Generic: Foreign Aid - bad

By Rebecca Sumner

***Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially reform its foreign policy regarding international terrorism.***

This is a generic brief that argues generally against foreign aid. It can be used against AFF cases where you don’t have specific evidence against their plan, and the plan somehow increases foreign aid. For example, it talks about how the money supposedly given toward aiding other countries often ends up wasted, it increases bureaucracies, which makes it hard for wealth-generating activities to flourish. Aid also floods the market (i.e. sending shirts or food to Africa), which then pushes the local businesses into bankruptcy. Not only that, but aid increases the recipient country’s dependence on aid, forcing them to have no choice but to continue receiving aid. It also creates disincentives for recipient governments to ever fix their economic or political structures, which is when real economic growth would happen. But why bother, if they are getting free money from the West?

This brief also goes through and refutes several arguments in support of foreign aid. For example, it refutes the common assumption that aid alleviates poverty, listing examples of times that countries move out of poverty without the help of foreign aid (like China), and examples of countries that receive aid that have only gotten worse (Liberia, and other parts of Africa). It also refutes the argument that aid brings peace to the recipient nations, listing examples such as Haiti and Somalia—both of whom received billions of dollars in aid and both ended up in chaos and under U.S. military occupation.

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Generic: Foreign Aid - bad

NEGATIVE PHILOSOPHY / OPENING QUOTES

When you don’t work hard for money, you don’t value it. That’s why governments (donors and recipients) always waste foreign aid

Jonathan Lea 2016 (British attorney with over 13 years of experience at both large international firms and smaller practices; for the last five years he’s worked on a self-employed basis with a network of other independent lawyers focused on serving the needs of entrepreneur-led businesses and startups around the UK and further afield) 19 May 2015 updated 7 Jun 2016, “Why foreign aid is harmful,” <https://www.jonathanlea.net/2015/why-foreign-aid-is-harmful/>

Foreign aid represents money, or wealth, that has been seized by force from taxpayers whether through taxation or increased government borrowing (with the taxpayer base used as collateral) to finance the aid. When the aid is spent it therefore doesn’t represent the careful and considered judgment of those who have legitimately earned money through voluntary exchange. As a result, many aid programs are ill-conceived and economically unsound, tending to support gaudy and extravagant projects, reckless spending and grandiose loss-making state ‘enterprises’ that don’t benefit anyone in any meaningful way. Further, many of the less developed world’s state enterprises, set up with foreign loans, were supposed to earn or save these countries the foreign exchange needed to service or pay back the loan, but instead, these enterprises racked up losses upon losses, and used up more foreign exchange to compound the problem.

Foreign aid is filled with examples of unfulfilled promises

Tom Dichter 2017 (contributor to Quartz. He is an anthropologist, who has earned his right to criticize foreign aid through over 50 years of work with many aid agencies in over 60 developing countries on four continents) 21 Apr 2017, “I’ve worked in foreign aid for 50 years—Trump is right to end it, even if his reasons are wrong,” <https://qz.com/959416/time-to-end-foreign-aid-but-for-the-right-reasons/>

If we look at the goal of instigating economic development—which is what development aid initially aimed for in the 1950s—and not just saving lives after a humanitarian crisis or finding a cure for malaria, the track record is quite poor. Given the seven decades that official foreign aid for development has existed (since president Truman’s Point Four speech in 1949), and the trillions of dollars spent, there is little to celebrate. The record looks especially bad when remembering the decades of confident declarations that did not even lead to modest gains: for example, the UN’s 1974 Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, the 1975 Lima Declaration and Plan of Action on Industrial Development (the goal of which was to increase less developed countries’ share of world production to 25% by the year 2000), the 1978 Alma Ata International Conference on Primary Healthcare which resolved to bring about “health for all” by the year 2000, the UN’s International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade which promised clean water for all by 1990, and of course the Millennium Development Goals, whose many unfulfilled promises expired in 2015.

US foreign aid has become an entrenched industry incapable of reform

Tom Dichter 2017 (anthropologist, with over 50 years of work with many aid agencies in over 60 developing countries on four continents) 21 Apr 2017, “I’ve worked in foreign aid for 50 years—Trump is right to end it, even if his reasons are wrong,” <https://qz.com/959416/time-to-end-foreign-aid-but-for-the-right-reasons/>

The main reason there is so little change is that aid has become an industry, and is rapidly moving towards what a present day Eisenhower might call an “aid-industrial complex,” an interlocking set of players (NGOs, government agencies, and private contractors, among others) who have largely closed off outside criticism and internal learning and become self-referential and entrenched. The main goal of this complex is to keep the money flowing. In 2014, thirty-three of the top 40 USAID vendors were American non- and for-profit firms and their total business with USAID was $5.53 billion. And these are only the top vendors. There are scores of other US organizations that get a piece of the American aid pie in the form of contracts and agreements.

