

China and the New Donors of Development Assistance: Theorizing the Future of the OECD Aid Apparatus

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Abstract:

This paper explores the new role that non-OECD nations such as Brazil, India, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and, especially, China are playing in providing international development aid. While global aid flows from traditional OECD nations remain significant to the development of global politics and what William Robinson calls the “Transnational State” (TNS) apparatus, these new aid donors are challenging the Western nations’ vision of what development means and what kind of global economy is being built. The consequences of these increasing aid flows for the global economy and for the development of aid recipient nations at this point are unclear. But it is crucial for scholars to pay close attention to the rise in official development assistance (ODA) from non-OECD nations as a key indicator of global political and economic integration. Bringing together insights from world systems theory, world polity theory, field theory, Robinson’s Transnational State perspective, and Saskia Sassen’s work on deterritoriality and denationization, this paper considers the role that new donors are likely to play within the global political economy in the coming decades. Particular attention is paid to whether the so-called “South-South” aid from these new donors is really “South-South,” whether we can expect to see a counterhegemonic shift in aid practice, what kind of future conflicts between donors are on the horizon, what this might mean for world state formation, and finally, whether any of this amounts to the beginning of the end for the nearly 60-year old Western aid apparatus.

Keywords: New donors, China, BRICS, aid apparatus, south-south cooperation, transnational institution

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Introduction

What is the role of official development assistance within the processes of globalization? Much of the existing literature on international development organizations and the global aid flows they administer tends to suggest that aid plays a secondary role in the capitalist world economy. Leslie Sklair, for example, states that aid's importance is "distinctly marginal" within global capitalism (2005:69). Scholars writing from the world systems tradition tend to place more emphasis on other kinds of global economic flows such as trade and foreign direct investment (FDI). Work being done within the world polity perspective tends to focus on how global norms and world "cultural scripts" operating within international organizations are more important than the aid itself. Aid is part of world polity formation but not the foremost concern.

Sociologists of globalization who pay more careful attention to the role of aid within the capitalist world economy emphasize that development assistance is part of "global governance." Phillip McMichael, for instance, states that aid organizations are implementing a "globalization project" on behalf of wealthy countries and focuses primarily on Bretton Woods institutions (1996). Yet he also places more importance on FDI when compared to aid itself and there is some confusion regarding what he means by a "project." Such a term conveys a somewhat uniform approach and does not signify the dynamic, complex and sometimes contradictory nature of the international development system as a whole. William I. Robinson's work is perhaps most adept at discussing the role of aid institutions within the global economy by arguing that they are part of an "emerging Transnational State apparatus (TNS) (2001, 2004). But his critics have pointed out some concern over his use of the term "state" and whether it is accurate to suggest that such an entity is coming into existence (Block 2001, Goldfrank 2001, McMichael 2001).

We can draw several overall lessons from the sociological scholarship on aid: First, aid itself and the political consequences of the aid apparatus itself are somewhat taken-for-granted sociological phenomena within development sociology and are under-examined theoretically. This is perhaps surprising to observe within a field whose main purpose is to study all facets of "development" in the world. This could be due to the fact that the institutions that exist to promote it are so ubiquitous that they fall within the realm of the "taken for granted" and are not particularly interesting to us as development sociologists. Second, aid is generally seen as either economic (in which case it plays a minor role) or political (in which case it plays an emerging role) but not both. And third, much scholarly emphasis within the social sciences has tended to emphasize the "end of development", the "crisis of development" and so on (see, e.g. Esteva 1992, Sachs 1992). Some of these scholars go so far as to predict its demise at precisely the time when it may be truly coming of age.

One of the topics that development sociologists and globalization scholars up until now have largely failed to address is the role of emerging donors and how they fit into these debates. Emerging donors challenge the very conventions and terminology used by scholars within these fields to define the world around them. What do core and periphery mean anymore if peripheral countries are giving aid? What are “developed countries” and “less developed countries” in this context? What will become of the Bretton Woods system? The “Washington consensus”? What happens to the inter-state system of world-systems theory, Robinson’s Transnational State or John Meyer’s (et al.) “world polity” (1997) if new donors emerge to disrupt these hegemonic structures? And finally, were predictions and inquiries into a “post-development era” premature? The goal of this paper is to address these theoretical questions by briefly examining some of the new aid donors and their recent activities, by looking at how commentators in the “global north” have responded to these new activities, and, finally, by exploring what these emerging donors, particularly China, are likely to mean for development sociologists and globalization scholars.

