

# Aid, Blame, and Backlash \*

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## Abstract

Not all aid is welcome. Aid targeted at minorities or other marginalized groups in recipient countries is a common donor priority. However, minority aid is unpopular in recipient countries due to persistent discrimination against out-groups and expectations of political favoritism from political representatives. Backlash against the presence of unpopular aid in recipient countries may cause majority-group members to blame their political representatives for allowing or acquiring unpopular aid. I develop a theory of how blame-attribution and donor-driven incentives to promote aid for vulnerable populations reduce trust in government. A case study of Kosovo illustrates the dynamic of political backlash against governments when aid to an unpopular minority is delivered by international actors. I test the theory on a novel dataset of aid projects in Kosovo by leveraging quasi-random timing of aid project events. I find that exposure to aid targeted at marginalized groups negatively affects trust in and approval of local and national governments. Donor attempts to help vulnerable populations may lead to backlash that empowers anti-minority parties, making the political landscape of recipient countries more dangerous for the groups they sought to aid.

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# 1 Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) promote efforts to address “poverty, hunger, disease, unmet schooling, gender inequality, and environmental degradation.” (Sachs, 2012, 2206) Reducing inequality, a key subcomponent of all of these goals, requires addressing unequal access to services for and discrimination against minority (ethnic, religious, racial) groups. Most minority groups face inequality in aid recipient countries because of persistent discrimination and disenfranchisement (Gurr & Scarritt, 1989). Foreign aid is a key tool to address the SDGs and has been used to improve the status of minorities in recipient countries (Kretz, 2013; Savun & Tirone, 2011). Aid to minorities receives high praise in donor countries and serves the larger humanitarian goals that motivate much of the aid community (Heinrich & Kobayashi, 2020; Heinrich *et al.*, 2018). This aid is intended to improve the material and political circumstances of its minority recipients (Velasco, 2020; Bütthe *et al.*, 2012).

While the SDGs intend to uplift the lives of all people in developing countries, majority populations in recipient countries may not want to improve the lives of minority groups. If aid is seen as a zero-sum game, aid for minority groups comes at a cost of aid for majority groups (Baylouny, 2020). Even minority-targeted aid that comes at no cost to majority populations receives substantially less support than neutral or majority-targeted aid among majority-group constituents (Linos *et al.*, 2020). Aid to unpopular groups may be subject to protests and anti-minority activism by the majority population (Weiss & Bosia, 2013; Velasco, 2020).

Aid to out-groups may be politically-popular for donor countries, but for recipient countries, it may impose political costs. Targeting aid has consequences for its recipients. I develop a theory of blame-attribution, a corollary to the burgeoning literature on credit-claiming in aid (Cruz & Schneider, 2017; Guiteras *et al.*, 2015). The presence of aid targeted

at an unpopular minority may result in jealousy from the majority community, leaving them to lower their support for the government. In line with the credit-claiming literature, aid to minorities may also reveal a politician to be either weak and unable to prevent the allocation of unpopular aid or strong and choosing to allocate aid to an unpopular minority against the preferences of her constituents (Dolan, 2020; Ijaz, 2020). I argue that aid targeted at specific constituencies, particularly minority constituencies, reduces trust in local and national governments.

I test the argument on a novel set of aid projects from Kosovo. Kosovo is a top recipient of aid from OECD countries. Donor countries have made support to minority groups, particularly to Kosovar Serbs, a key feature of their engagement with the state (Doli & Koronica, 2013; Gjoni *et al.*, 2010; Papadimitriou *et al.*, 2007; Devic, 2006). Minority groups are over-represented in the amount of aid they receive relative to their population size: 8% of the population but 22% of the total aid projects.<sup>1</sup> Politicians in Kosovo typically publicize their relationships with aid donors as a sign of their ability to get additional resources for their community. Some politicians express frustration at the amount of funding for minority communities. As an aid-dependent country with contentious inter-group relations, Kosovo is a space in which we should expect to see backlash from aid to minority communities resulting in blame for political representatives and lower support for government.

To measure the effect of unpopular targeted aid on support for governments, I use public opinion data from the 2016 Life in Transition Survey in Kosovo. I identify the relative exposure of survey respondents to aid for minorities by calculating individuals' physical distance from the project and the amount of time they have been exposed to an aid project. While aid timing is non-random on a macro-scale (Kersting & Kilby, 2016; Kilby, 2005; Marx, 2017), I exploit plausibly-exogenous variation in timing due to bureaucratic idiosyncrasies, conditional on covariates. I find evidence that exposure to minority aid projects decreases

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<sup>1</sup>Population estimates from the OSCE. Aid project calculations by author.

government approval among survey respondents.

The paper proceeds as follows: I discuss the logic and consequences of donor-driven incentives to target aid at minority populations. I explore existing research on the politics of minority aid in recipient countries. I describe the phenomenon of credit-claiming for aid recipients and introduce its corollary for unpopular targeted aid: blame-attribution. The case of aid to minority populations in Kosovo illustrates the dynamic of international support for targeted aid and the political consequences for elected representatives in Kosovo. Using a national survey of citizens in Kosovo, I empirically test the hypotheses derived from my case study. Aid to Kosovar minorities is associated with decreases in approval for local and national governments.

## 2 The Political Economy of Unpopular Aid

I review existing literature on aid allocation for minority populations. Donors have strong incentives to provide funding for minority groups. Recipients have incentives to accept minority aid even if it does not align with their aid priorities. The presence of minority aid may reduce approval for government as political representatives are blamed for acquiring aid targeted at minority populations.

### 2.1 Donors and Minority Aid

Donors aim to support targeting aid at out-groups and the poor.<sup>2</sup> Why these groups? Donors have humanitarian motivations to target the poor and marginalized (Heinrich & Kobayashi, 2020; Heinrich *et al.*, 2018; Lebovic & Voeten, 2009). Out-groups may be economically-disadvantaged as a function of their social isolation, making them a compelling target for

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<sup>2</sup>(Briggs, 2017) finds that aid *does not*, in fact, target the poorest. However, donors uniformly claim to target their aid at the poor.

humanitarian-motivated aid (Büthe *et al.*, 2012).

In some contexts, donors have particular affinity for a given out-group. Velasco (2020) points to aid for LGBT causes as driven by norms of donor countries that are more pro-LGBT rights. Vice-President Mike Pence, in what is widely viewed as an attempt to shore-up the conservative Christian base that helped elect the Trump-Pence ticket in 2016, directed USAID to target aid at Christian minority groups across developing countries despite cutting aid to most other groups/sectors.<sup>3</sup> On the macro level, common language, religion, and colonial history link donor and recipient countries with more alike countries receiving greater volumes of aid (Schmid, 2000).

Donors also have incentives to promote aid to out-groups as part of democracy aid. Notions of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic democratic institutions influence Western donors' perceptions of what constitutes democracy, leading donors to support targeted aid for minorities as a form of nation-building and democracy promotion (Devic, 2006; Bush, 2015). Donors may also perceive some groups as out-groups based on out-group relations in their own countries or countries they have previously been involved with. This creates incentives for donors to design interventions that match social issues in familiar contexts without necessarily considering the cultural, economic, and social distinctions of recipient countries (Easterly, 2002; Börzel & Risse, 2004).

## 2.2 Recipients and Minority Aid

Why should recipient governments accept aid targeted at unpopular groups? General aid allows recipients to allocate funds in a manner they see fit. Aid targeted at a specific population reduces the flexibility of allocation by design.<sup>4</sup> For some recipients, this restriction

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.propublica.org/article/how-mike-pences-office-meddled-in-foreign-aid-to-reroute-money-to-favored-christian-groups>

<sup>4</sup>Though, as Briggs (2014) notes, targeted aid is still subject to political influence.

may actually be beneficial. Vreeland (2003) notes that some governments will accept IMF loans that require targeted improvements in financial systems in order to implement better economic policies without suffering political consequences. Recipients are able to “blame” the IMF and effectively tie their hands in the eyes of the public (Shim, 2020). Recipient governments may recognize that targeted aid for out-groups would also allow the governments to ensure funding for these groups and improve overall economic outcomes if they are able to claim a similar “hands-tied” situation.

Targeted aid is less fungible than general budget support aid. However, targeted aid may still allow recipients to transfer their own funds from the targeted sector to other priorities. Swaroop *et al.* (2000) find that foreign aid given to specific Indian states led the Indian federal government to allocate its own intra-governmental transfers away from targeted states and towards other, non-targeted states.<sup>5</sup> In several top aid recipients, US military aid increases investment in unrelated private sectors (Khilji & Zampelli, 1994). For different countries, sector-specific foreign aid may be more or less fungible (Pettersson, 2007; Pack & Pack, 1993, 1990). Depending on domestic political context, targeted aid may still allow recipients to increase funding to their preferred sectors.

Recipients may expect targeted aid to harm them electorally (Vreeland (2003) notes that governments may reject IMF loans if they are unable to pass the buck on blame for stringent loan conditions) or may genuinely prefer to exclude out-groups from foreign aid financing. However, actual and perceived disparities in power between donors and recipients may make recipients unable to refuse certain types of aid. During the Cold War, it is widely accepted that recipients were able to extract greater amounts of aid from donors due to power struggles between the West and the Soviet Union (Dunning, 2004; Meernik *et al.*, 1998). The rise of China in relation to Western donors in the last decade has increased fears of the same

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<sup>5</sup>In fact, the Indian federal government seems to have allocated **more** funds away from the targeted states than the amount of aid these states received, demonstrating a form of punishment for receiving aid.

forum-shopping for aid by recipients (Naidu *et al.*, 2010; Kohno *et al.*, 2020; Swedlund, 2017). Without outside aid options for recipients, donors can more credibly threaten to withdraw aid from recalcitrant recipients (De Mesquita & Smith, 2007). Recipients may fear that rejecting targeted aid for unpopular groups may lead donors to 1) reduce aid for other sectors or 2) reduce Western support for the recipient country in non-foreign-aid-related arenas.

Aid to minorities may be beneficial to recipients if the minority group forms a salient voting bloc for incumbent political parties. Wilkinson (2006) finds that Indian politicians take efforts to prevent anti-Muslim riots when Muslim voters are important to their electorate. Briggs (2021), Corstange (2016), and Kasara (2007) all note that patronage benefits may be targeted at swing voters (including out-groups) when co-ethnics or in-groups have few outside voting options. The political costs of majority group disapproval of aid allocation to minorities may be outweighed by the political benefits of acquiring out-group voting blocs.

Finally, rejecting foreign aid may not be possible for recipient governments. Aid may be disbursed from donors to NGOs, leaving government preferences out of the picture (Dietrich, 2013). Blocking aid for NGOs is logistically difficult, risks antagonizing the international community, and cracking down on NGOs may generate a backlash effect in which NGOs are able to generate more revenue in response to being targeted (Chaudhry & Heiss, 2019; Christensen & Weinstein, 2013). Additionally, federalism in recipient countries may lead to a misalignment in preferences between local, state, and national priorities. National politicians and local politicians have different incentives to engage with international aid donors for aid to out-groups because their electoral constituencies are different (Swaroop *et al.*, 2000). For recipient countries in crises, either humanitarian or conflict-related, it may be difficult to monitor what aid enters the country and to reject unwanted aid (Swedlund, 2013; Carnegie & Dolan, 2015; Dany, 2020).