Emergency and charity-based aid only provides band-aid solutions for the short term. Doesn’t do anything long-term

Dambisa Moyo 2009 (former economist at Goldman Sachs. She’s the author of "Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa") 21 Mar 2009, “Why Foreign Aid Is Hurting Africa,” <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123758895999200083>

Nevertheless, it's worth reminding ourselves what emergency and charity-based aid can and cannot do. Aid-supported scholarships have certainly helped send African girls to school (never mind that they won't be able to find a job in their own countries once they have graduated). This kind of aid can provide band-aid solutions to alleviate immediate suffering, but by its very nature cannot be the platform for long-term sustainable growth.

Good intentions alone won’t help anything

Nick Wadhams 2010 (Contributor for Bloomberg LP. Previously, he was a freelance reporter contributing to TIME, NPR, the Los Angeles Times, Wired, National Geographic Adventure, and many other outlets in East Africa. Before that, he was a correspondant for the Associated Press posted in Moscow, Denver, the UN, and New York) 12 May 2010, “Bad Charity? (All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt!),” <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1987628,00.html>

Millions of Africans who have no trouble getting shirts, and who never asked Sadler for a handout, might object to the idea that giving them more clothes will change the world. Stung from watching people donate old, useless stuff after the tsunami and earthquake, aid workers bristled. "I'm sorry to be so unkind to someone who has good intentions, but you don't get a get-home-free card just for having good intentions. You have to do things that make sense," says William Easterly, an author and New York University economics professor who is a leading critic of bad aid. "If a surgeon is about to operate on me, I'm not all that interested in whether he has good intentions. I hope he doesn't have evil intentions, but I'm much more interested in whether he knows what he's doing. People have a double standard about aid."

INHERENCY

1. World is getting better without foreign aid

Foreign aid fails, while economic reform succeeds, and the world experiences an enormous spurt of economic growth

Prof. Andrei Shleifer 2009 (prof. of economics, Harvard Univ.) “Peter Bauer and the Failure of Foreign Aid” <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/8705862/bauer.2009.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

The failure of foreign aid is all the more remarkable once we remember that, in the last quarter century, the world has experienced an enormous spurt of economic growth and social development. I have elsewhere (Shleifer 2009) called this period “The Age of Milton Friedman” and documented its enormous accomplishments. Starting from East Asia, and concluding most recently with India and China, nearly all the countries in Asia (where much of the world’s population lives) have experienced rapid economic and social progress. The collapse of communism started the period of economic transition in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union which, while difficult at the start, within a few years has brought rapid economic growth in the whole region. Even the current economic crisis will slow down, but is highly unlikely to reverse, these achievements. Economic success has not been as conspicuous in Latin America and Africa. Even those regions, however, judging by many indicators of human development, such as health, education, and poverty reduction, have seen substantial progress.

All indicators show billions of people are experiencing fantastic improvements in their lives today

Prof. Andrei Shleifer 2009 (prof. of economics, Harvard Univ.) “Peter Bauer and the Failure of Foreign Aid” <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/8705862/bauer.2009.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Economic growth has been accompanied by improvements in the quality of life for billions of people. Extreme poverty is declining at staggering rates. Life expectancy has grown tremendously around the world. Literacy and education have improved rapidly. Starting in the mid 1970s, when Bauer began to criticize foreign aid, the world has experienced unbelievable growth in democracy and human rights.

SOLVENCY

1. Aid doesn’t help economic growth or poverty reduction

Money alone is not the solution – we would have solved poverty by now if it were

Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson 2014 (authors of Why Nations Fail; Acemoglu—Turkish-American economist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Robinson—British political scientist from the University of Chicago) 25 Jan 2014, “Why foreign aid fails - and how to really help Africa,” <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2014/01/why-aid-fails/>

But if money alone were the solution we would be along the road not just to ameliorating the lives of poor people today but ending poverty for ever. The idea that large donations can remedy poverty has dominated the theory of economic development — and the thinking in many international aid agencies and governments — since the 1950s. And how have the results been? Not so good, actually.

No evidence foreign aid has ever produced any economic benefits

Prof. Andrei Shleifer 2009 (prof. of economics, Harvard Univ.) “Peter Bauer and the Failure of Foreign Aid” <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/8705862/bauer.2009.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Against this background of economic development and the rise of free markets, the inability to find any benefits of foreign aid is even more remarkable. One might have thought that foreign aid would have done better when the world is growing and democratizing, as it did in the last thirty years, than under less propitious circumstances. But there is no evidence of its contribution, despite a substantial effort to find it (Easterly 2009).

Countries move out of poverty when they have economic growth, not foreign aid. Example: China

Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson 2014 (authors of Why Nations Fail; Acemoglu—Turkish-American economist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Robinson—British political scientist from the University of Chicago) 25 Jan 2014, “Why foreign aid fails - and how to really help Africa,” <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2014/01/why-aid-fails/>

Millions have moved out of abject poverty around the world over the past six decades, but that has had little to do with foreign aid. Rather, it is due to economic growth in countries in Asia which received little aid. The World Bank has calculated that between 1981 and 2010, the number of poor people in the world fell by about 700 million — and that in China over the same period, the number of poor people fell by 627 million.