Theorizing Aid

This paper examines the role that aid plays in the global economy by following in the scholarly tradition laid out by Pierre Bourdieu, Arturo Escobar, James Ferguson and William I. Robinson but also taking it in a new direction. Bourdieu’s definition of globalization as an “economic politics seeking to unify the economic field by means of a whole group of legal-political measures... put to work by an ensemble of agents and institutions” (2001:2) is useful if we apply it to the case of international development assistance. In addition, this analysis builds on Robinson’s “transnational state” approach (2001, 2004). However, Robinson may overstate the role played by the transnational capitalist class (TCC) in the world of development. Aid is largely guided by the interests of capital, as the Robinson model maintains, but it carries out other agendas as well (including pro-labor, anti-corporate pollution, women’s and indigenous rights) and these agendas can even be at loggerheads with the neo-liberal agendas promoted by the TCC (Jackson 2005: 9). Furthermore, his emphasis on the concept of global “state” formation may be misplaced. Aid is about global governance, politics and power, and it seems clear that aid agencies intervene in local politics, engage in surveillance of local political dynamics, set political agendas and “projects” and even try to “garner local political consent” for their agendas, (Jackson 2005) but these agencies do not particularly resemble a “state” or even an “emerging state apparatus.” Rather, it might be preferable to think of aid agencies as a “transnational institution” made up of complex large-scale transnational organizations. The distinction here is a Parsonian one where “institution” refers to phenomena occurring at a cultural level (as world polity theorists emphasize) and are a “given part of the social structure” (Parsons 1956). Aid, in this sense, is a global *institution*, one that follows well established rules and traditions and one in which various human groups can chose to participate or not. An “organization” on the other hand, is a modern bureaucratic form of human action, according to Parsons. It is a “system which, as the attainment of

its goal, 'produces' an indentifiable something which can be utilized in some way by another system" (65).

By defining aid in this way, we avoid the problem of seeing it as primarily a feature of the economy or primarily a feature of the polity. Aid occupies the interstitial space between the "market" and the "state." Using this formulation, we can draw upon the strengths of various approaches: World systems theory is most useful in placing emphasis on the role of capital in the formation of global structures and institutions, particularly the global economy. Robinson's TNS model is a prime example of this as he explicitly chooses to emphasize a Marxian definition of the state over a Weberian one in concluding that state institutions are creations of capital. World polity theory is useful in its emphasis on bureaucratic institutions and their role in creating global cultural forms that have a significant role, particularly in the formation of world political structures (see e.g. Boli and Thomas, 1997; Swiss, 2012). But the world-systems/world-polity perspectives can be seen as mutually compatible (instead of being in conflict) if we think of aid as "economic politics" -- as simultaneously political and economic. In many ways, aid is a clear example of how the world economy might best be thought of as a system of "bureaucratic capitalism" (Sjoberg 1999) in which capitalism itself is embedded in modern bureaucratic institutions operating within what Fligstein and McAdam call "strategic action fields." (2012: 9)

Sociologists have long understood the importance of institutions, but theories of globalization (with a few exceptions, i.e. Evans 1995) have tended to be based within macro perspectives that place lesser emphasis on the role that institutions play within "constructed mesolevel social orders" and how people within these institutions engage in collective action (Fligstein and McAdam 2012: 9) By incorporating field theory into the discussion that world systems and world polity scholars are having, we can gain a greater understanding of the role that aid agencies play within the global political economy as they occupy the mesolevel interstitial space between market and politics; between global and local.

Development aid has been in many ways a "settled field," one which "exhibits very high consensus and that... despite widespread dissent and open conflict, nonetheless exhibit a stable structure over time" (Fligstein and McAdam: 12). The institution of aid, as well as the organizations which administer official development assistance, are the historical creations of donor countries. While the global practice of providing economic assistance among nations has roots in both the distant (e.g. Mauss' "The Gift") and more recent past (e.g. colonialism), modern aid giving is an institution firmly based upon the post-WWII founding of the Bretton Woods organizations such as the World Bank and IMF (in 1944), the United Nations (1945) and, most significantly perhaps, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (1960) and its predecessor: the Organization of European Economic Cooperation (1948). Originally created to administer U.S. and Canadian post-war reconstruction funds in Europe under the Marshall plan, the OECD and Bretton Woods agencies, in particular, developed

the policies, frameworks and norms that would set the stage for international development assistance for decades to come. Finding success in rebuilding war-torn European economies and societies, these agencies explicitly and very self-consciously set about to apply the same practices to economies and societies in the “developing world.” The original twenty nations that provided the monetary wherewithal for these efforts were the leading industrialized nations and wealthiest economies in the world at that time. Now made up of thirty-four member nations, the OECD is the global institution that defines “donor nation” at the global level and sets the rules whereby donor nations report and administer the aid provided to “recipient nations” throughout the world.

Since the birth of the OECD, many other organizations have emerged throughout the world that participate in the transnational institution of aid, including “official” bilateral and multilateral organizations, as well as “unofficial” or private voluntary organizations and non-governmental organizations. Taken all together these aid organizations are “agents of globalization” acting on behalf of donor countries” (Jackson, 2005: 126) The primary agendas of aid organizations are economic integration into the world economy and neo-liberalism, but these are not the only agendas. As world polity theorists maintain, other “global cultural scripts” are promoted as well. Within the institution of aid we see a “multiplicity of agendas” arranged in a hierarchy of importance depending on the donor countries’ shifting priorities and concerns. These agendas can even be in conflict with one another without challenging the stable structure of the field itself (Jackson 2005).