## 2.3 Blame and Backlash

Aid is a signal of government intent and competency for many aid-dependent countries. A growing literature on the phenomenon of credit-claiming in aid (Cruz & Schneider, 2017; Guiteras *et al.*, 2015) notes that recipient politicians may claim undeserved credit for the existence of aid in their locality. Even absent costly attempts by politicians to claim credit for aid, citizens in aid-dependent countries perceive attracting aid as a primary responsibility of their representatives (Dolan, 2020; Ijaz, 2020; Young, 2009). Politicians target aid to their constituents in order to bolster their chances at re-election (Briggs, 2012, 2014; Dreher *et al.*, 2021; Jablonski, 2014). Results are mixed on whether or not aid benefits politicians politically. Knutsen & Kotsadam (2020) find positive effects of aid on incumbency while Briggs (2019) finds the opposite results.

Donors too benefit from the signal their aid sends to recipient polities, allies, and their domestic constituencies (Milner & Tingley, 2010; Mawdsley, 2014). Aid to recipient countries can increase positive sentiment towards donors amongst recipients (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2014), signal a donor state's type or belonging to a certain tier of states in the international system (Crandall & Varov, 2016), and send a signal of priorities to their domestic constituents (Greene & Licht, 2018; Goldstein & Moss, 2005; Milner & Tingley, 2010). Additionally, in order to attract investment from private entities, aid foundations, and government bodies, aid agencies have incentives to publicize their achievements in aid, making their dispersion of aid visible to both donor constituencies and recipients (Adam & Gunning, 2002).

Aid targeted at unpopular groups may reduce support for recipient incumbent politicians. If politicians in recipient localities are attributed credit for aid that the locality receives, they may also be attributed blame for the locality's unpopular aid. The logic of credit-claiming in aid implies the existence of blame-attribution for unpopular aid. In a standard retrospective voting model, the exposure to minority aid may result in majority group citizens' disapproval of the government. As an extension of the work on credit-claiming and aid, I describe two



additional mechanisms through which unpopular aid may result in decreases in trust in government. First, the presence of unpopular aid may signal that a politician does not have the *capacity* to acquire popular aid from donors. Second, if citizens believe that a politician intentionally acquired unpopular aid from donors, the aid may signal a misalignment in political *priorities* between the politician and her constituents.

*Capacity:* Citizens may perceive the presence of unpopular aid as a donor imposition rather than a choice of their political representative. However, if this is the case, citizens may blame their political representative for being too weak to oppose unpopular aid or convince the donor community to provide popular aid. Unpopular aid may be a signal of political incompetence. Citizens who believe their political representative to be incompetent may update their beliefs about how much trust to put in their government.

*Priorities:* Citizens may believe their politicians were not weak but rather worked with donors to acquire unpopular aid. Unpopular aid, then, could signal distance between constituent priorities and their political representative's priorities. In cases where politicians have consistently claimed credit for aid projects (signaling their capacity to obtain projects), the presence of unpopular aid may signal that politicians are choosing to acquire aid for unpopular groups.

Both of these mechanisms, and the standard retrospective voting model, predict a decrease in trust in government from citizens exposed to politically-unpopular aid projects. Opposition parties can use the existence of unpopular aid to elicit negative reactions to the incumbent political representatives. Decreasing trust in government is both a function of immediate citizen public opinion and of opposition party incentives to publicize the existence of unpopular aid and to further associate this aid with the incumbent politician. Trust is posited to be a precursor to effective government policies, with decrease trust a sign of demand for political change and an opportunity for political radicalization (Miller, 1974; Citrin, 1974). Hetherington (1998) notes that "a public no longer possessed of a core trust

in its political system is easily frightened by negative campaigns against broad new initiatives.” (804) Decreased trust provides an opening for political opportunists to capitalize on the discontent. If decreased trust is driven in part by minority aid, it is possible anti-minority politicians to come to power in the wake of this backlash.

Overall, aid can benefit the communities it targets, but can also produce backlash if the “wrong people” were targeted. A cash-transfer program targeting the poor in Niger sparked backlash against recipients due to suspicions about the targeting process, perceived biases against non-recipients (de Sardan *et al.*, 2015). International advocacy and pressure on aid recipient countries to support LGBT rights decreased support for LGBT rights due to “political homophobia,” backlash against international norm imposition (Weiss & Bosia, 2013; Velasco, 2020). Aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon has been the site of resentment and backlash amongst host populations (Baylouny, 2020; Christophersen & Thorleifsson, 2013). Paler *et al.* (2020) find that targeting aid to non-combatants in a post-conflict context is successful only when combatants, non-beneficiaries of the aid program, “are willing and able to challenge elite authority to try to appropriate a share of the aid for themselves.” (389) A summary of the evidence on interventions aimed at improving women’s livelihoods and agency finds huge mediating effects of gender norms. Men’s expectations of benefiting from programs limits the ability of programs to substantially increase women’s well-being (Chang *et al.*, 2020). Importantly, Lehmann & Masterson (2020) find that Syrian-targeted aid *reduces* violence towards Syrian refugees in Lebanon through the mechanism of sharing aid benefits directly and indirectly between host and refugee population. The relationship between aid and resentment is not linear and may affect different populations or actors. I add to this growing literature on backlash to targeted community improvements by theorizing the existence of political blame attribution for politician representatives associated with minority aid programs.

### 3 Aid and Blame in Kosovo

Kosovo, a country of just over 3 million people, has been the subject of international attention since 1998, when a Kosovar-Albanian insurgency fought against ethnic cleansing by the Serbian state, of which Kosovo was a part at the time. The insurgency drew international attention and support, culminating in the NATO bombings of Serbian troops and cities in 1999 and the subsequent withdrawal of Serbian troops from the territory of Kosovo. After 8 years as a UN protectorate, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia with much, though not all, of the international community's support.<sup>6</sup> As an independent nation, Kosovo is a top recipient of international aid on a per capita basis.<sup>7</sup>

The conditions of Western support for Kosovo's independence, as well as any hope for the state to join the EU, include strong protections for minority populations within Kosovo, including Serbs (Economides & Ker-Lindsay, 2015). The Kosovar constitution is rated highly on its accommodations for minority populations. It was drafted by constitutional scholars in the US and EU and ratified by a Kosovar parliament dependent on Western donors for economic and military support (Lantschner, 2008; Doli & Korenica, 2013). Major political parties in Kosovo, composed primarily of former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army and the non-violent alternate governing body of the 1990s, face a trade-off between advocating for sovereignty and losing the support of donors (Jackson, 2018). The international community's support for Serbs and other minorities in Kosovo is a consistent source of tension at the international level and between political parties within the nascent state (Devic, 2006). Kosovo's flag, for example, was designed by the EU and displays six stars for the six major ethnicities in Kosovo: Albanians, Serbs, Bosniaks, Turks, Romani, and Gorani.

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<sup>6</sup>Notable, countries with potential break-away regions of their own have refused to recognize Kosovo's independence. For a full up-to-date list of countries that have recognized Kosovo, see <https://www.kosovothanksyou.com/>.

<sup>7</sup>The country is in the top 25% of aid recipients on a per-capita basis according to OECD data.

92% of Kosovo citizens are Albanian. Yet, of the aid projects that Kosovo has received, 22% have targeted minority populations despite minorities constituting only 8% of the Kosovar population.

Donors explicitly target minority communities in Kosovo in their projects and promotional material. The USAID's official website from 2012-2017 proclaimed one of its major achievements as "Community-based programs that have rehabilitated and built community infrastructure, engaged young people and supported businesses in minority areas of Kosovo."<sup>8</sup> In the of the coronavirus pandemic, the EU has emphasized the importance of aid for Roma and other vulnerable populations in the Western Balkans: "The EU quickly provided vulnerable individuals, such as Roma, with essential food and hygiene packages, and will continue supporting the elderly, children, victims of domestic violence, and minorities to ride out the crisis"<sup>9</sup> Aid has been tied explicitly to the benefit of Serbian communities with the goal of communicating US support for minority rights. For example, a leaked diplomatic cable stated the importance of using aid to highlight the US's commitment to the Serbian community in Kosovo.

On December 12 [2006], COM traveled to north Mitrovica to preside over a ceremony marking the completion of a USAID-funded major renovation project at the Sveti Sava elementary school, serving an exclusively Serb population. The \$100,000 project, implemented through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and carried out by a Kosovo Serb construction firm from Gracanica, included extensive repairs to a leaking roof and damaged walls and installation of new thermopane windows, as well as brand new flooring, bathroom facilities and a playground for the children.

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<sup>8</sup><https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/kosovo>

<sup>9</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/coronavirus\\_support\\_wb.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/coronavirus_support_wb.pdf)

The event was covered extensively by local Serb and Albanian media. In his remarks at a special school assembly convened for the inauguration, the school principal praised the U.S. for its support of the project, citing the quality of the work and the speed with which it was carried out (the renovation was completed within one month of the contract being finalized). COM thanked him, assuring those watching that “the U.S. Government believes that there must always be a strong and vibrant Serb community in Kosovo with full legal rights and with special protection for their cultural and religious sites.”<sup>10</sup>

Aid to Kosovar Serbian communities is particularly contentious because the international community is actively supporting an out-group whose association with the Serbian state is both a painful reminder of a violent past and a current impediment to economic progress and European integration. As an out group, Kosovar Serbs speak a different language (Serbian), practice a different religion (members of the Serbian Orthodox Church), and can be considered a different race.<sup>11</sup> They engage with separate political institutions, have separate money (the Serbian dinar; Kosovar Albanians use the Euro), and live primarily in geographically-isolated areas. Kosovo has received 2.4 billion Euros of aid in the last fifteen years; 8% of this aid is targeted at Serbian municipalities or communities despite Serbs comprising only 4% of the population of Kosovo.<sup>12</sup> Albanians, according to their elected representatives, are jealous of the fact that the international community prioritizes Serbs for foreign aid.<sup>13</sup> Non-Serbs in Kosovo believe the international community favors Serbs in order to maintain peace in the region (Rrustemi, 2019). This perception may color interactions in which ethnicity has not been the basis for inequalities. A Serbian mayor of a

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<sup>10</sup>[https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06PRISTINA1071\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06PRISTINA1071_a.html)

<sup>11</sup>Race is, of course, a constructed concept. Here, however, it is made relevant by the racial politics of the collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

<sup>12</sup>Authors calculations for aid and OSCE for population.

<sup>13</sup>Author’s interview 3/12/19.