No correlation to economic development: Countries that have received aid for a long time are still poor, while others grow

Tom Dichter 2017 (anthropologist, with over 50 years of work with many aid agencies in over 60 developing countries on four continents) 21 Apr 2017, “I’ve worked in foreign aid for 50 years—Trump is right to end it, even if his reasons are wrong,” <https://qz.com/959416/time-to-end-foreign-aid-but-for-the-right-reasons/>

At the beginning of this period (1981) only four countries had a worse poverty rate than China—Cambodia, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Uganda. But decades later these four countries remain more or less where they were, while China moved ahead. Why? India began to move ahead rapidly after 1991. Why? The answer is complex—a mix of culture, changes in government policy, and changes in arrangements in the political economy. But what most of these dramatic changes don’t correlate with is foreign aid. Aid has resulted in remarkably few significant shifts in economic growth and poverty reduction. The truth is much of aid’s promise has come up empty.

Countries that receive a lot of aid are not improving. Example: Liberia

Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson 2014 (authors of Why Nations Fail; **Acemoglu**—Turkish-American economist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; **Robinson**—British political scientist from the Univ. of Chicago) 25 Jan 2014, “Why foreign aid fails - and how to really help Africa,” <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2014/01/why-aid-fails/>

In the meantime, more than a quarter of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa are poorer now than in 1960 — with no sign that foreign aid, however substantive, will end poverty there. Last year, perhaps the most striking illustration came from Liberia, which has received massive amounts of aid for a decade. In 2011, according to the OECD, official development aid to Liberia totalled $765 million, and made up 73 per cent of its gross national income. The sum was even larger in 2010. But last year every one of the 25,000 students who took the exam to enter the University of Liberia failed. All of the aid is still failing to provide a decent education to Liberians.

Turn: Aid makes it worse. Aid to Africa has made the poor poorer, and the growth slower

Dambisa Moyo 2009 (former economist at Goldman Sachs. She’s the author of "Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa") 21 Mar 2009, “Why Foreign Aid Is Hurting Africa,” <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123758895999200083>

Calls for more aid to Africa are growing louder, with advocates pushing for doubling the roughly $50 billion of international assistance that already goes to Africa each year. Yet evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that aid to Africa has made the poor poorer, and the growth slower. The insidious aid culture has left African countries more debt-laden, more inflation-prone, more vulnerable to the vagaries of the currency markets and more unattractive to higher-quality investment. It's increased the risk of civil conflict and unrest (the fact that over 60% of sub-Saharan Africa's population is under the age of 24 with few economic prospects is a cause for worry). Aid is an unmitigated political, economic and humanitarian disaster.

Over $1 trillion of development aid has gone to Africa. Per-capita income is lower today than the 1970s and poverty doubled

Dambisa Moyo 2009 (former economist at Goldman Sachs. She’s the author of "Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa") 21 Mar 2009, “Why Foreign Aid Is Hurting Africa,” <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123758895999200083>

Over the past 60 years at least $1 trillion of development-related aid has been transferred from rich countries to Africa. Yet real per-capita income today is lower than it was in the 1970s, and more than 50% of the population -- over 350 million people -- live on less than a dollar a day, a figure that has nearly doubled in two decades.

2. A/T: “Produces development”—To have development, it must be led by the people inside the countries themselves

Outsiders’ aid doesn’t really help development. It has to come by those in the poor countries themselves

Tom Dichter 2017 (contributor to Quartz. He is an anthropologist, who has earned his right to criticize foreign aid through over 50 years of work with many aid agencies in over 60 developing countries on four continents) 21 Apr 2017, “I’ve worked in foreign aid for 50 years—Trump is right to end it, even if his reasons are wrong,” <https://qz.com/959416/time-to-end-foreign-aid-but-for-the-right-reasons/>

It has not listened to four decades of trenchant critiques, many of them by insiders. Countless articles and at least thirty widely read books about aid (such as Michael Maren’s 1997 *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity*, or William Easterly’s 2006 *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*, or Dambisa Moyo’s 2009 *Dead Aid*), have pointed out that outsiders cannot “nation build,” that development must be led by the people in the poor countries themselves, that dependency has been one of the few tangible results of the trillions we have spent, that the complexity and the context-specific nature of each country’s politics, social structure, and culture cannot be easily understood by outsiders and thus the short term three to five year aid “project” is a wildly inappropriate vehicle for aid, and so on. Moreover, a number of highly respected historians and economists like David S. Landes and J.K. Galbraith have pointed out that aid simply cannot produce development.