The institution of aid is transnational, which means it is neither “global” nor “national” nor “local.” Rather, it creates “denationalized” spaces and “specialized assemblages as a new type of territoriality” (Sassen 2006, 2008). As Sassen states: “These institutions should rather be conceived of as powerful capabilities for the making of a new order—they are instruments, not the new order itself” (2008: 63). Following Sassen and others, we can see that aid organizations in many ways are among the chief “architects” of the world political economy today. They are “globalizers,” ensuring that all nations and regions in the world become incorporated into both the global economy and world political norms. As such, the institution of aid sits as the nexus between the global and the local, as well as the nexus between the polity and the economy.

Within this nexus several important general observations can be made: global agendas (donor agendas) tend to win out over local agendas most of the time; local agendas succeed inasmuch as they connect to global agendas (Jackson 2005, see also e.g. Bob 2002; Swidler and Watkins 2009); local institutions in aid-recipient countries receive some benefits from participating in global agendas; the negative consequences of this interaction are downplayed by aid organizations and generally hidden by a “shiny veneer of beneficence” (Jackson 2005: 12) – the (often faulty) assumption that aid is by its very nature a practice of “helping,” “restoration,” and “progress.” Finally, the greater benefits of the aid institution accrue to the donor countries that reap economic and political

rewards in return for their assistance packages. These rewards have also remained largely hidden from view, though one may argue that they are becoming more apparent as new aid donors enter the fray (Jackson 2005).

Aid agencies and the workers they employ are builders of the globalizing world political economy in large part due to the power they wield in the context of many recipient countries. Though the extent of this power and influence varies from country to country (much greater in Honduras and Eritrea, much less in Peru and Thailand where current ODA flows are much smaller), and varies historically (aid to Costa Rica was high in the 1980s but has waned to almost nothing currently, while the heaviest aid flows to Afghanistan are a more recent phenomenon), the power of aid agencies in many contexts is important to understand.

In a case study of the aid profession in Honduras, the mechanisms of authority and power that development agencies wield in aid-recipient societies were identified (Jackson 2005). First, drawing on Anthony Giddens' definition of power, aid agencies have "the capacity to *intervene* in a given set of events" and some of their power is predicated upon acting—upon inserting oneself (or one's institution) into the social or political arena. Second, power is built upon surveillance. Using Escobar (1988, 1995) and Foucault (1979), it is easy to see how aid agencies conduct monitoring, research, and evaluation of every aspect of aid-recipient society in order to gather information and identify the "problems" or targets of intervention. The ability of development organizations to subject developing nations to their "governor's gaze" reveals the nature of their powerful position in these societies. Third, these organizations create a multiplicity of blueprints and plans of action and, in so doing, engage in *agenda setting*. This mechanism recognizes the observations made by Weber, Russell and Parsons who emphasized the extent to which power is based on intentional action, and the capacity to carry out "intended effects" or "goals." All large development agencies, in all recipient-nation contexts, possess formalized plans, objectives, strategies, programs and missions outlining very concrete and specific courses of action. In so doing, they situate their activities as "governing" and position themselves as being involved in "running the country." Finally, putting a plan of action into effect requires *garnering consent* from local institutions by getting local participation and buy-in. Building on Burawoy (1979) and Outhwaite and Bottomore's interpretation of Arendt (1994), it is crucial to see how development agencies rely on the consent of local institutions and local professionals to put their plans into action. Sometimes these local agencies have their own concerns and agendas that conflict with those of the globalizers. In these situations, external agencies must promote their plans and encourage their acceptance through various means such as providing financial assistance, engaging in public relations campaigns, lobbying, or by conducting trainings, workshops, and coordination meetings. International aid agencies spend a lot of time and money on "creating influence" and getting the "locals on board" (Jackson 2005; Watkins, Swidler, and Hannan 2012).

Who Are the “New Donors”?

For a long time, the OECD was a select group, governed almost exclusively by those original twenty member nations who founded the organization in 1960.¹ Those member nations with the greatest influence and financial commitments created the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), a directorate within the OECD which reports and monitors “official development assistance” (ODA) worldwide, and sets the rules for its use. In the 1970s and 80s, Japan, Finland, Australia and New Zealand became part of this donors club and, along with original members Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain, joined the DAC ruling body as well and became part of the transnational collective effort of managing “aid” worldwide, agreeing to help build “the capacity of developing countries to participate in the world economy.” In short, they commit to help build the architecture of the world economy in the developing world.

While some have only more recently become significant aid donors themselves, the member nations making up the OECD all take on significant economic and political responsibilities and, most would argue, all enjoy the significant economic and geo-political benefits as well (as will be discussed later in this paper). Largely because of these benefits, other nations have sought to join the donors’ club through a very formalized OECD process known as “accession.” Donor nations that have joined the OECD in more recent years (after 1993) are typically considered “new donors” and include Mexico (1994), the Czech Republic (1995), Hungary (1996), Poland (1996), Korea (1996), the Slovak Republic (2000), Chile (2010), Slovenia (2010), Israel (2010), and Estonia (2010) (OECD 2010a). Most of these member nations are not, however, members of DAC² or have only very recently³ become members. These “new donors” do not all contribute significant amounts of aid to the developing world, but, as evident in Figure 3, their contributions are increasing and they are playing a greater role in the transnational institution of aid than was the case in the past.