Serbian-majority community told me, “An Albanian who moved to the municipality in 2012 complained to the newspapers that Albanian villages don’t have paved roads. But everyone doesn’t have paved roads, not just Albanians. How is it discrimination if he decided to move on top of a mountain with no paved roads?”<sup>14</sup>

The emphasis on minority rights in Kosovo has been driven by the international community with the purpose of protecting minorities writ large, but especially defending the rights of the Serbian population in order to ease the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia (Gjoni *et al.*, 2010). Serbia uses concern about the welfare of Kosovar Serbs as a cudgel with which to claim both its authority over Kosovo and the necessity of Serbian state involvement in the Kosovar state (Gjoni *et al.*, 2010; Visoka, 2008). The consociational structure foisted upon Kosovo by the international community reserves 20 seats in the national legislature for minority parties (10 Serb, 10 other minorities) (Doli & Korenica, 2013). When the dominant Serbian party, Srpska Lista, is confident in its dominance in the race for Serbian-reserved seats, it has been accused of directing excess voters to other minority parties who, in turn, may vote more sympathetically for Serbian-backed causes in the legislature.<sup>15</sup> Other minority parties face a trade-off between building alliances with Serbs to promote minority-focused policies and exposing themselves to anger and resentment from majority Albanian populations as a result of this association, living in “enclaves within enclaves”- endlessly marginalized and discriminated against” (Visoka, 2008, 163). Human Rights Watch’s 2019 report noted ““Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptians continue to face problems acquiring personal documents, affecting their ability to access health care, social assistance, and education. There was no visible or reported progress towards integration of these minority communities.”<sup>16</sup> These ethnic groups are targeted by about 13% of aid

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<sup>14</sup>Author’s interview 12/21/2018

<sup>15</sup><https://balkaninsight.com/2021/01/28/belgrad-backed-party-in-kosovo-accused-of-dirty-tricks-in-election/>

<sup>16</sup><https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/serbia/kosovo>

projects but are only 4% of the population of Kosovo. Other social groups also face social barriers and are targeted by donors in Kosovo. Less than 0.05% of projects are targeted at LGBTQ+ populations, who are also known to suffer discrimination in Kosovo.<sup>17</sup> Catholic Albanians, who face discrimination in some settings, are the beneficiary of roughly 0.001% of aid projects in Kosovo.

While Serbs are the most politically-contentious recipients of aid in Kosovo, aid to other minority groups may also be disputed. For example, Linos *et al.* (2020) demonstrate that aid agencies receive fewer individual donations when they highlight Roma as beneficiaries of aid than Greeks (the majority population in the study). Importantly, this aid allocation comes at no cost to the majority Greek population. Unpopular aid, then, may be unpopular because minority groups are perceived as acquiring more aid in a zero-sum game (leaving less aid for the majority group) or because the majority group perceives the minority group as less-deserving of the amount of aid they do get. Both the zero-sum model of aid allocation and the relative deprivation model should result in the same observable implications.

## 4 Research Design and Data

Aid to unpopular groups is not allocated randomly. Indeed, the nature of targeted aid is to specifically distribute aid based on the characteristics of its recipients. I conduct an observational study of the relationship between aid project exposure and trust in government. In this study, I exploit plausibly exogenous variation in the *timing* of aid project implementation to calculate the “dosage” of an aid project received by an individual at a given moment in time. As Kersting & Kilby (2016) and Kilby (2005) have demonstrated, the timing of aid project implementation and disbursements is not random with regard to national elections. Donors engage in “electioneering” that fast-tracks aid disbursements to favored countries in

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/serbia/kosovo>

the year before a national election. Marx (2017) shows that incumbent politicians expedite completion of large-scale, visible World Bank projects in the year before a national election.

However, within a short time period and a given country, the exact timing of aid implementation is plausibly exogenous to events in a recipient country. Bureaucratic idiosyncrasies of the donor, recipient, and other individuals and organizations involved in the aid project provide some randomness unrelated to political events. World Bank officials, for example, describe how budget issues from Bank principles may result in disruptions to project planning and implementation such as transferring the project between different units at the Bank.<sup>18</sup> Donor priorities may shift in response to domestic politics, prompting shifts in aid priorities that result in disruptions to planned aid timings (O'Brien-Udry, 2020). For example, the Global Gag Rule and freeze of US funding for reproductive services after the election of Republican presidents often generates logistical costs for aid agencies that planned to implement or continue projects related to reproductive health. (Bednar, 2010; gag, 2007; Pugh *et al.*, 2017; van der Meulen Rodgers, 2018). These costs extend beyond projects targeted at reproductive health; one policy change by a prominent donor can disrupt planned and ongoing projects in other sectors due to additional administrative burdens and need to find additional funding.<sup>19</sup> Brookings writes that “Foreign aid is not like a water reservoir ready to flow with a turn of the tap. Rather, it is like a business or a sports team, requiring planning and strategies, hiring and developing the right staff skills, soliciting grants and contracts, designing partnerships, providing management and oversight, monitoring and evaluation, feedback, and learning.”<sup>20</sup> Disruptions to any part of the logistically-intensive supply chain of aid could result in delays in the receipt of aid that have no relation to the conditions of the recipient. Under the assumption of random timing of aid project implementation, the

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<sup>18</sup>Author interview 5.27.2020.

<sup>19</sup>Author interview 5.22.2020.

<sup>20</sup><https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2018/06/04/erratic-budget-processes-threaten-us-foreign-aid/>



results of this study can be considered causal.

I use a single-country study of subnational aid projects in Kosovo to identify the correlation between exposure to minority aid projects and trust in government. Variation in project timing due to national elections, the outcome identified as a significant predictor of aid project timings by Kersting & Kilby (2016), is held constant. While Kosovo may be the beneficiary more or less aid closer to its national election due to the timing of elections in countries that are more important to aid donors, the single-country study removes this confounding factor in comparative aid allocation. Unlike Marx (2017), I use a multi-donor sample of projects. Variation in aid bureaucracy management and relationships between donors and Kosovo adds additional variation my measure of aid project timing. I extract data on the timing and location of aid projects from Kosovo's Aid Management Platform (see Appendix A). Aid is "minority aid" if its intended beneficiaries are ethnic, religious, or cultural (LGBTQ+) minorities.

I measure outcomes based on the third Life in Transition Survey (LITS III). This survey, implemented over the course of 2016, is the third iteration of a European Reconstruction and Development Bank (EBRD) project to understand the changing political landscape of post-communist countries. Respondents were selected using a random-walk procedure and the timing, within the survey year, of measuring the survey outcomes is random. The survey is conducted across a battery of countries and the timing is pre-determined by the concerns of the LITS team, unrelated to political events in a given country. The primary outcome measures of interest are trust in local and national governments.

I subset the data to projects for which an aid disbursement occurs in the 50 days before or after the LITS survey was implemented (calculated per respondent). By limiting the analysis to the 50 days before or after the survey, I eliminate most of the data but also reduce potential for the data to be driven by macro-trends in aid timing as opposed to micro-level variation. I also limit the sample to individuals and aid projects within 10 kilometers of each other

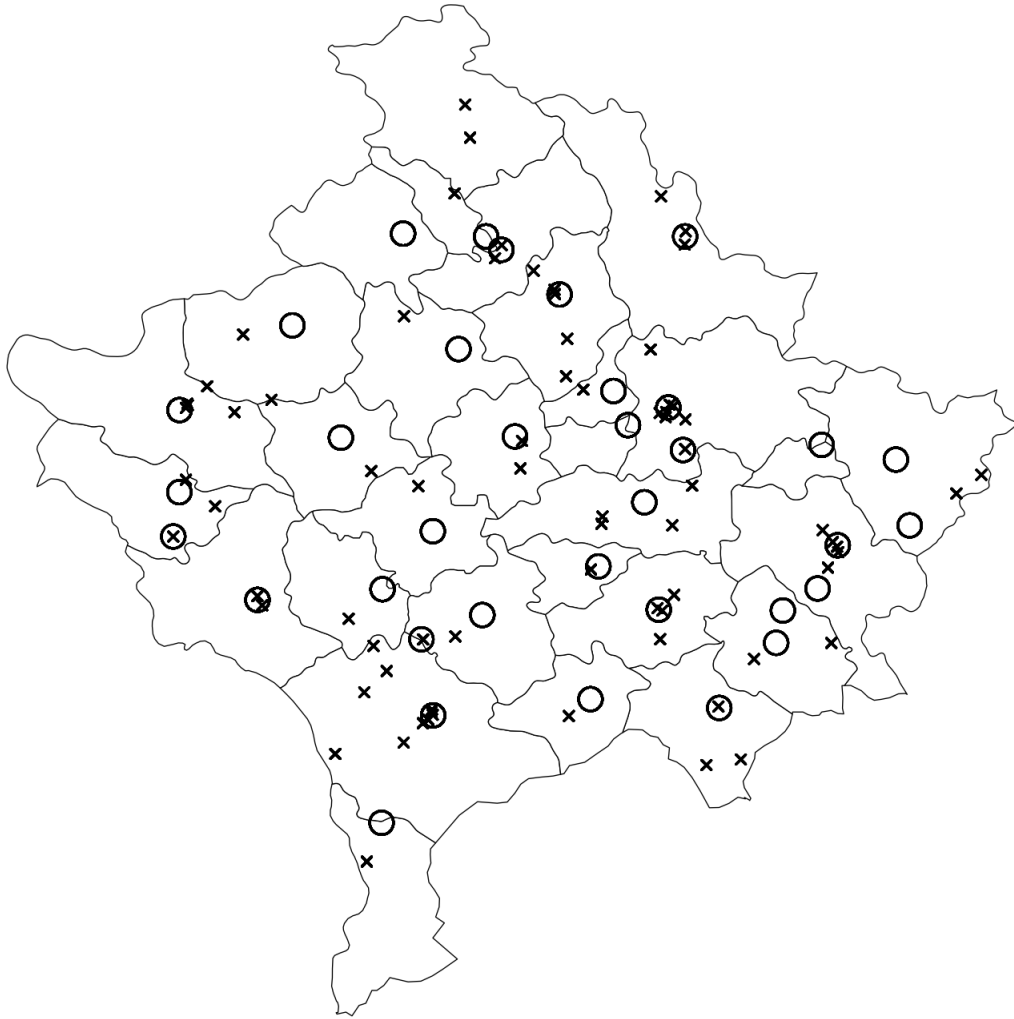


Figure 1: *Map of aid project locations and survey respondents:* Aid projects are indicated by black circles and locations are indicated by black crosses.

or within a given municipality. Aid projects closer to an individual respondent should be more salient and constitute a stronger test of my theory than aid projects further from an individual. I use a simple pre-post design that compares individuals exposed to aid projects before being interviewed with people about to be exposed to aid projects. Every individual in the sample is or will be exposed to an aid project, but the timing of the exposure is assumed to be random. I estimate the following equation.

$$Outcome_{ijm} = \beta_{1ij}Post - exposure + \beta_{2ij}Minority\_aid + \beta_{3ij}Post - exposure * Minority\_aid + \mathbf{X}_{ijm} + \epsilon_{ijm} \quad (1)$$

Here,  $i$  is each individual,  $j$  is each project, and  $m$  is each municipality.  $X_{ijm}$  is a battery of covariates and  $\epsilon_{ijm}$  is the error term. I conduct the analysis in two main samples: Albanians within a certain distance (10k) from a given aid projects and Albanians within the municipality of a given aid project. I do not examine the results with regards to minority respondents because the sample is underpowered and minority respondents may have differential expectations of their political representatives that would violate the monotonicity assumption.<sup>21</sup> In the same municipality sample, every individual in the municipality is considered exposed to any project in the municipality. In the 10k sample, individuals are exposed to projects based on distance rather than municipal ID; an individual just over the border of one municipality but still within 10k of a given aid project would be considered exposed to this aid project. The main outcomes of interest are trust in national government, performance of the national government, and change in the performance of the national government. For each outcome, a value of one indicates a low evaluation and five a high evaluation.