3. A/T: “Brings peace”—Not even close

Despite what the aid advocates say, the argument simply isn’t true

Doug Bandow 1999 (Senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan; regular commentator on ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox News Channel, and MSNBC; JD from Stanford Univ.) This piece appeared in the Washington Times on 20 Aug 1999, “Foreign Waste Disguised as Aid,” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/foreign-waste-disguised-aid>

But aid advocates haven’t given up. Mr. Clinton told the VFW that current programs are “designed to keep our soldiers out of war in the first place.” Without money for the Balkans, he warned: “Make no mistake - there will be another bloody war.” It’s a superficially appealing argument. Alas, it simply isn’t true.

Historical Example: Haiti & Somalia got billions in aid, and both ended up in chaos and under U.S. military occupation. Turn: Aid makes conflict more likely

Doug Bandow 1999 (Senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan; regular commentator on ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox News Channel, and MSNBC; JD from Stanford Univ.) This piece appeared in the Washington Times on 20 Aug 1999, “Foreign Waste Disguised as Aid,” <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/foreign-waste-disguised-aid>

Between 1971 and 1994, Haiti received $3.1 billion and Somalia collected $6.2 billion. Both nations ended up in chaos and under U.S. military occupation. In fact, most every country in crisis in recent years banked abundant “aid” over the same period. Sierra Leone received $1.8 billion, Liberia $1.8 billion, Angola $2.9 billion, Chad $3.3 billion, Burundi $3.4 billion, Rwanda $4.7 billion, Uganda $5.8 billion, Zaire $8.4 billion, Mozambique $10.5 billion, Ethiopia $11.5 billion, and Sudan $13.4 billion. In no case did peace result. To the contrary, aid often fostered conflict, underwriting autocratic, venal dictators who impoverished their nations.

4. If anything, we should end aid, not increase it

The main goal of aid is to get to the point where the country no longer needs aid

Tom Dichter 2017 (anthropologist, with over 50 years of work with many aid agencies in over 60 developing countries on four continents) 21 Apr 2017, “I’ve worked in foreign aid for 50 years—Trump is right to end it, even if his reasons are wrong,” <https://qz.com/959416/time-to-end-foreign-aid-but-for-the-right-reasons/>

By far the most important conclusion to draw is that if the goal of development aid to poor countries is to be met, our agencies need to become smaller, not larger; we need to take a back seat and “do” less. Indeed someday soon, we need to prepare to go out of business. No industry wants to hear this, but aid is not like the auto industry. It was meant not to last. If there is a useful way forward for aid, it is to recall its original reason for being; As British scientist C.P. Snow said some sixty years ago, aid should be about people “who will muck in as colleagues, who will pass on what they know, do an honest technical job, and get out.”

Completely cutting off the flow of aid would be far more beneficial

Jonathan Lea 2016 (British attorney with over 13 years of experience at both large international firms and smaller practices; for the last five years he’s worked on a self-employed basis with a network of other independent lawyers focused on serving the needs of entrepreneur-led businesses and startups around the UK and further afield) 19 May 2015 **updated** 7 Jun 2016, “Why foreign aid is harmful,” <https://www.jonathanlea.net/2015/why-foreign-aid-is-harmful/>

Cutting off the flow of aid would altogether be far more beneficial, says Dambisa Moyo. Money from rich countries has trapped many African nations in a cycle of corruption, slower economic growth and poverty. The insidious aid culture has left African countries more debt-laden, more inflation-prone, more vulnerable to the vagaries of the currency markets and more unattractive to higher-quality investment. It’s also increased the risk of civil conflict and unrest. Indeed, the African countries that received the most aid – Somalia, Liberia, and Zaire – have all slid into virtual anarchy.

It may seem cruel to say aid should stop—but really, it should

Nick Wadhams 2010 (Contributor for Bloomberg LP. Previously, he was a freelance reporter contributing to TIME, NPR, the Los Angeles Times, Wired, National Geographic Adventure, and many other outlets in East Africa. Before that, he was a correspondant for the Associated Press posted in Moscow, Denver, the UN, and New York) 12 May 2010, “Bad Charity? (All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt!),” <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1987628,00.html>

There are some critics who argue that all foreign aid — whether from individuals or nonprofits or governments — is keeping Africa back. A vast body of research shows that foreign aid has done little to spur economic growth in Africa — and may have actually slowed it down. "The long-term solution is not aid. It may seem cruel that aid should stop, but really it should," says Rasna Warah, a Kenyan newspaper columnist and editor of the anthology Missionaries, Mercenaries and Misfits, a call to arms against aid. "Africa is the greatest dumping ground on the planet. Everything is dumped here. The sad part is that African governments don't say no — in fact, they say, 'Please send us more.' They're abdicating responsibility for their own citizens."