Furthermore, there are other “new donors” waiting in line to join the club. Russia began its efforts for accession to the OECD in 2006 (those efforts stalled with the crises in Crimea and the Ukraine). The OECD launched accession discussions with Colombia and Latvia in 2013 and considered proposals to open accession discussions with Costa Rica and Lithuania in 2015. These efforts to open up the “donors club” to a larger number of “developed” and “newly developed” countries caused the OECD Secretary-General to declare in 2010 that

¹ Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States.

² Mexico, Hungary, Chile, Israel, Estonia and founding member Turkey are not DAC members.

³ Korea joined the DAC in 2010. Iceland, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia become members in 2013.

this once exclusive club is “expanding its membership and its horizons” (OECD 2010a)

Such a declaration represents a growing awareness on the part of the OECD that many nations wish to experience the responsibilities and privileges associated with becoming members of the donors’ club, whether through joining the OECD or through becoming non-OECD aid donors themselves. In 2007, the OECD devised a program called “enhanced engagement” to compliment its accession process and to reach out to some of the larger new aid donors that have not been a part of OECD and may have not directly expressed a desire for accession. The program was “aimed at advancing the OECD’s relationship with five Key Partners, China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa” (OECD 2010a) in particular and lays out a more specific process of preliminary positioning and assessment of mutual benefits in what the OECD now calls a “pre-accession contact phase.”

Observers have noted the sensitive and potentially explosive political dynamics involved in these new developments, some claiming that countries such as China and India may be “too big and powerful” (Grocott 2012) to easily join the OECD without disrupting the established club’s rules and protocols dramatically. Others wonder if these nations might “go it alone” creating a “new aid paradigm” that could offer a direct challenge to the long-standing (and perhaps stale) practices of the Western aid apparatus, perhaps “changing the face of international cooperation” (OECD 2006). More often, observers express doubt as to whether such nations are developed enough (Bencosme 2014, Grocott 2012) to accede to the OECD’s demands and standards and, with the exception of China perhaps, whether the relative small size of their contribution to the overall global aid pool can really make much of a difference at all (Chan 2010).

What is important to recognize is that the list of nations becoming aid donors is growing (Figure 1 and Figure 2). There are over two-dozen other countries whose names appear on OECD documents under the heading of “emerging donors.” Some of these countries, such as Malaysia, have submitted requests to be considered for OECD accession that have been turned down. Most are currently engaging in various kinds of aid practices by contributing economic development assistance (either in cash, or through “aid-in-kind” disbursements) to other, less-developed, countries. This list includes some large contributors of foreign aid such as Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, but most contribute small amounts compared to their DAC counterparts. Some of these donors, such as the so-called “Arab donors” like Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and the aforementioned Saudi Arabia have been giving aid since the 1960s and early 70s, always outside of OECD frameworks and monitoring. Most, however, are very recent participants in the aid business such as Taiwan, Cyprus, Thailand, Liechtenstein, and Romania.

The OECD recognizes the growing importance of either more carefully and deliberately bringing these new donors into the fold by encouraging them to

pursue accession and follow established OECD rules and standards of mutual cooperation and transparency (referred to as “harmonisation”) or by more clearly distinguishing and delineating between the “DAC donors” and those non-OECD donors who fail to adhere to DAC norms, fearing that DAC standards may be “at risk” if too many donors operate outside of the OECD (OECD 2004, 2006, 2010a, 2010b; Zimmerman and Smith 2011).

Furthermore, numerous countries that are defined by the OECD as “developing countries” are increasingly participating in foreign assistance with other developing nations in what the OECD and others have come to term “south-south” cooperation. This list includes many important donors already mentioned such as China, Brazil, Venezuela and India but also contains Egypt, Argentina, Singapore and Tunisia. Some of this south-south cooperation involves the provision of professional consultants from one so-called developing country to another in partnership with a more traditional wealthy DAC member nation in what is called “triangular development cooperation” (OECD 2010a). But the mere fact that developing nations are getting involved in the export of foreign assistance to other countries implies that there is something to be gained by everyone in the aid business.

In 2008, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) released a report examining these developments in which it concluded that not only are these new forms of international cooperation significant in terms of their consequences for the countries in which these projects are carried out, but more to the point, that these “southern donors” have a very different set of principles and priorities that stand in stark contrast to the long standing protocols of the OECD. In fact, these “southern donors are uncomfortable with reporting to the DAC because it is seen as a ‘Northern club’, which may not always be open to specific South-South initiatives that do not fit into the [DAC’s] current agenda...” (ECOSOC 2008:9) In other words, ECOSOC recognizes that these new southern donors may have a development outlook that differs from, and even challenges, the western aid hegemony. ECOSOC recommends creating a “North-South dialogue process” in order to develop an agreed upon definition of ODA and to create greater “harmonization and coordination” among established (North) and newer (south) aid donors. As a matter of fact, ECOSOC’s list of “donors” that should be invited to such a dialogue reaches much further than any list of emerging donors on the OECD’s radar, and includes Iran, Qatar, Libya, Algeria, Bahrain, Cuba, Morocco, Nigeria and Pakistan. The report also highlights the growing importance of new multilateral donors such as the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Islamic Development Bank, the OPEC Fund for International Development, the Bank of the South, and an APEC-based ASEAN Development Bank. Shortly after the 2008 ECOSOC report, the OECD created its own “task-team” and released its own report on south-south and triangular cooperation efforts in 2010 (2010a).