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<sup>21</sup>I present results using minority respondents in Appendix D but note that these results should be viewed with caution given the above threats to inference.

I estimate the model with and without covariates. All models include municipal fixed effects. At the municipal level, the covariates include `Nighttime lights` as a measure of municipal development. `log(Population)`, `log(Area)`, and `log(Population/Area)` are measures of population size, rural communities, and population density. `Incumbent won (mayor)` and `Incumbent won (municipal assembly)` indicate the political strength of the incumbent party in the municipality. `Projects (count)` and `Projects (lagged count)` refer to the number of individual aid projects active in the current and prior year in the municipality; `log(Total commitments (lagged))` and `log(Total disbursements (lagged))` are the total values of the commitments and disbursements associated with the lagged projects. `log(Project commitment)` and `log(Project disbursement)` are the total values of the project to which the individual is exposed. I also include donor fixed effects for half of the models.

I expect that aid to any minority group will produce backlash against political representatives and reduce support for and trust in government because majority group constituents expect politicians to acquire aid for their in-group. Aid to the out-group either represents less aid for the in-group or relative deprivation of the in-group. In either case, **(H1)** trust in government should decrease as exposure to unpopular aid increases.

## 4.1 Descriptive statistics

	10k	Same municipality
# Projects	53	40
# Minority-targeted	6	5
# Municipalities	31	24
# Respondents	1105	1104
# Respondent-Municipality-Project-Disbursements	9994	5353
Average project commitment (total)	676662.6	1386299
Average (minority) project commitment	122457.8	167711.4
Average (majority) project commitment	695556	1424777

Table 1: Summary statistics

Table 1 describes the projects in the sample. The unit of analysis is individual-project-municipality-disbursement. Substantively, this means that each observation is an individual that is either within 10k of a project or in the same municipality as a project and interviewed by the LITS III team within 50 days of a disbursement of the associated project (before or after). An individual can be exposed to multiple projects. Projects may have multiple disbursements (no project has more than two disbursements in the time frame of the sample; 8 out of 53 projects experience two disbursements). Projects may exist in multiple municipalities so the same disbursement-project may be experienced by individuals in multiple places. In the 10k sample, individuals may be exposed to projects that do not occur in their municipality of residence (for example, if they live close to the border).

All of the projects in this sample were implemented by NGOs or INGOs. No government entities directly received funding, rendering this an analysis of the effect of bypass aid on individual evaluations of trust in and performance of government by virtue of the sample.<sup>22</sup>

To address concerns that minority and majority-targeted aid projects differ on many dimensions, I also run generalized additive models on each minority and majority sample to determine the effect of high “dosages” of exposure of each type of project on the outcomes of interest in Appendix D.3.

## 4.2 Results

Figure 2 presents results for the interaction term, `Post-exposure*Minority aid`, across four specifications, two samples, and three outcome measurements. The results are substantially the same for each model, though under some specifications the models lose standard statistical significance. Exposure to minority aid projects reduces trust in government and approval of government performance. Substantively, these results indicate that exposure to

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<sup>22</sup>Governments did benefit from the projects; multiple projects are explicitly targeted at training municipal employees, but the government was not responsible for the project funding.

minority projects reduces approval of governments among the majority population.

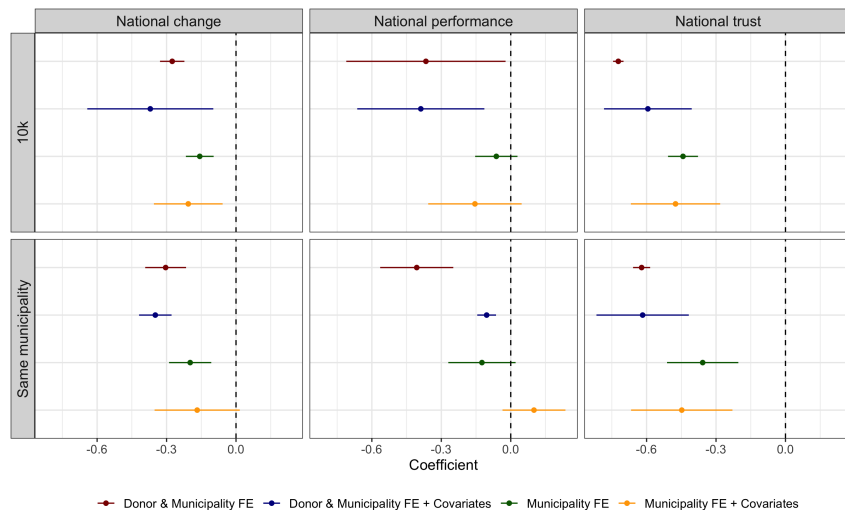


Figure 2: *Main results*:  $\beta_3$  for main model specifications, outcomes, and samples. Point estimates and 95% robust standard errors presented. Standard errors clustered at the individual, project, and municipal level.

Does minority aid reduce support for minorities? I use a question aimed at eliciting expressions of intolerance and negative outgroup sentiment to answer this question. Respondents are asked “On this list are various groups of people. Could you please mention any that you would not like to have as neighbours?” If respondents mention people of a different race as a group of people they would prefer not to have as a neighbor, this answer is coded as 1 for the respondent, 0 otherwise. Figure 3 depicts the likelihood that a person expressed anti-minority sentiment, as proxied by unwillingness to have a person of a different race as their neighbor, after exposure to minority aid. Across all model specifications and samples, I find an increase in anti-minority sentiment when individuals are exposed to minority aid.

#### 4.2.1 Bypass aid

As Section 4.1 describes, all of the projects in the sample are implemented by non-state actors (NGOs or INGOs). Do respondents decrease their support for non-state actors as

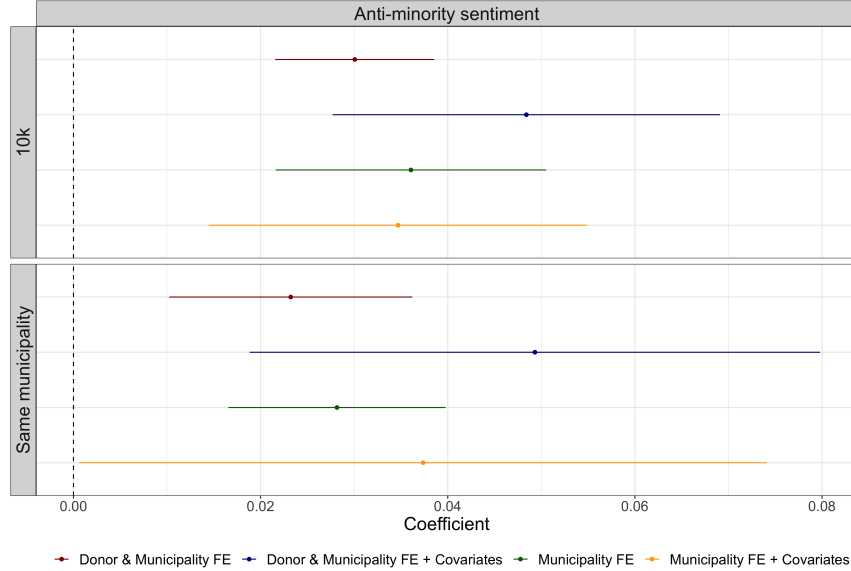


Figure 3: *Anti-minority results:  $\beta_3$*  for main model specifications, outcomes, and samples. Point estimates and 95% robust standard errors presented. Standard errors clustered at the individual, project, and municipal level.

a result of service provision to minority groups? Figure 4 depicts results for the question, “How much do you trust non-governmental organizations?” There is no consistent change in attitudes towards NGOs as a result of respondent exposure to minority aid despite the fact that the aid was implemented by NGOs.

This finding suggests that respondents’ expectations of the responsibilities of different actors (NGOs, governments) moderate the blame they attribute to these different actors. NGOs in Kosovo often integrate minority programming (McMahon, 2017) and are not necessarily expected to be responsive to majority citizen concerns.

#### 4.2.2 Robustness checks

The results can be interpreted as causal under the assumption of random timing of aid disbursements. If aid timing is non-random and is related to the outcomes of interest, primarily trust in and performance of governments, then the identification strategy can only claim correlational evidence that may be confounded. Figure 5 depicts a histogram of aid

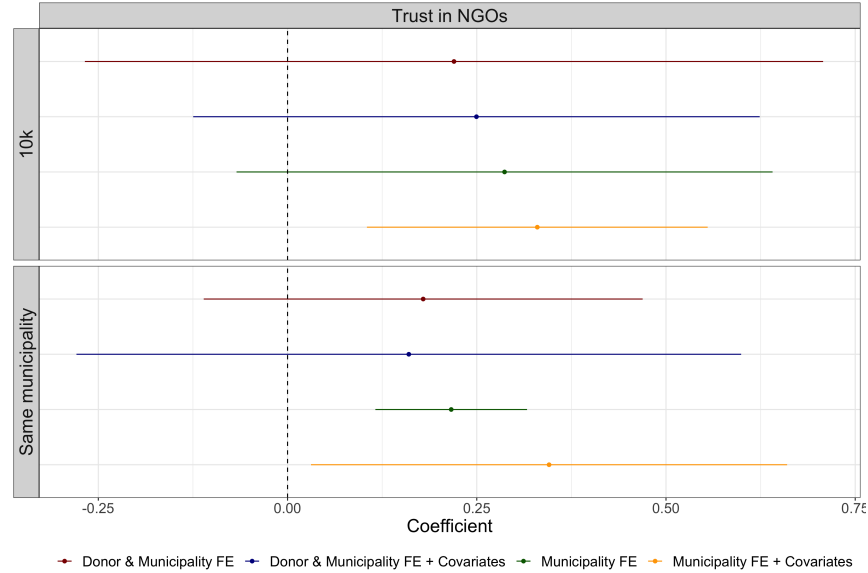


Figure 4: *Trust in NGO results:  $\beta_3$*  for main model specifications, outcomes, and samples. Point estimates and 95% robust standard errors presented. Standard errors clustered at the individual, project, and municipal level.

disbursement timings for each sample. There are two main clusters of aid disbursements: December 31, 2015 and March 31, 2016. These dates correspond to the last dates of the fourth and first quarter of the year, respectively. Both aid organizations and governments have incentives to complete tasks by the end of the quarter. If the completion of other tasks by the government is related to evaluations of trust in and performance of governments, there could be unaccounted-for confounding.

In order to address this, I reanalyze my main outcomes without the sample of projects that experienced disbursements on the last days of the fiscal first and fourth quarters. This removes 85-6% of my data across both sample populations. Figure 6 reanalyzes the main results with the remaining sample. The results are robust to the exclusion of these potentially-confounded aid disbursements.