1. Incompetent administration and end use

Poor countries are incapable of administering aid money efficiently

Prof. Andrei Shleifer 2009 (prof. of economics, Harvard Univ.) “Peter Bauer and the Failure of Foreign Aid” <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/8705862/bauer.2009.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

But remember that money, of what is left of it, is still in the recipient country’s capital. The small piece of it designated for some activity that resembles economic or social development is yet to be spent for that purpose. That piece still needs to pass through the treasury, the spending ministry, the regional offices, and the actual spenders in the developing country. At each turn, some fraction is diverted, misspent, or wasted. According to Reinikka and Svensson (2004), 13 cents out of each dollar of the Ugandan government’s expenditure on schools actually reached those schools. Not all of that waste is malevolent. Western governments have a lot of trouble spending money efficiently; the human and administrative capabilities of developing country governments are considerably lower, as is the efficiency of their spending.

Most foreign aid since World War 2 has been wasted, diverted, misallocated or lost

Prof. Andrei Shleifer 2009 (prof. of economics, Harvard Univ.) “Peter Bauer and the Failure of Foreign Aid” <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/8705862/bauer.2009.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Last but not least, when the money reaches a designated recipient – a bridge builder, a teacher, or a farmer – that recipient must spend it wisely. The bridge builder must build the bridge, the teacher must show up at school, the farmer must use his fertilizer. None of these can be taken for granted. Indeed, the lesson of development economics of the last decade is that there is tremendous corruption, waste and resource misallocation at every stage. Bridges are not built (or collapse soon after if built), teachers stay at home, and farmers retain old production techniques. The bottom line is that perhaps a few pennies of the original Western taxpayer’s dollar are actually spent as might be designed and implemented by a benevolent and effective social planner. The rest is wasted or diverted. Easterly suggests that a trillion dollars has been spent on foreign aid since World War II. But how much has actually been delivered wisely to the intended recipients of that aid? Viewed from the perspective of a dollar traveling from the Western taxpayer’s pocket to the intended ultimate recipient, the failure of foreign aid is not all that puzzling.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Wasteful Spending

American tax dollars have frequently been used on countries that later prove to be failures

Danielle Pletka 2017 (Senior vice president for foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute; adjunct professor at Georgetown University’s Walsh School of Foreign Service; former longtime senior professional staff member for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; appears frequently on NBC News’ “Meet the Press.” Her broadcast appearances also include CBS News, CNN, C-SPAN, and MSNBC; M.A. from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University and a B.A. from Smith College) **Statement** before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs On the Budget, Diplomacy, and Development 28 May 2017, “Addressing the crisis of confidence in American foreign policy: Increasing the effectiveness of our nation abroad,” <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20170328/105791/HHRG-115-FA00-Wstate-PletkaD-20170328.pdf>

To expand on this theme, it is indeed completely appropriate for the American people to ask how their tax dollars are being spent and whether decades of investment in places such as Haiti or Egypt have fertilized those nations to the point where American values and ideals are flowering. Since 1948, and including a major plus up after the signing of the Camp David Accords, the United States has spent more than $100 billion in Egypt, yet in 2011 the beneficiary of many of those dollars, Hosni Mubarak, was overthrown by an angry, US-funded military that, together with the Egyptian people, believed he was a tyrant and a thief. What about Tunisia, where the Arab Spring began over the self-immolation of a man furious over economic regulations that were stopping him from earning? Tunisia, we should remember, was one of the early graduates of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which predicates its lending on performance. What about Pakistan, which has received more than $20 billion in US military and economic assistance over the past 15 years, only to be discovered as the safe haven for Osama bin Laden?

Impact: US economic harm. Every dollar wasted on aid could have reduced the deficit and benefited the US economy

Dr William Gale and Benjamin Harris 2011. (Gale - PhD in economics, Stanford Univ.; senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and co-director of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center; former assistant professor in the Department of Economics at UCLA, and a senior economist for the Council of Economic Advisers under President George H.W. Bush; Harris - master’s degree in economics from Cornell University and a master’s degree in quantitative methods from Columbia University; senior research associate with the Economics Studies Program at the Brookings Institution) “Reforming Taxes and Raising Revenue: Part of the Fiscal Solution” <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/05_fiscal_solution_gale_harris.pdf>

The second broad effect is on national saving. A reduction in the deficit raises public saving, which typically results in higher national saving (national saving is the sum of household, corporate, and government saving). This effect is often ignored in discussions of tax policy and economic growth, but it can be important. Even in the absence of a financial crisis, sustained deficits have deleterious long-term effects, as they translate into lower national savings, higher interest rates, and increased indebtedness to foreign investors, all of which reduce future national income. Gale and Orszag (2004b) estimate that a 1 percent of GDP increase in the deficit will raise interest rates by 25 to 35 basis points and reduce national saving by 0.5 to 0.8 percentage points. Engen and Hubbard (2004) obtain similar results with respect to interest rates. Thus, relative to a balanced budget, a deficit equal to 6 percent of GDP would raise interest rates by at least 150 basis points and reduce the national saving rate by at least 3 percent of GDP. The IMF (2010) estimates that, in advanced economies, an increase of 10 percentage points in the initial debt/GDP ratio reduces future GDP growth rates by 0.15 percentage points.