While there are some difficulties in acquiring reliable data reporting the actual amounts of aid currently given by emerging donors, I have created estimates

based on various sources (Brautigam 2009 and 2011; Cabral 2010; Callan, Blak and Thomas 2013; Chan 2010; The Economist 2010 and 2011; ECOSOC 2008; IDRC 2008, 2008a,b,c,d and e; Jayawickrama 2010; ODI 2010; OECD 2011; Provost 2011; Putz 2007; Walz and Ramachandran 2011; Woods 2008; Zimmerman and Smith 2011) to present a general picture of these new aid flows (Figures 3 and 4). Since 1980, ODA from emerging donors has risen from approximately \$2 billion dollars to approximately \$18 billion, though some scholars estimate that the actual number may be as high as \$41 billion (Walz and Ramachandran 2011:7). “Put another way, non-DAC donors give somewhere between eight and thirty-one percent of the global gross ODA” (Walz and Ramachandran 2011: 6).

Understanding the Emergence of New Donors

Why are emerging donors stepping in? While there have been few sociologists studying this issue to date, other scholars and observers of the development profession have begun to address this question. In 2008, international relations scholar Ngaire Woods argued that this “silent revolution... in development assistance” was occurring largely due to the failures of the “Western aid regime” (Woods 2008:1205-6). First of all, established donors are not providing enough aid to developing nations (and not even as much as promised). Most OECD member nations fail to adhere to their own standard of 0.7% of GDP and aid overall is not increasing significantly (1213). Second, Woods claims that structural adjustment policies were largely a failure and nations are looking for other sources of assistance that are free from the damaging conditionality imposed by DAC donors and the IMF (1216). Third, she concludes that Western donors have the wrong attitude towards their role and towards their aid-recipient partners. To support her claim, she cites former President of Botswana, Festus Mogae who said “I find that the Chinese treat us as equals. The West treats us as former subjects” (1217). Fourth, she makes a strong argument that the Western aid regime is too convoluted and dysfunctional. Here she documents the layers and layers of policies and protocols inherent in the Bretton Woods institutions and the OECD as well as the “dizzying array” of organizations “creating a cacophony of donors” that make coordination and harmonization so difficult, particularly for local officials in aid-recipient countries (1218-19). The result is that Western donors have failed “to deliver on better coordination and alignment” (1219). A fifth reason cited by Woods is that there is really no incentive for emerging donors to join the Western aid regime or to attempt to reform it: “They do not have enough voice or influence to make it worth their while to attempt to improve the running of the multilateral system” (1219). The OECD and the World Bank, in particular, are slow to consider a more inclusive system. The end result, she argues, is an aid architecture in crisis:

The international development assistance regime in which established donors work is suffering multiple stresses... In Africa and elsewhere, governments needing development assistance are skeptical of promises of more aid, wary of conditionalities associated with aid, and fatigued by the heavily bureaucratic and burdensome systems used for delivering aid.

Small wonder that the emerging donors are being welcomed with open arms. (1220)

Furthermore, Woods and others have observed that many of the new donors may have a significant competitive advantage as aid providers to developing countries: they have their own successes to tout. As newly developed or developing nations themselves, emerging donors can position themselves in a much more attractive position vis-à-vis their aid-recipient partners. As the Botswana President's statement above attests, they can emphasize a less exploitative, more egalitarian partnership than the established wealthy donors -- many of whom are former colonial or neo colonial super-powers— are able to achieve. While we must take such statements with a grain of salt due to the fact that this is someone who has significant political motivation to make such a statement, Woods' insight is nevertheless an important one in terms of how aid from new donors is perceived, particularly in the developing world.

So how do the new emerging aid donors fit into this already-established transnational institution of aid? Ngaire Woods calls this a “silent revolution.” She says,

“because emerging donors are not overtly attempting to overturn rules or replace them. Rather, by quietly offering alternatives to aid-receiving countries, they are introducing competitive pressures into the existing system. They are weakening the bargaining position of western donors in respect of aid-receiving countries” (1221)

International development and comparative politics scholar Deborah Brautigam arrives at very similar conclusions in her groundbreaking work on Chinese aid in Africa (2009). Of central importance to Brautigam is to understand the reasons why China has been so successful, so quickly, in creating development partnerships and providing economic assistance to African nations. First, she offers a scathing critique of Western aid in Africa which has been a clear failure, in her view (11). Despite fifty years of traditional OECD donor efforts in Africa, there has been little success and African nations, she claims, are desperately seeking alternative models. One of the main reasons China is investing so heavily in development efforts throughout Africa has been because the Western donors are simply not meeting the demand for aid, nor have they been able to demonstrate a successful model, according to Brautigam (13).

In contrast, China has become a “model for prosperity” in Africa according to Brautigam. Chinese developers are “very attractive to Africans as prosperous, confident leaders” (10). It could very well be the case that China currently has a competitive advantage over Western aid agencies in offering development advice and in coordinating donor-recipient investment opportunities. African leaders are tired of the “old model” and are very eager to try the new one.

