0008)	(0.0019)	(0.0008)
	Vote US important, 1-year lag	0.2277	0.4301	0.1745	0.4268**
		(0.2437)	(0.2683)	(0.4469)	(0.2035)
3	Leader present, 1-year lag	0.0018	0.0008	0.0037**	0.0011
		(0.0011)	(0.0010)	(0.0018)	(0.0007)
	Vote US important, 1-year lag	0.2241	4260	0.1582	0.4165**
		(0.2419)	(0.2675)	(0.4412)	(0.2026)
4	Non-advisers, 1-year lag	0.0165	0.0223**	0.0005	0.0283***
		(0.0108)	(0.0089)	(0.00236)	(0.0089)
	Vote US important, 1-year lag	0.2279	0.4223	0.1880	0.4163**
		(0.2418)	(0.2647)	(0.4510)	(0.2022)

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

This table summarizes the results of estimating the impact that voting alignments on issues important to the US and different measures of delegation sizes have on the four measures of aid. The different measures of voting alignments are identified by the model numbers in the left-most column. Each model incorporates time and year fixed effects and uses 2-year lags of all the necessary control variables, all of which have been suppressed for brevity.

their votes as strongly with the US issues it deems important. Therefore, when a recipient country aligns with the US on its important issues, these other major donors do not perceive this alignment as beneficial or warranting an increase in aid.

6 Conclusion

This study investigates the complex interplay between a recipient country's diplomatic presence at the UNGA and its subsequent receipt of foreign aid commitments from DAC member countries. By analyzing the dual mechanisms of UNGA delegation size and voting alignment with the US, its findings provide robust evidence that both diplomatic activity and political alignment significantly influence the volume and composition of development assistance.

Crucially, the analysis of delegation size reveals a nuanced division of labor within the recipient country's mission, where different delegate types are associated with securing different forms of aid. The presence of specialized advisers drives increases in general ODA commitments, while the presence of non-adviser delegates (e.g., permanent representatives, ministers) is associated with securing higher-value grant and technical cooperation commitments. The presence of a national leader, however, is uniquely associated with an increase in loan commitments, which may reflect a combination of leaders possessing greater authority to sign long-term debt commitments and donors strategically offering repayable loans in high-level negotiations.

Furthermore, the results clearly demonstrate that voting in alignment with major donors at the UN is a stronger determinant of aid commitments than delegation size. Specifically, general voting alignment with the US is highly and significantly rewarded with increases in aggregate ODA, grants, and technical cooperation commitments. This finding highlights how a recipient country's diplomatic posture—in this case, general alignment with the US which often aligns with the consensus of major DAC donors—is directly linked to favorable financial outcomes. Conversely, alignment on issues deemed specifically important to the US yields a statistically insignificant reward, suggesting that aid allocation is driven by the broader, collective foreign policy interests of the DAC community rather than unilateral US pressure.

The findings yield three major implications for policy makers and academic scholarship. First, for recipient countries, these results suggest that the composition of UNGA missions should be viewed as a precise strategic tool. The revealed division of labor—where advisers drive overall ODA, non-adviser delegates secure grants, and national leaders correlate with loans—enables recipients to optimize their diplomatic resources by tailoring delegation structure to target specific forms of development assistance. Second, concerning donor countries, this research confirms that foreign policy interests are a key, quantifiable driver of ODA flows, as aid commitments from DAC donors are demonstrably responsive to the diplomatic signals sent by recipient states at the UN. Finally, in terms of theoretical contribution, this study advances the literature on the determinants of foreign aid by demonstrating that the actions of a recipient country serve as a powerful, collective political signal that effectively influences the aggregated aid decisions of the entire DAC group.

Future research should focus on two main areas. First, it would be beneficial to conduct case studies or field interviews to qualitatively explore the micro-mechanisms of the diplomatic division of labor observed within UNGA missions. Second, researchers could investigate whether voting alignment's large impact holds true when controlling for donor-specific alignment patterns, moving beyond the aggregate DAC measure to analyze the unique motivations of individual donor countries like France, Germany, or Japan.