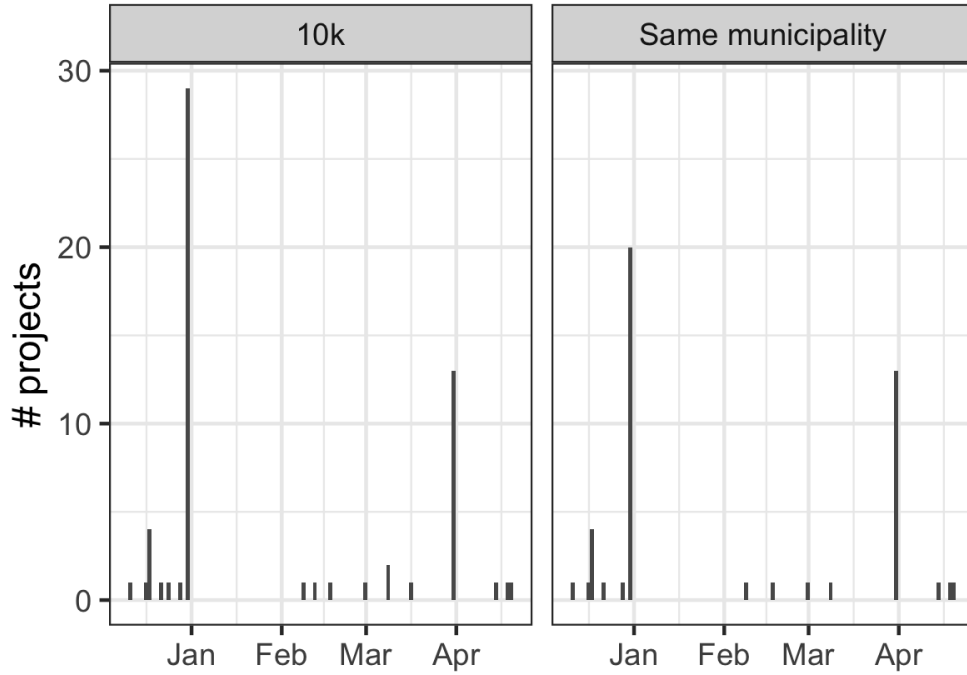


Figure 5: *Histogram*: Number of projects in sample with disbursements on a given date.

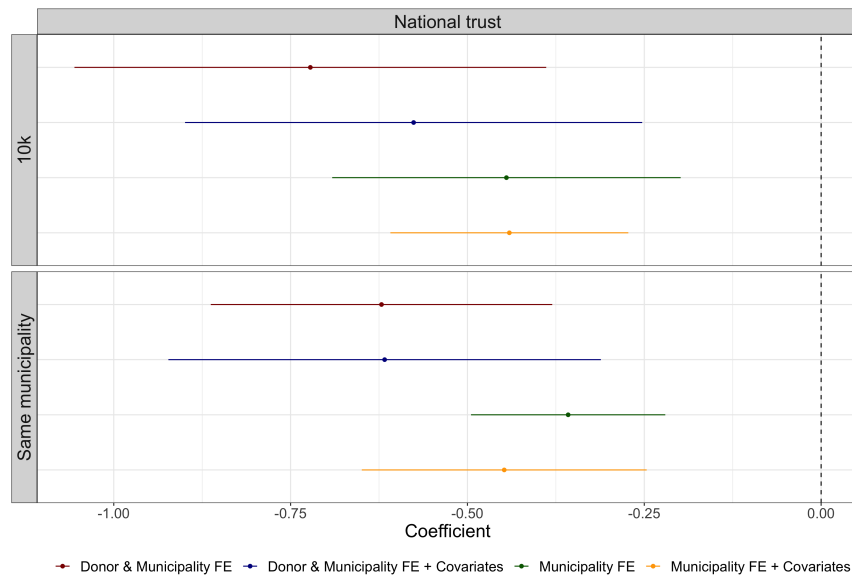


Figure 6: *Main results (without confounded dates)*:  $\beta_3$  for main model specifications, outcomes, and samples. Point estimates and 95% robust standard errors presented. Standard errors clustered at the individual, project, and municipal level.

### 4.2.3 Placebo test

I run a placebo test to determine whether other omitted variables could be driving sentiment in respondents exposed to minority projects. Turning back to the question about out-group attitudes, “On this list are various groups of people. Could you please mention any that you would not like to have as neighbours?”, I analyze results for the outcome “immigrants.” Kosovars generally are not anti-immigrant or anti-refugee.<sup>23</sup> If anti-immigrant sentiment increases as a result of exposure to minority aid programs, both sentiment and minority aid exposure may be driven by other variables. Figure 7 shows null results for this placebo test, lending further credence to the theory.

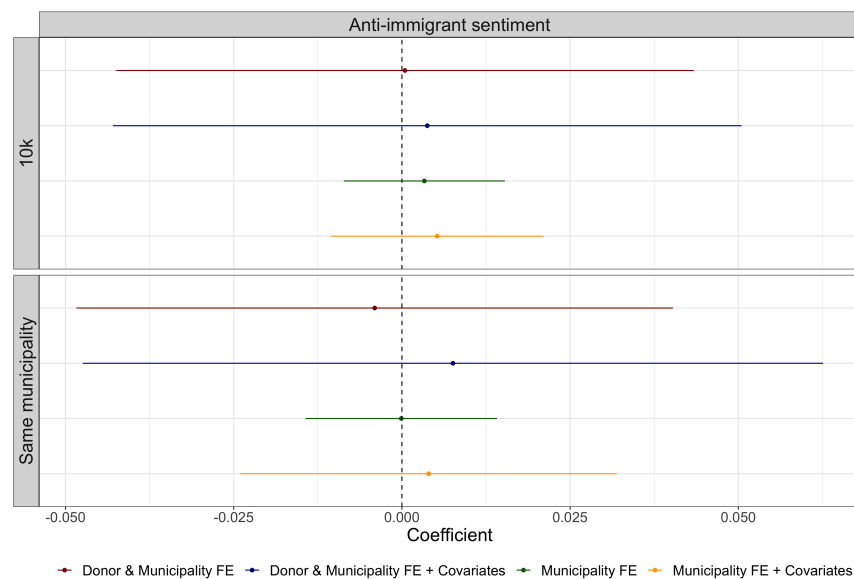


Figure 7: *Anti-immigrant sentiment*:  $\beta_3$  for main model specifications, outcomes, and samples. Point estimates and 95% robust standard errors presented. Standard errors clustered at the individual, project, and municipal level.

<sup>23</sup>800,000 Kosovar Albanians were forced out of their homes during the Serbian state’s attempted ethnic cleansing in the late 90s and many Kosovars have worked abroad or know others who have worked abroad as part of the Yugoslav *gasterbeiter* population or current European exodus from the state.

## 5 Conclusion

Minority aid may be popular among donors, but it may have pernicious consequences for recipient politicians. I provide evidence that exposure to minority aid projects is associated with a decreased trust in recipient governments. Disruptions in trust in government due to minority aid projects may produce windows of opportunity for political entrepreneurs with anti-government or anti-minority sentiments to gain power.

This paper does not call for an end to aid targeted at minorities. The appropriate counterfactual of no aid to minorities is a harrowing prospect for vulnerable groups who receive little support from their countries' governments. Minority aid has many benefits overlooked by this paper, including economic and political empowerment. Indeed, the lack of a durable association between exposure to minority projects and trust in government suggests that the long-term benefits of minority aid may outweigh the temporary costs. The costs of this aid, however, should not be understated. Lack of attention to the political consequences of favoring, or perceived favoring, of minority groups could result in further disenfranchisement of these minority populations. Understanding how and why politicians may be blamed for aid is crucial to better developing aid programs that do not cause political harm.

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## A Kosovo Aid Management Platform

The data for aid in Kosovo from 2004-2020 was scraped from the Kosovar government’s Aid Management Platform (AMP) (<https://amp-mei.net/portal/>). The AMP “ a project of the Ministry of European Integration of the Government of Kosovo, funded by the European Union Office in Kosovo (EUO) and implemented by Development Gateway International.”<sup>24</sup> As part of Kosovo’s ongoing negotiations with the European Union to promote its accession to membership, the AMP was created to transparently and accurately document the inflow of aid from countries and donor organizations to Kosovo.

The dataset takes the following form each row is a project in a specific municipality by a specific donor. If the project only has one donor and takes place in one municipality, the project is represented by a single row. If it has two donors and two municipalities, the project is represented by four rows. I calculate the proportion of funding going to each municipality by multiplying the disbursements and commitments of each donor by the percentage listed in the “Location” tab. If no percentage is listed, I assume the funding is equally divided among municipalities.

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<sup>24</sup><https://amp-mei.net/portal/node/11>

## B Project list

	Title	Organization	# indiv.
1	"WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT" in Gjakova	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs	24
2	Action for Municipal Leadership	European Union Office	72
3	Action for Municipal Leadership	Norway	72
4	Advancing Kosovo Together Local Solutions	United States Agency for International Development	988
5	Advancing Kosovo Together U.S. Prime	United States Agency for International Development	988
6	AGRO	United States Agency for International Development	180
7	Back home – and now? Sustainable reintegration of returnees and vulnerable families in Kosovo	Austrian Development Agency	53
8	Basic Education Program	United States Agency for International Development	11
9	Block by Block – Prishtina (Urban Regeneration)	UN Habitat	116
10	Building a Better Future for Citizens of Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje and Obiliq/c -UNDP	Municipality of Fushe Kosova	203
11	Building a Better Future for Citizens of Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje and Obiliq/c -UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	406
12	Building a Better Future for Citizens of FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje and Obiliq/Obilic: WHO	World Health Organization	203
13	Building a Better Future for Citizens of FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje and Obiliq/Obilic: Participation, Protection and Multi-Ethnic Partnerships for Improved Education, Health and Sustainable Livelihood -UNFPA Part	United Nations Population Fund	203
14	Building and Reinforcing Inclusive Communities in Kosovo (BRICK)	United States Department of State	123
15	Capacity Development in the Basic Education Sector in Kosovo (CDBE), Phase III	German Government	683
16	Core support to Kosovo Foundation Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB Kosovo)	Sweden	1
17	EcoFriend - Green Art Center, GAC	Embassy of Finland in Kosovo	138
18	EDI - Empowerment of Kosovo minorities through Education, Dialogue and Involvement in the municipal decision-making process (EDI phase II)	Austrian Development Agency	22
19	Effective Rule of Law Program (EROL)	United States Agency for International Development	502
20	EIDHR 2012 - Mitrovica Rock School 2014-2015	European Union Office	36
21	EMPOWER Private Sector	United States Agency for International Development	180
22	Engagement for Equity	United States Agency for International Development	360
23	EU Community Stabilization Programme (EU-CSP) I and II phase	European Union Office	1068
24	Facilitation of voluntary return of displaced (RAE) families from FYROM to Kosovo through ARP (Alternative Return Package)	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	125
25	Improving Education and health status of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) children in Roma Mahala, Mitrovica and Leposavic camp after evacuation and relocation process	German Government	72
26	International Business College in Mitrovica 2012-2014	Government of Denmark	72
27	IPA 2008 - Extension of Water Treatment at Shipol, Mitrovica	European Union Office	40
28	IPA 2010 - Construction of Municipal Social and Economic Infrastructure - Phase VII a	European Union Office	80
29	IPA 2011 - Construction of Municipal Social and Economic Infrastructure in Kosovo Phase VII Lot 2 and Lot 3	European Union Office	120
30	IPA 2011 - Construction of Municipal Social and Economic Infrastructure - Phase VII Lot 5	European Union Office	68
31	IPA 2011 - Construction of Municipal Social and Economic Infrastructure in Kosovo Phase VII Lot 4	European Union Office	168
32	IPA 2011 - EU Community Stabilisation Programme Phase II (EU-CSP II)	European Union Office	72