Impact: Poor countries harmed. Aid money would do better if it were refunded to taxpayers, who could spend it and increase trade with poor countries and benefit them more

Jonathan Lea 2016 (British attorney with over 13 years of experience at both large international firms and smaller practices; for the last five years he’s worked on a self-employed basis with a network of other independent lawyers focused on serving the needs of entrepreneur-led businesses and startups around the UK and further afield) 19 May 2015 **updated** 7 Jun 2016, “Why foreign aid is harmful,” <https://www.jonathanlea.net/2015/why-foreign-aid-is-harmful/>

The popular understanding of international assistance programs is that these programs deliver immediate needed disaster relief or enhance the well-being of people through economic development. Arguably, that happens to some, marginal, extent. However, my view is that “we should trade, not give aid” and that the money appropriated for Western governments’ foreign aid budgets should be put back into the pocket of the Western taxpayer, thus leaving less developed countries free from the pernicious effect of foreign aid and allowing more capital to be accumulated by those in the West who produce goods and services and who are better able to enter into mutually beneficial trading relationships with the Third World.

2. Corruption

Link: Aid fuels corruption and bloated bureaucracies, and the money gets diverted

Jonathan Lea 2016 (British attorney with over 13 years of experience at both large international firms and smaller practices; for the last five years he’s worked on a self-employed basis with a network of other independent lawyers focused on serving the needs of entrepreneur-led businesses and startups around the UK and further afield) 19 May 2015 updated 7 Jun 2016, “Why foreign aid is harmful,” <https://www.jonathanlea.net/2015/why-foreign-aid-is-harmful/>

Increased Corruption  
One of the most frequent criticisms of foreign aid is how it fuels rampant corruption in the countries that receive it. Money that the UK government markets to the gullible electorate as being destined to help the destitute in the third world actually ends up creating and supporting inorganic, bloated and unnecessary bureaucracies in the form of both the recipient country governments and the donor-funded NGOs. The net result of this is to make it all too easy for the funds to be used for anything, save for what their developmental purpose should be, or what products and services would otherwise be supplied in an open market.

Poor country leaders and officials steal the aid money

Prof. Andrei Shleifer 2009 (prof. of economics, Harvard Univ.) “Peter Bauer and the Failure of Foreign Aid” <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/8705862/bauer.2009.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

But let us keep following whatever is left of the Western taxpayer’s dollar. Suppose that some fraction of that original dollar is now lent or given as a grant to a government in a developing country for some purpose that may contribute to development. As has been extensively documented, in many instances the first instinct of the officials receiving the funds is to steal them. Many a developing country leader has become a billionaire courtesy of foreign aid. When the money is not stolen by the leader, there are the various ministers, officials, and other bureaucrats who all want a cut.

Impact: Poor citizens harmed. “Free” money is the perfect way to keep a bad government in power

Dambisa Moyo 2009 (former economist at Goldman Sachs. She’s the author of "Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa") 21 Mar 2009, “Why Foreign Aid Is Hurting Africa,” <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123758895999200083>

A constant stream of "free" money is a perfect way to keep an inefficient or simply bad government in power. As aid flows in, there is nothing more for the government to do -- it doesn't need to raise taxes, and as long as it pays the army, it doesn't have to take account of its disgruntled citizens. No matter that its citizens are disenfranchised (as with no taxation there can be no representation). All the government really needs to do is to court and cater to its foreign donors to stay in power.

Impact: Blocks social/economic improvement. Aid bureaucracies make it hard for wealth-creating activities to develop

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The economic environment that created aid bureaucracies has therefore built unproductive organisations that define their output as money disbursed rather than service delivered, produce many low-return observable outputs like glossy reports and “frameworks” that can be used to justify their spending and put enormous demands on those with scarce administrative skills in poor countries who could otherwise be engaged in doing something useful. This growing phalanx of corrupt, meddling, unaccountable and overpaid bureaucrats imposed on countries thus makes it very hard for local businesses and wealth creating activities to develop as the imposition of these parasitical alien administrations not only hoover up and corrupt the brightest and most dynamic of the host population but also spin a suffocating web of rules and regulations devoid from any local business context.

3. Bankrupting local businesses

Flooding the market with free stuff bankrupts local businesses in poor countries. Example: agriculture

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An example of this phenomenon is the US ‘Food for Peace’ program that was created in 1954 to help the Eisenhower administration get rid of embarrassingly large farm surpluses. In the 1950s and 1960s, massive U.S. wheat dumping in India disrupted that country’s agricultural market and helped bankrupt thousands of Indian farmers. George Dunlop, chief of staff of the Senate Agriculture Committee, speculated that such food aid may have been responsible for millions of Indians starving. Although food aid programs may sometimes alleviate hunger in the short run, the overall effect of them appears to be the disruption of local agricultural markets, making it harder for poor countries to develop their own resources and feed themselves in the long run.