Related to this second point is the very significant observation made by Brautigam regarding China's credibility in selling “anti-poverty planning” and implementing development efforts as a “developing country itself” (9). In twenty

years, China reduced its own poverty rate from 53% (1981) to 8% (2001) and can point to its own development as an example of what its development programs can achieve. Could it be the case that China is better able to offer anti-poverty programs that are more well-suited to the developing world than the wealthy industrialized nations are? Brautigam believes this to be the case and claims that the established donors are going to have a difficult time arguing otherwise.

Another observation made by Brautigam is that China is creating a new model of development assistance that is quite different from the traditional OECD “official development assistance” model. China offers a “different kind of aid” (11) emphasizing infrastructure, industry and University scholarships which, according to her, “goes beyond ODA” to include complex “packages” of grants, loans, trade credits, and commercial investments (14). If these kinds of aid packages become more attractive to recipient nations in the future, perhaps the Chinese model could lead to a radical reform of Western aid paradigms in accordance with the emerging Chinese approach (11). This would be quite different from what the OECD nations hope for (and expect) due to the fact that most of their published reports declare the need to bring China into the OECD fold, not the other way around (e.g. OECD 2010a, Zimmerman and Smith 2011).

Finally, she argues that Chinese entrepreneurship is more tied to public sector planning and emphasizes the important role of the state than is typical of Western entrepreneurial endeavors in the developing world. Chinese development initiatives, therefore, are more of a “mix of market and plan” (Brautigam 2009:9). China may be more capable of filling the “interstitial space” between economy and politics referred to earlier and may be better suited to “planned economic development” overall as a result.

What is the reaction in the West?

Brautigam makes another observation that deserves mention. She writes that (Western) media reports about Chinese aid in Africa are dominated by rumors and speculation regarding the nature of Chinese development efforts and seem to indicate a widespread alarmism, fear and loathing towards the Chinese among those in the traditional donor societies such as the United States. There are many who claim that the Chinese model represents a kind of “rogue aid” that fails to adhere to established world protocols and could be potentially dangerous, or at least highly exploitative, to the developing world (277). Western pundits often point to the pure “self-interest” of the Chinese investing in oil and other basic extractive industries in Africa simply to fuel its own economic growth. This construction of China as exploitative colonizer or parasite is not an entirely new one (and is certainly familiar to development scholars since at least the days of dependency theory) but the foe is new. And the irony is probably lost on those Western pundits that they are making the same criticism of Chinese aid that critics of the Western aid apparatus (primarily scholars from the developing world) have been making for years. In this way, it is important to note how the current debates regarding emerging donors such as China are perhaps laying

bare the realities of the donor benefits associated with aid that are central to international development assistance overall (Jackson 2005:17-18). China is not doing anything new, but Western observers may be seeing this exploitative side of aid for the first time as they examine “the other.”

Other reactions within the western media to the dramatic growth of Chinese development efforts include pleas for the West to “step up its game” in the new “flat world” (Friedman 2005) so that nations like the United States and Germany are not left behind or surpassed by the BRICs. Others have called for the current club of donor nations to “open the doors” to invite new donors to engage with established donors, and to develop strategies of donor “enlargement.” (OECD 2004, 2010a) The greatest concern here often seems to be to encourage transparency and collect data. It would seem that China’s tendency to keep its development assistance information close to the vest is of greatest concern here and observers of development aid are attempting to “encourage new donors to adopt established donor practices.” (OECD, 2010a). Finally, some have even made a call to “build a new development architecture” entirely, one that dramatically reforms the existing models in favor of new ones built through “new international forums” that have yet to exist (OECD, 2010b).

Where is the Macrosociological Analysis?

An overview of the recent scholarly literature on new and emerging aid donors indicates a need for sociological theorizing and macro-level analysis. While Woods and Brautigam and others have contributed greatly to our understanding of the new aid donors, their accounts lack clear theoretical frames that situate what is happening within the current debates on globalization and the role of aid within the global political economy. What we know about emerging donors up to now is predominately based upon the work of journalists, economists, business economists, international relations scholars, public policy scholars, and, of course, development agency practitioners themselves. Therefore, this paper will conclude by highlighting a few points of analysis based upon the recent theoretical and empirical work done by sociologists with regard to aid and its role in the global economy. We will now return to the theoretical discussion from the start of the paper to address the questions: What is going on here, why are emerging donors entering the aid business? And what is the future of the OECD apparatus?