33	IPA 2012 - EU Grant Scheme for the North - The promotion and achievement of a higher standard in a cattle breeding production	European Union Office	40
34	IPA 2012 - Pedestrian Zone in Mitrovica	European Union Office	18
35	IPA 2012 - Support to Agribusiness of the Gjilan/Gnjilane Region	European Union Office	78
36	IPA 2013 'Argo-Tourism business and infrastructure support to enhance and promote Istog's economic development business potentials and generate growth and sustainable jobs for better future'	European Union Office	28
37	Joint Domestic Violence Program Phase 2 North UNWOMEN Part	Finland	144
38	Joint Program on Domestic Violence in Kosovo Ph2 North UNFPA Part	Finland	72
39	Joint Programme on Domestic Violence in Kosovo Phase 2 North UNICEF Part	Finland	72
40	Mandate - Luxembourg Caritas - Foundation Kosovo Luxembourg	Luxembourg	95
41	Municip. Spatial Planning Support Programme in Kosovo	Sweden	536
42	Project for equipping the Main Centre for Family Medicine (MCFM) in Junik with an ambulance and medical equipment	Government of Japan	19
43	Project for equipping the Main centre for Family Medicine (MCFM) Rahovec with an ambulance and medical equipment	Government of Japan	9
44	Project for equipping the Main Centre for Family Medicine in Vitia with an ambulance and a minibus	Government of Japan	40
45	Return and Reintegration of displaced Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian Communities	European Union Office	116
46	Support to Impl. of the Forest Policy and Strategy Ph2 UNDP Part	Finland	72
47	Support to Vocational Education Reform in Kosovo	Luxembourg	140
48	Supporting Reconciliation in Kosovo through the Renovation of the Orthodox Chapel in Mitrovica Municipality	Embassy of Turkey	36
49	Sustainable Municipal Services (Waste Management)	German Government	238
50	TEDxPrishtina (Joan de Boer)	Embassy of Netherlands	1
51	Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Growth for all Newly-established Municipalities in Kosovo (TSIGaN)	Finland	376
52	UNDP-DPA: Conflict Prevention	Norway	144
53	Volunteer support to healthy families in a healthy environment (The Ideas Partnership - TIP)	Embassy of Finland in Kosovo	178
54	Water in Mitrovica	Luxembourg	36
55	Women together in support to Brussels Agreement (RWL SEE)	Embassy of Finland in Kosovo	57



## C Interviews

Table 3: List of Kosovo interviews

Interview #	Date	Profession
1	December 2018	Mayor
2	December 2018	Deputy Mayor
3	December 2018	Mayor
4	December 2018	Deputy Mayor
5	December 2018	Mayor
6	December 2018	Deputy Mayor
7	December 2018	Deputy Mayor for Communities
8	December 2018	Deputy Mayor
9	December 2018	Deputy Mayor for Communities
10	December 2018	Mayor
11	December 2018	Mayor
12	December 2018	Mayor
13	December 2018	Mayor
14	December 2018	Mayor
15	December 2018	Mayor
16	March 2019	Mayor
17	March 2019	Deputy Mayor
18	March 2019	Deputy Mayor for Communities
19	March 2019	Mayor
20	March 2019	Mayor
21	March 2019	Deputy Mayor for Communities
22	March 2019	Mayor
23	March 2019	Mayor
24	March 2019	Mayor
25	March 2019	Deputy Mayor
26	March 2019	Mayor
27	March 2019	Deputy Mayor
28	May 2019	Bilateral donor official
29	June 2019	Multilateral donor official
30	June 2019	Kosovo government official
31	June 2019	Bilateral donor official
32	June 2019	Multilateral donor official
33	June 2019	Multilateral donor official
34	June 2019	Bilateral donor official
35	June 2019	Bilateral donor official
36	June 2019	Kosovo research agency

## D Minority respondents

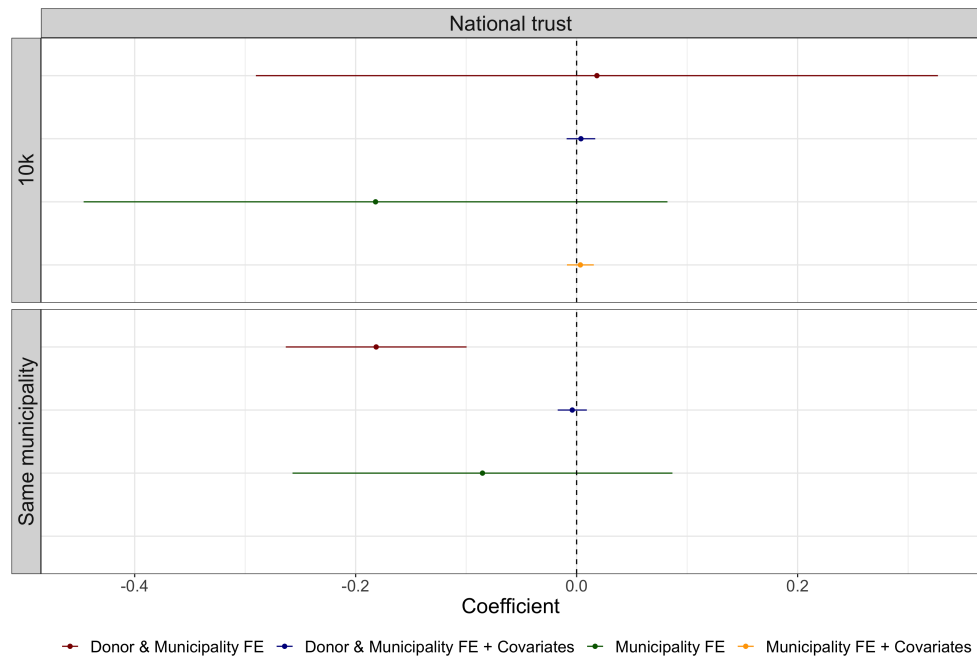


Figure 8: *Trust in government*:  $\beta_3$  for main model specifications, outcomes, and samples. Minority (non-Albanian) respondents only. Point estimates and 95% robust standard errors presented. Standard errors clustered at the individual, project, and municipal level.

## D.1 Additional robustness tests

## D.2 Conley standard errors

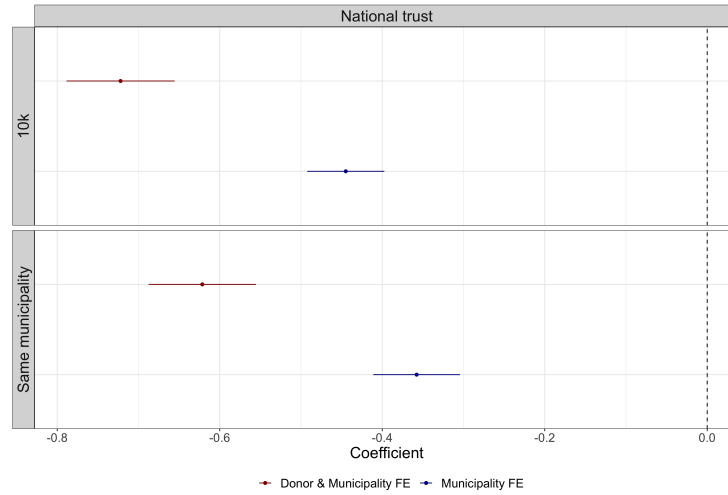


Figure 9: *Main result (Conley standard errors):  $\beta_3$  for main model specifications, outcomes, and samples. Point estimates and 95% robust standard errors presented. Standard errors adjusted for spatial autocorrelation.*

## D.3 Generalized Additive Models

A generalized additive model (GAM) gives nonparametric dosage estimates of exposure, conditional on being exposed (project pre-interview). Using GAM allows me to relax the assumption that exposure to aid has a uniform effect across a given time period. I additionally subset the sample to only exposed individuals (rather than pre-post exposure).

### D.3.1 Measuring exposure to aid

What does it mean for an individual to be “exposed” to an aid project? Previous literature has conceived of exposure to foreign aid as a function of information, physical proximity, and/or temporal proximity (Jablonski, 2014; Briggs, 2017; Knutsen & Kotsadam, 2020). Survey experiments, for example, may prime individual exposure by showing a picture of an aid project or information about an aid project’s existence (Dietrich *et al.*, 2018). Observational studies, both descriptive and causal, rely on physical proximity to a project in a given time period to determine whether an individual is familiar with an aid project (Dreher *et al.*, 2020; Pearson *et al.*, 2020; Jablonski, 2014; Briggs, 2017; Knutsen & Kotsadam, 2020). Paler *et al.* (2020) nuance the conversation about aid project exposure by exploring individual relationships to aid projects as a function of whether or not the individual is a direct beneficiary of the project. Direct beneficiaries of an aid project, by design, are more exposed than indirect beneficiaries. However, indirect beneficiaries may still be considered exposed if they are aware of the project’s presence and intended impact. I construct a measure of exposure to aid projects that includes both physical and temporal proximity.

Physical proximity is measure by the distance from the location of an individual, specifically their residence, to the location of an aid project. The approach follows an abundance of research on foreign aid, including Briggs (2017), who notes that for local public goods (as opposed to private public goods such as cash transfers, “the benefit of these kinds of goods declines as one moves away from them - a health clinic built near you is useful while a clinic

built far away is less useful - so a necessary condition for this kind of aid to help the poor is that local public goods must be built where poor people live.” (190) In my empirical tests, I test multiple windows of physical exposure to a project. The lowest level of exposure I test is 5 kilometers; the highest 50km.<sup>25</sup> I posit that individuals who live within 5km of an aid project can be considered more exposed to this project than individuals living 50km from a project.

Temporal proximity is generally measured by whether a project is active, or has been approved by both donor and recipient, at a given time period. See Table 4 for an example of a project timeline from Kosovo. Projects generally follow a specific timeline: pre-approval discussions and negotiations (generally not public knowledge), approval/start, implementation, and completion. A project is agreed upon, implemented, and then closed. Implementation is tracked through transactions between the donor and recipient. Two types of transactions are recorded for most aid projects: commitments and disbursements. Commitments generally reflect the planned schedule of funding, including dates and amounts. Disbursements are a more accurate record of the funds that are released from donors to recipients. However, data on aid commitments is generally more complete, easier to track, and more representative of the intentions of the aid project than disbursements, for which data is more likely to be missing and may be more reflective of the actual timing and process of implementation. Much of the aid literature uses commitment data due to the issue of missing data with disbursements.<sup>26</sup> Project implementation is dependent on the timing of funding disbursements. Contractors, trainers, acquisition of materials and venues, and any other aspect of a project requires funds to be released before it can proceed.