Free stuff bankrupts the local people who already sell them. Example: Shirts

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Similarly, as this story demonstrates, flooding third world markets with free non-agricultural goods can also bankrupt the people who already sell them. Donating clothing is a sensitive topic in Africa because many countries’ textile industries collapsed under the weight of secondhand-clothing imports that were introduced in the 1970s and ’80s. “First you have destroyed these villages’ ability to be industrious and produce cotton products, and then you’re saying, ‘Can I give you a T-shirt?’ and celebrating about it?” says James Shikwati, director of the Nairobi-based Inter Region Economic Network, a think tank. “It’s really like offering poison coated with sugar.”

Sending free stuff isn’t helpful and distracts from real solutions Other examples: teddy bears, shoes, soap, socks, T-shirts.

Nick Wadhams 2010 (Contributor for Bloomberg LP. Previously a freelance reporter contributing to TIME, NPR, the Los Angeles Times, Wired, National Geographic Adventure, and many other outlets in East Africa. Before that, he was a correspondent for the Associated Press posted in Moscow, Denver, the UN, and New York) 12 May 2010, “Bad Charity? (All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt!),” <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1987628,00.html> (ellipses in original)

There was the boy in Grand Rapids, Mich., who collected 10,000 teddy bears for Haiti's earthquake victims. Soles4Souls.com is sending shoes. The list goes on: old soap from hotel rooms, underwear, baby formula, even Spam (the pork product, not junk e-mail). "Years — decades — of calm, reasoned discussion do not seem to have worked," an aid worker who blogs under the name Tales from the Hood told TIME by e-mail. "People are still collecting shoes, socks, underwear ... T-shirts ... somehow under the delusion that it is helpful. Sometimes loud shouting down is the only thing that gets heard." Then there's the matter of cost. Money spent shipping teddy bears to kids might be better spent providing for more pressing needs. The same goes for T-shirts.

Free stuff = local bankruptcy in poor countries. Example: Mosquito-net makers in Africa

Dambisa Moyo 2009 (former economist at Goldman Sachs. She’s the author of "Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa") 21 Mar 2009, “Why Foreign Aid Is Hurting Africa,” <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123758895999200083>

Say there is a mosquito-net maker in small-town Africa. Say he employs 10 people who together manufacture 500 nets a week. Typically, these 10 employees support upward of 15 relatives each. A Western government-inspired program generously supplies the affected region with 100,000 free mosquito nets. This promptly puts the mosquito net manufacturer out of business, and now his 10 employees can no longer support their 150 dependents. In a couple of years, most of the donated nets will be torn and useless, but now there is no mosquito net maker to go to. They'll have to get more aid. And African governments once again get to abdicate their responsibilities.

Example: Jason Sadler’s “1 Million T-Shirts” project. Waste of time & money and may have made things worse

Tom Dichter 2017 (anthropologist, with over 50 years of work with many aid agencies in over 60 developing countries on four continents) 21 Apr 2017, “I’ve worked in foreign aid for 50 years—Trump is right to end it, even if his reasons are wrong,” <https://qz.com/959416/time-to-end-foreign-aid-but-for-the-right-reasons/>

A few years ago, a person named Jason Sadler wanted to help poor Africans by sending them a million free t-shirts. Sadler had never been to Africa, never worked in foreign aid, and while he evidently wanted to help the poor, his “1 Million T-Shirts” project was doomed by a mindless lack of reflection and zero up-front homework. Was there a need for T-shirts? Poor Africans all over the continent walk around in used T-shirts emblazoned with the names of plumbers in Kansas or bowling allies in New Jersey, and every road-side market stall sells them. Did it make economic sense to pack and ship a million T-shirts when the same money could instead be invested in something that might be lasting? And what about the effect of dumping these garments on poor economies already filled with similar donated goods? He didn’t ask.

4. Dependence & poverty

Poor villages don’t even try because they know somebody will come along and fix things

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I came across this interesting anecdote on Quora from the poster’s time as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mali:  
“One of the examples I offer in this regard is from a village in western Mali. This small town had a market garden built for them by an international NGO, with several wells that had been constructed by another NGO. When a fellow volunteer started her service in this village, two of the three wells had collapsed and needed to be rebuilt. My colleague asked why the village council didn’t organize an effort to get the wells repaired, and her neighbors said that they were waiting for an NGO to come along and do it for them. The wells had been built by somebody else and the village felt no ownership of them. The people knew someone would come and fix them, and sure enough, some NGO came along and fixed them after a year or two.”

Link: Foreign aid encourages reliance on hand-outs by the people and government in poor countries

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The dependence on foreign aid means that it becomes the opiate of the Third World. In a similar way to how the development of the welfare state in the UK and other developed countries has completely undermined and destroyed society by removing the need for communities to develop themselves through cooperation and exchange and by instead supporting and facilitating anti-social and irresponsible behaviour, foreign aid has largely encouraged Third World governments and their populations to rely on hand-outs instead of on themselves for development.