With regard to the first question, drawing upon world-systems theory and world polity theory, it seems clear that the transnational institution of aid exists because growing economies need greater global economic integration to continue their growth. Growing economies need raw materials, labor, new markets and investment opportunities and developing countries can provide all of these. The economic politics of aid are a mechanism that creates the conditions in which donor countries can foster access to all of these things. Western aid donors such as Japan, Germany, France and the United States utilized development assistance to build their global economic hegemony during the post-war years. Rapidly

growing economies such as Hungary, Greece, Turkey, Korea, India, Brazil, Russia and China want in on the same opportunities and benefits that playing the aid game provides. “Official development assistance” creates international ties between donor and recipient nations and fosters transnational business partnerships, largely to the benefit of the donor nation. Aid, in this sense, is a donor-nation “investment” in its own global economic aspirations. While aid is hidden behind the shiny veneer of beneficence of “rich helping poor” it is, in fact, a donor-nation practice designed to serve as a subsidy for donor-nation-based enterprises. United States provision of millions of dollars of ODA to Honduras to help build a new hydroelectric dam under the auspices of “developing the Honduran energy sector” return to U.S. enterprises in the form of “aid-tied” contracts to U.S. dam building companies. A German contribution of \$14 million of mixed ODA and credit to Honduras returns to the German firm ABG Telefunken to purchase four generators and equipment worth almost exactly the same amount. (Jackson 2005:166) New donors like China are simply doing the same thing that the old donors have been doing for over fifty years: use public monies collected by national governments and given to recipient nations in the form of ODA to promote the economic (and geopolitical) interests of those national governments. Aid is the catalyst of globalization in the developing world and fosters transnational economic cooperation to the benefit of powerful enterprises largely based in the donor nations. Aid-recipient nations do receive some benefit from these transnational arrangements, but the larger benefits accrue to the donor countries (Jackson 2005).

Secondly, in line with world polity theory, new donors are building cultural capital within the world polity arena. Giving aid becomes part of the “cultural toolkit” (Swidler 1986) for these new donors as they seek to gain political benefits by distinguishing themselves as part of the donors club and by emulating the aid practices of the historically wealthier nations, consistent with the world-polity concept of “isomorphism” (Scott and Meyer 1994).

Furthermore, aid fosters transnational connections and networks between real human beings working within large bureaucratic organizations, both private and public. ODA plays an important role, therefore, in building transnational organizational linkages that set the stage for these economic politics to emerge in the first place. As world polity theorists have maintained, the rules for the global economy are based in common understandings, policies, frameworks and recipes known as “world cultural scripts” (Meyer et. al. 1997). These include legal frameworks, international weights and measures standards, and other international conventions and treaties that together lay the bureaucratic underpinnings of global economic trades and transactions. Often conceived of as part of the “role of the state” within development scholarship, these organizational norms and protocols allow for the efficient interface of firms, enterprises and government agencies at the transnational level and are inextricably linked to global economic phenomenon. Aid occupies the interstitial space between “the market” and “the state” which can be better understood as an example of how global capitalism is embedded in modern bureaucratic structures

(Sjoberg 1999). Within these structures of “bureaucratic capitalism,” higher education and “expertise” both play an extremely important role as the managers and planners of complex transnational projects must employ state-of-the-art technologies, professional experts in myriad fields, and global communications networks in order to effectively carry out their goals. Aid can serve (and often does serve) as a “global expert brokerage service” which is utilized by both recipient (where the experts are in demand) and donor (where the experts are looking for work) nations. When China uses aid to grant university scholarships to would-be African engineers for them to study at Chinese universities, they are not only fostering the development goal of “training experts” for aid recipient nations in Africa, but they are also fostering the long term health of the institutes of higher education in China and building constructive relationships with future leaders of the countries receiving these scholarships. It would appear that China may even understand this reality better than the traditional OECD donors because, according to some observers, Chinese aid packages place more emphasis on these kinds of university training programs (Brautigam 2009:158).

In terms of the second question regarding the future of the Western aid regime, there are a number of facets to consider. First, do the new donors represent an “alternative” to the Western aid regime (i.e. Is this South-South aid as opposed to North-South)? Or, in the framework of field theory, do new donors such as China create the conditions where the development “field” becomes “unsettled” as is the case “if the relative power of actors is equalized, then there is a possibility for a good deal of jockeying for advantage... and the very existence and structure of [the field] is up for grabs” (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:12)

Based on the evidence to this point, it appears that that is not the case. New donors are largely participating in the same transnational institution as established donors and, with few exceptions, are largely conforming to Western (OECD) frameworks and protocols. This is the case for the large majority of new donors. As for the exceptions, there are some donors (such as Venezuela and China, for example) that position themselves as what field theory calls “challengers” that “occupy less privileged niches with the field and ordinarily wield little influence over its operation” that remains under the disproportionate influence of the “incumbents” -- the traditional Western aid providers “who wield disproportionate influence... and whose interests and views tend to be heavily reflected in the... field.” (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012: 13) When one examines the new donor activities sociologically, it becomes clear that they are participating in the transnational institution of aid in an almost identical fashion to the established aid donors: seeking economic benefits for themselves by providing aid to less-advantaged nations (i.e. North to South, not South to South). It could be argued further that the so-called “South-South” form of aid that they claim to administer may simply be their own version of the shiny veneer of beneficence... a nice-sounding public relations message that gives them claim to legitimacy and moral authority to intervene and participate in the affairs of another sovereign nation.