Implementation itself takes on different forms for different types of projects. For example,

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<sup>25</sup>Kosovo itself is roughly 10,000 square kilometers in area.

<sup>26</sup>Commitment data does not always precede disbursement data; disbursements may occur without commitments for reasons related to donor timelines and annual budgets.

a school refurbishment, for example, requires contractors, building materials, and active repairs to the school building. A municipal training program may be less visible and intrusive: workshops are organized by the implementing organization and attended by personnel. An arts exhibition requires time to create the art, prepare a venue, advertise the exhibition, and open the exhibition. Individual exposure to different types of projects varies. A training or an exhibition should be visible, and therefore exposing individuals to the project, for a limited amount of time. Both word of mouth, active advertisement by beneficiaries and donors, and physical (temporary) presence in a locality constitute exposure to these types of projects. Once these types of projects are completed, individual exposure should fade. This does not imply that the effect of the projects on beneficiaries ends; one would hope that municipal trainings allow bureaucrats to gain lasting skills and that art exhibitions allow artists to make connections that further their artistic careers or inspire young people to create art. However, the public profile of these events should fade after their implementation.

Infrastructure projects, or visible changes in the landscape of a locality, are visible from the moment they are announced to long after their implementation.<sup>27</sup> A health clinic in a given locality whose construction was funded by foreign donor will presumably continue to operate long after the donor's initial contribution. If the infrastructure is branded by the donor, it may be difficult to see how exposure to the project can fade. However, I argue that the law of diminishing marginal returns should apply to these situations. A project cannot always be salient and it will be more salient when the public is focused on the project. Projects under construction or recently completed will likely receive more attention from politicians and media than projects that have long since been completed, in part due to recency bias. Individuals will also acclimate to the presence of the project in their locality. In line with prospect theory, individuals assimilate gains quickly. (Levy, 1992) The new

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<sup>27</sup>Marx (2017) notes that, in populations with high media consumption, infrastructure is no more visible than other aid projects. However, he does not consider the long-term visibility of projects in the paper.

status quo should reflect the presence of the project.

A project is officially completed once all of the paperwork documenting uses of funds in accordance with donor guidelines is complete. This process may take days, weeks, or months depending on bureaucratic idiosyncrasies and administrative burdens at both the local and international levels. I conceive of temporal exposure to an aid project as highest when an aid project is currently being implemented, but diminishing as time passes after implementation. Exposure fades once implementation is over. Because official project completion is a measure of completion of paperwork, I posit that completion is an extremely conservative measure of the end of exposure. The salient aspects of a project’s operation, those most visible to the public, end before the paperwork does.

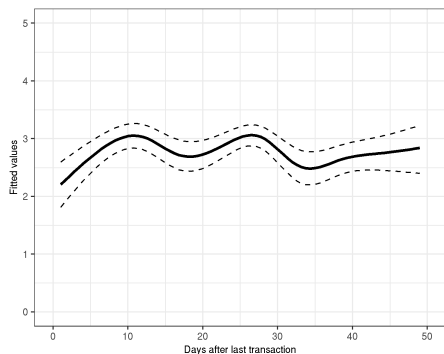
Table 4 depicts one project’s timeline for representative purposes.

	Event	Date
1	Start	10/12/2007
2	Commitment	01/01/2008
3	Disbursement	08/12/2008
4	Commitment	01/01/2009
5	Disbursement	14/12/2009
6	Commitment	01/01/2010
7	Disbursement	02/07/2010
8	Commitment	03/01/2011
9	Disbursement	26/01/2011
10	Disbursement	26/07/2011
11	End	30/06/2012

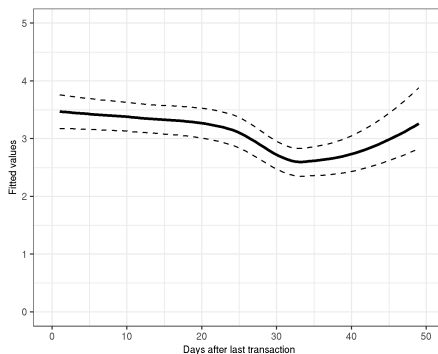
Table 4: *Sample timeline:* Project timeline for "Support to Kvinna till Kvinna," a Swedish-funded women’s empowerment program.

Currently active projects, then, constitute higher exposure, or a higher “dosage,” of aid for a given respondent. Aid exposure fades after the project is completed, proxied by both the last disbursement of funds and the official end of the project. If a project finished many months ago, it should be less salient than a project that only recently finished. For the main specifications, I report exposure to aid as a function of the date of a given commitment of

funds for a given project. By focusing first on commitments, I demonstrate the signaling value of the presence of a minority aid project as commitments occur before funds are disbursed for a project. The commitment then is a visible signal from donors to recipients that a project will be implemented, but does not necessarily affect the material conditions of recipients as there is a time lag between commitment and disbursement of funds.



Albanian exposure general aid



Albanian exposure minority aid

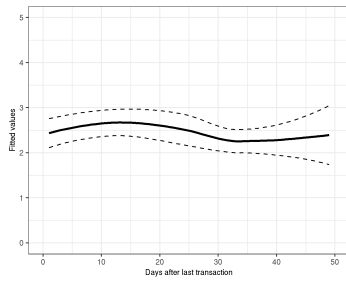
Figure 10: *Main results:* GAM models for exposure to minority and general aid with covariates for outcome *trust in government*. Time window: 50 days; geographic window: 5km. 95% confidence intervals reported. Standard errors clustered by individual and project. Smoothing parameter chosen using leave-one-out cross-validation.

I replicate the findings for Albanian exposure to minority aid with different outcome measures in Figure 11. The pattern of decreasing trust in or approval of local and national governments followed by a reversion to the mean is present in every specification. The *trust in national government* results are weaker and not statistically-significant, suggesting that there may be some differences in credit- and blame-attribution across different levels of government.<sup>28</sup> The same is not true for Albanian exposure to general aid projects.

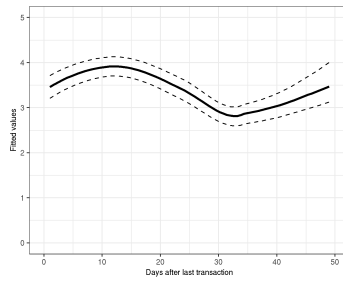
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<sup>28</sup>For more on credit attribution across levels of government, see Springman (Forthcoming) and Baldwin & Winters (2021).

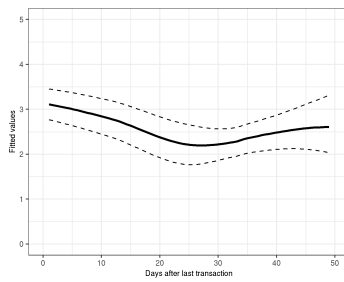




Trust in national gov



Local performance



National performance

Figure 11: *Alternative outcomes*: GAM models for exposure to minority aid with covariates for multiple outcomes. Geographic window: 5km; temporal window: 50 days. 95% confidence intervals reported. Standard errors clustered by individual and project. Smoothing parameter chosen using leave-one-out cross-validation.

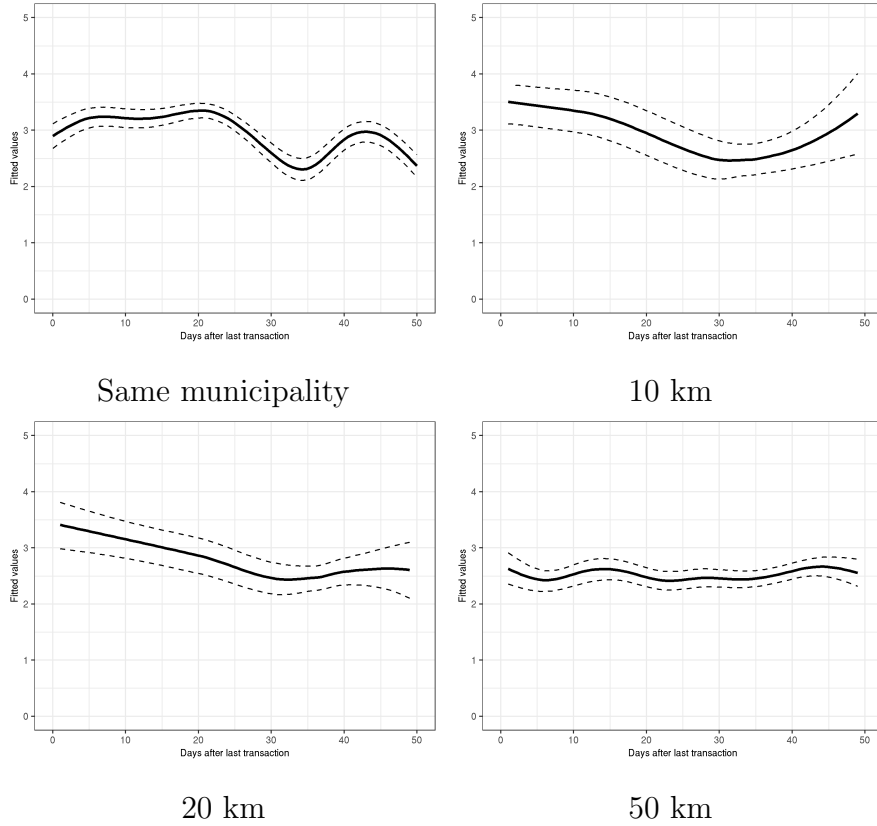


Figure 12: *Alternative geographic windows:* GAM models for exposure to minority aid with covariates for outcome *trust in government* for multiple geographic windows. Temporal window: 50 days. 95% confidence intervals reported. Standard errors clustered by individual and project. Smoothing parameter chosen using leave-one-out cross-validation.