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A Supplemental Tables

A.1 Summary statistics of Primary Variables of Interest

Table 5 provides a descriptive statistics of the primary variables of interest, with the measures of aid in log format.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Primary Variables of Interest

Variable	**Obs**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Min**	**Max**
Delegates	1564	22.52	20.73	0	253
Advisers	1564	12.83	20.02	0	241
Align USA	1572	0.34	0.09	0.11	0.59
Align USA important	1568	0.39	0.15	0.00	0.82
Log ODA	1572	5.74	1.56	-0.60	9.51
Log grants	1572	5.37	1.58	-0.67	9.45
Log loans	1294	4.29	1.90	-3.91	8.78
Log technical support	1572	3.69	1.56	-2.30	7.53

A.2 Robustness Check for Different Lags of Explanatory Variables

Table 6 is a collection of models that try out different lag combinations of the explanatory variables. The results remain consistent for every lag combinations tested.

Table 6: One- versus two-year lags of all explanatory variables

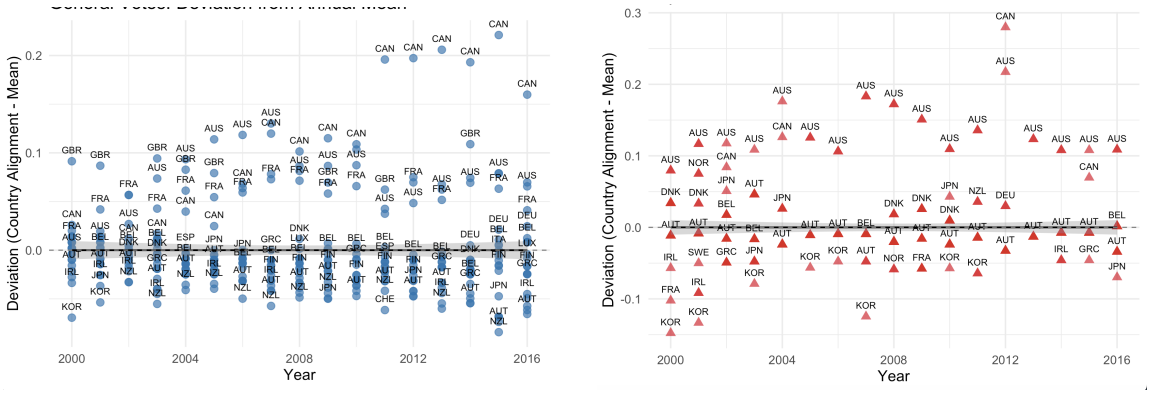
Models		Dependent Variables in Logs			
	Independent Variables	ODA	Grants	Loans	Technical
1	Delegation size, 1-year lag	0.0021**	0.0005	0.0028	0.0006
		(0.0010)	(0.0008)	(0.0020)	(0.0008)
	Voting alignment, 1-year lag	0.9878**	1.3258**	1.2688	1.0688**
		(0.4929)	(0.5208)	(1.0456)	(0.4563)
2	Delegation size, 2-year lag	0.0021**	0.0005	0.0028	0.0006
		(0.0010)	(0.0008)	(0.0020)	(0.0008)
	Voting alignment, 2-year lag	0.9878**	1.3258**	1.2688	1.0688**
		(0.4929)	(0.5208)	(1.0456)	(0.4563)

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

The first column identifies the two additional versions of the model in Section 4 that are estimated. Model 1 is the results of estimating the model with 1-year lags of all explanatory variables, including all the necessary controls that have been suppressed for brevity. Model 2 is the results for estimating a model with 2-year lags of all explanatory variables. Changing the lag structure does not affect the impact that delegation size and voting alignments with the US have on the four different measures of aid.

B Voting Alignments of DAC Member Countries

Figure 2 depicts the deviations of the voting alignments of DAC member countries from the US votes relative to the group average. Panel 2a focuses on general votes whereas Panel 2b represents votes that are deemed important by the US.



(a) Deviations of general voting alignments from the group average

(b) Deviations of voting alignments on important votes from the group average

Figure 2: Panel (a) plots deviations of voting alignments of individual DAC member countries to the US on general votes. Other than Japan, notice how other major donors like the United Kingdom, France, and Germany consistently vote in alignment with the US. Panel (b) plots deviations in voting alignments from the group average on votes that are important to the US. The United Kingdom, France, and Germany do no particularly align their votes with the US on these votes.