Impact: Trapped in poverty. They can’t pull themselves out of poverty if their governments fail to deliver

Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson 2014 (authors of Why Nations Fail; Acemoglu—Turkish-American economist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Robinson—British political scientist from the University of Chicago) 25 Jan 2014, “Why foreign aid fails - and how to really help Africa,” <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2014/01/why-aid-fails/>

The people in poor countries have the same aspirations as those in rich countries — to have the same chances and opportunities, good health care, clean running water in their homes and high-quality schools for their children. The problem is that their aspirations are blocked today — as the aspirations of black people were in apartheid South Africa — by extractive institutions. The poor don’t pull themselves out of poverty, because the basic ability to do so is denied them. You could see this in the protests behind the Arab Spring: those in Cairo’s Tahrir Square spoke in one voice about the corruption of the government, its inability to deliver public services and the lack of equality of opportunity.

Impact: Poverty. Aid blocks political and economic reform, making it harder for poor countries to develop economically

Prof. Andrei Shleifer 2009 (prof. of economics, Harvard Univ.) “Peter Bauer and the Failure of Foreign Aid” <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/8705862/bauer.2009.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

As important, the diversion of most of the dollar before a few pennies reach an intended recipient is not development neutral—this diversion may actually undermine development because it interferes with the political and institutional processes that might actually be beneficial to a country. For example, many social scientists believe in the idea going back to the Magna Carta (and which has some empirical support as well), that governments should have to raise taxes to finance their spending, so that they are forced to seek the consent of the governed. By breaking the link between government resources and its ability to tax, foreign aid might undermine the basic contract between the government and the governed. And to the extent that the evolution of indigenous political institutions is a central element of economic and social development, these adverse effects of foreign aid might be as significant as the meager benefits it provides.

Impact: Poverty. Not caused by lack of money, it’s caused by institutions that block the initiatives of poor people to make things better

Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson 2014 (authors of Why Nations Fail; Acemoglu—Turkish-American economist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Robinson—British political scientist from the University of Chicago) 25 Jan 2014, “Why foreign aid fails - and how to really help Africa,” <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2014/01/why-aid-fails/>

But huge aid flows appear to have done little to change the development trajectories of poor countries, particularly in Africa. Why? As we spell out in our book, this is not to do with a vicious circle of poverty, waiting to be broken by foreign money. Poverty is instead created by economic institutions that systematically block the incentives and opportunities of poor people to make things better for themselves, their neighbours and their country.

Impact: Stuck in poverty. A society that can’t develop without external gifts is unlikely to do so with them

Tom Dichter 2017 (anthropologist, with over 50 years of work with many aid agencies in over 60 developing countries on four continents) 21 Apr 2017, “I’ve worked in foreign aid for 50 years—Trump is right to end it, even if his reasons are wrong,” <https://qz.com/959416/time-to-end-foreign-aid-but-for-the-right-reasons/>

Here is British development economist Peter Bauer in 1974:  
What holds back many poor countries is the people who live there, including their governments. A society which cannot develop without external gifts is altogether unlikely to do so with them.

5. Hurts human rights

U.S. support for dictators undermines human rights

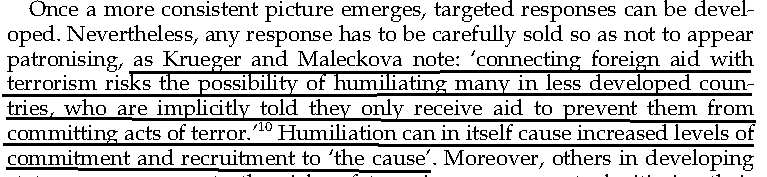
Patrick Tyrrell 2018 (He is a research coordinator in The Heritage Foundation’s Center for International Trade and Economics.) 2 May 2018 “Foreign Aid Is Not the Answer to Global Poverty. Look to Freedom.” <https://www.heritage.org/international-economies/commentary/foreign-aid-not-the-answer-global-poverty-look-freedom>

Strongmen who disregard property rights or the rule of law to remain in power have been rewarded with billions of dollars in foreign aid from rich countries for decades. Despots and dictators have often used this aid to solidify their grips on power, such as by withholding food aid from groups that do not support them.

6. Aggravates terrorism

Foreign aid to “fight terrorism” can actually make it worse

Dr. Karin von Hippel 2002. (PhD from London School of Economics; co-directed the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC and was a senior research fellow at the Centre for Defence Studies, King’s College London. She has also worked for the United Nations and the European Union in Somalia and Kosovo, and has direct experience in over two dozen conflict zones) The Roots of Terrorism: Probing the Myths <http://werzit.com/intel/classes/amu/classes/lc514/LC514_Week_02_The_Roots_of_Terrorism_Probing_the_Myths.pdf>



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