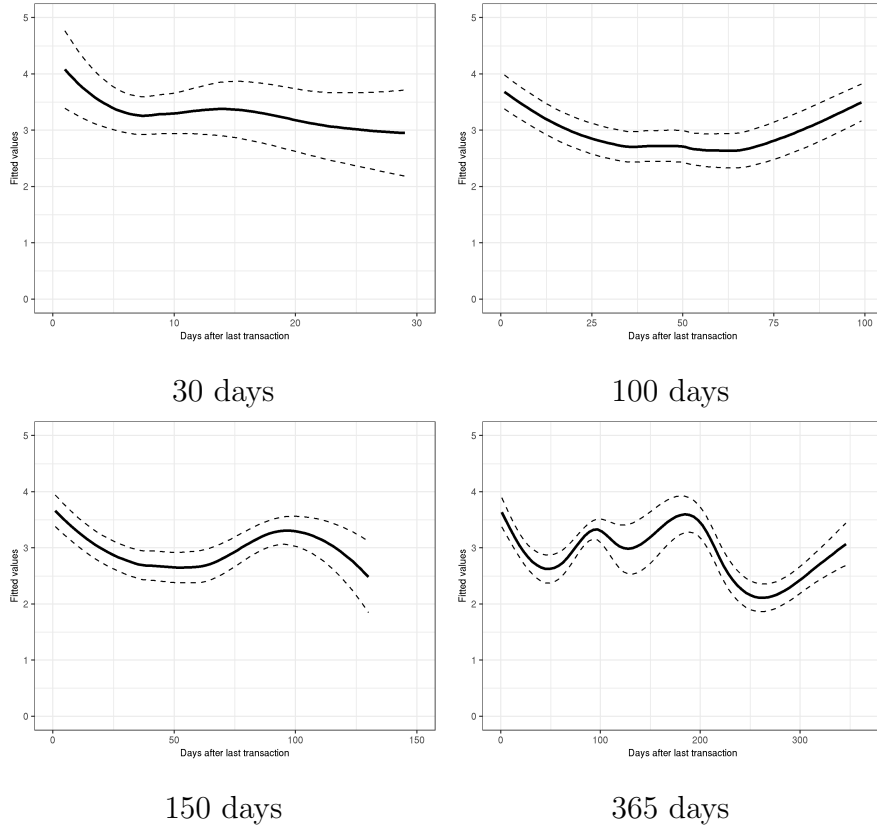


Figure 13: *Alternative time windows:* GAM models for exposure to minority aid with covariates for outcome *trust in government* for multiple time windows. Geographic window: 5km. 95% confidence intervals reported. Standard errors clustered by individual and project. Smoothing parameter chosen using leave-one-out cross-validation.

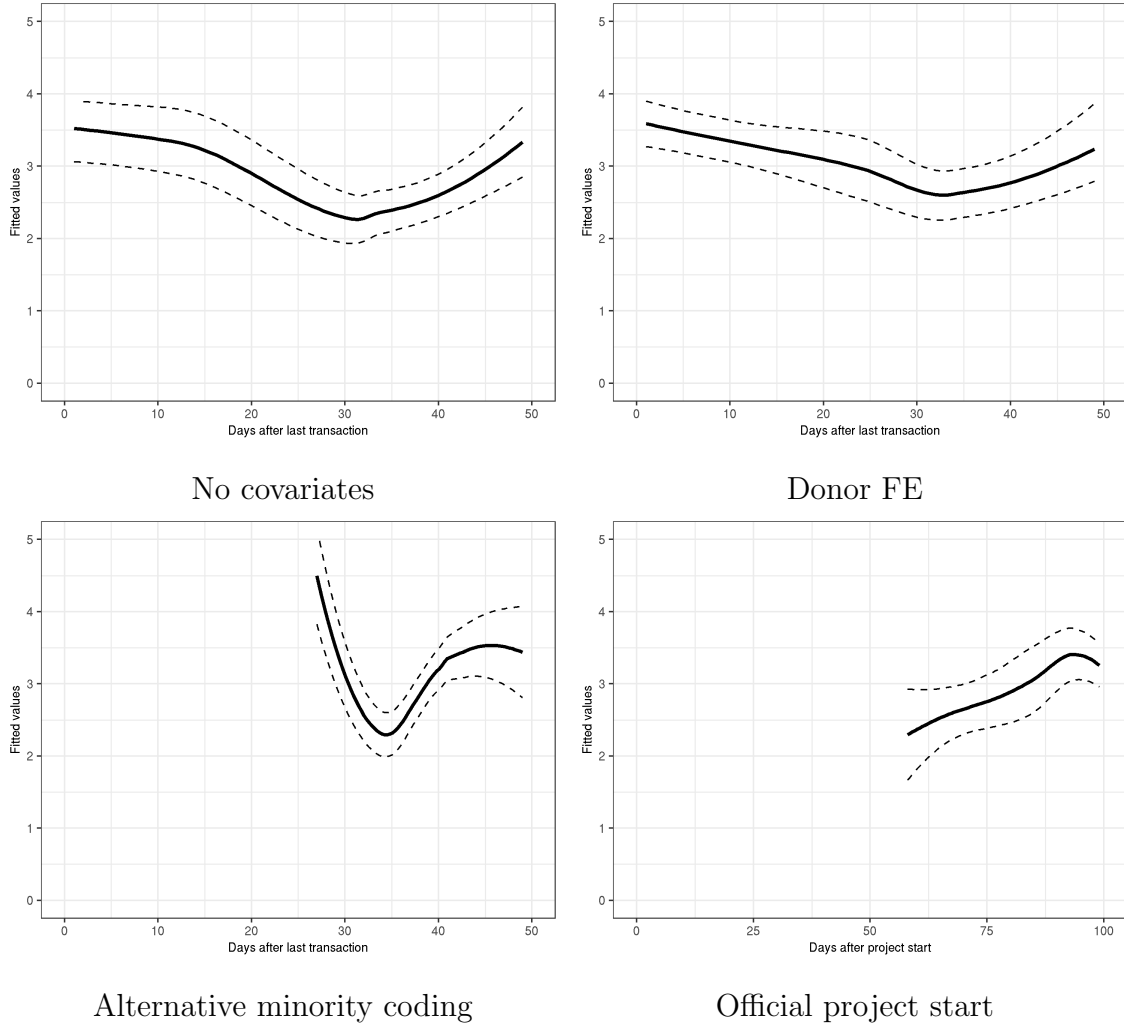


Figure 14: *Robustness checks:* GAM models for Albanian respondent exposure to minority aid with multiple specifications for outcome *trust in government*. Temporal window: 50 days; geographic window: 5km. 95% confidence intervals reported. Standard errors clustered by individual and project. Smoothing parameter chosen using leave-one-out cross-validation.

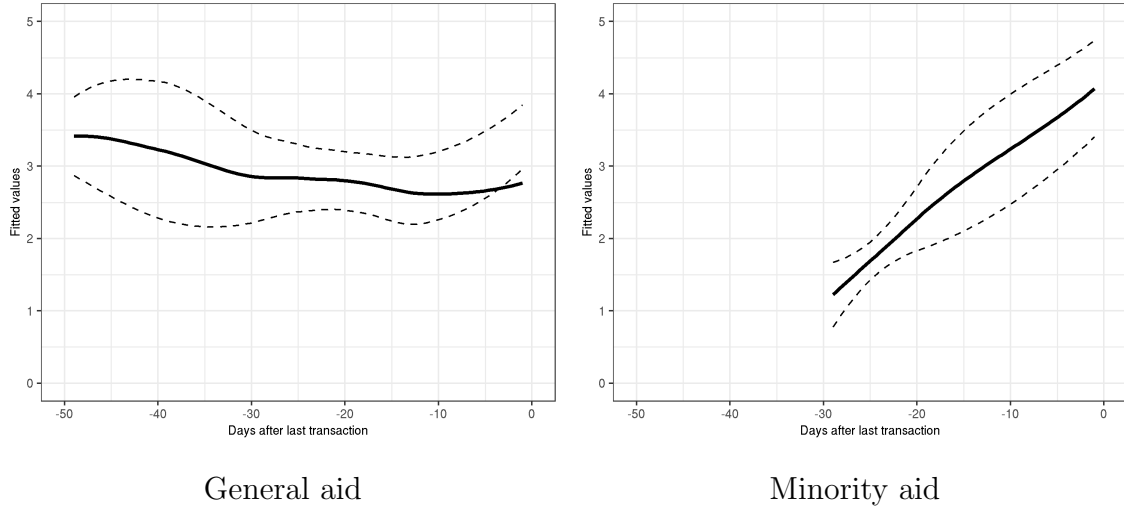
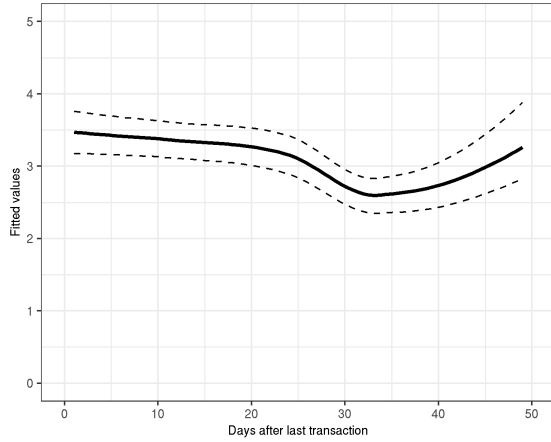
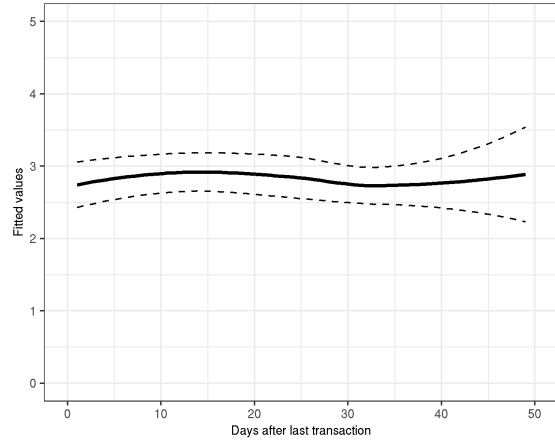


Figure 15: *Anticipation*: GAM models for Albanian respondent exposure to minority and general aid for outcome *trust in government* with covariates. Temporal window: -50 days to 0 days; geographic window: 5km. 95% confidence intervals reported. Standard errors clustered by individual and project. Smoothing parameter chosen using leave-one-out cross-validation.

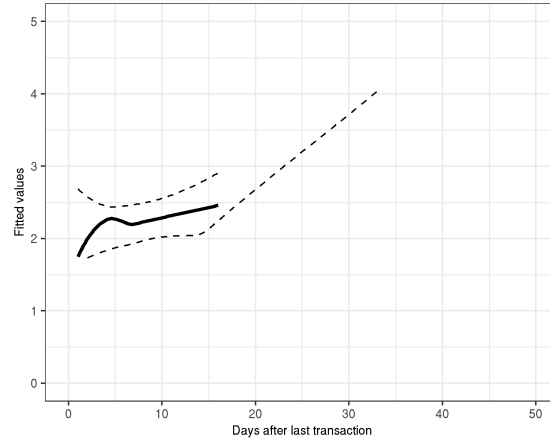


Bypass aid



Trust in NGOs

Figure 16: *Bypass Aid*: GAM models for exposure to minority aid with covariates for outcome *trust in government* for bypass aid and outcome *trust in NGOs* for all aid. Temporal window: 50 days; geographic window: 5km. 95% confidence intervals reported. Standard errors clustered by individual and project. Smoothing parameter chosen using leave-one-out cross-validation.



Minority exposure to general aid

Figure 17: *Minority respondents*: GAM models for minority respondent exposure to general aid with covariates for outcome *trust in government*. Data are insufficient to estimate minority respondent exposure to minority aid. Temporal window: 50 days; geographic window: 5km. 95% confidence intervals reported. Standard errors clustered by individual and project. Smoothing parameter chosen using leave-one-out cross-validation.