Part of the analytical problem here may be with the terms “global north” and “global south” in the first place. “South-south” aid implies the notion of the poor helping the poor, but we may need to rethink the concepts of global south and global north within sociology (Jackson et al. 2016). Historically these terms have emerged as alternatives or euphemisms for long-established dichotomous concepts such as “developed vs. developing” or “core vs. periphery.” However, as Judy Aulette has stated:

Although the terms Global North and South are widely used—perhaps they are even the dominant terms used by Southern scholars—they have not yet been theorized extensively.... North and South, on the one hand, quickly capture a critical cleavage within the global political economy, but they do not tell us about the gaps within the North and South by social class and among various nations within each category. Many people in the North are poor and oppressed, and every nation in the South includes those who are wealthy and powerful. (Aulette 2012:1548)

Sociological scholarship has begun to eschew such dualism by calling us to examine global political economy using more granular, and multiscalar epistemologies. “Global south” can be thought of outside of nation-state categories, for example. And various scholars have encouraged us to explore the world economy in ways that move us beyond “nation state centrism” (Robinson 2004:88) and allow us to consider “other containers of development” (Brewer 2011:312) at both the transnational (regional or global) as well as subnational (states, counties, and districts) levels. Re-defining the “global south” in this way we can see it as a

“a conceptual framework used to observe the contingent and interconnected pockets of poverty, gender inequality, and racism throughout the world, including the so-called “wealthy nations,” one that attends to the importance of local context and privileges the perspectives of the subordinate and subaltern in the production of knowledge” (Jackson et al. 2012).

Examining the aid provided by new donors such as China from this perspective brings into sharper focus the reality of Chinese aid as being far removed from “poor helping poor.” For example, a list of recent Chinese aid efforts in Central America reveals two substantial canal/cross-country rail projects in Nicaragua (\$40 billion) and Honduras (\$20 billion) being carried out by Chinese construction firms HKND Group and China Harbor Engineering Co. respectively; a \$300 million dollar telecommunication satellite project in Nicaragua carried out by the Great Wall Corp.; and a \$295 million dollar hydroelectric dam effort in Honduras conducted by Chinese dam construction giant ICBC. Current Chinese aid efforts in Uganda include a proposed \$2 billion dollar hydroelectric dam project on the Nile river and a \$580 million dollar, 30-mile, four-lane expressway connecting the capital city of Kampala to the Entebbe International Airport that was funded in part by a \$350 million loan from the Export Import Bank of China

(Chexim) and built by a Chinese contractor, China Communications Construction Co. Ltd (Biryabarema 2018). These aid activities much more closely resemble the established practices of the “global north” than they do “poor helping poor” as wealthy interests in China pursue the interests of wealthy companies and their investors in China by working in conjunction with local elites in Central American and African countries. These local elites are actually pockets of the “global north” in the developing world or what Robinson calls the “transnational fraction of the local bourgeoisie” (2004) working to pursue mutually beneficial global economic transactions. This is why “South-South aid” is often a misnomer. It would be more accurate to say that China (and India, and Brazil and others) are participating in the “global north” *institution* of aid. Their government officials, entrepreneurs and other elite groups are organizing transnationally and engaging in the global north practice of development assistance in a way that fosters their own geo-political and economic interests. New donors are simply subsidizing their own globalizing industries and pursuing opportunities for their own rapidly growing economies, just like the so-called “Northern” countries have been doing for decades.

That said, will development aid as an institution become more sensitive to the needs of the poor because it is being increasingly administered by nations that have higher levels of poverty themselves? This is an open empirical question and while some observers have noted some differences in the practice of new donors, more research will need to be conducted on this matter before we can arrive at a clear answer.

Do new donors offer more suitable development strategies with fewer strings attached? Are they more attuned to local needs and more sensitive to local sovereignty? Again, while some observers claim this to be the case, it is much too early in the history of these emerging donor practices to be able to say for certain. This is another open empirical question that future researchers should examine closely by studying the activities of new donors in developing contexts throughout the world.

And what about the fears of Western media pundits who ask whether new donors will eventually supplant the Western aid regime? This is clearly an open question as well. By way of conclusion, I would like to offer several final observations regarding “the future of aid” in these regards.

The Future of the OECD Aid Apparatus

First, it is important to recognize that *most* new donors are easily assimilating into the established institution of aid and the OECD. Some, such as Russia, have been left out of this system for a long time and others, such as Korea, are quite new. All appear to be quite eager to join the “donors’ club” and enjoy the benefits that such membership provides. In the foreseeable future, we can therefore very reasonably expect further “enlargement” of the transnational institution of aid with a greater number of donor countries participating in established aid

practices and a larger array of donors becoming active in aid-recipient nations. For the first forty years, the Western aid regime was made up of about twenty donors (approximately ten percent of the world's nations). Currently, about one-third of the world's nations are "donor nations" in some form or another. This enlargement of the aid apparatus will grow further in the next fifty years, but most of these new donors will likely conform to the established programmes and standards of the OECD, even as they may achieve some small level of reform of those standards and protocols. Some have called for new international forums that may enable such reforms to come about more readily (Walz and Ramachandran 2011:24) but it remains to be seen whether such initiatives are in the interest of the most powerful donor nations and if they would agree to participate in re-writing the established rules of the club.

Therefore, second, new donors may mark the beginning of the end of Western aid *hegemony*, but not the end of the Western aid *apparatus*. We might be able to imagine a world where China and India, for example, are the largest aid donors in fifty years, surpassing the aid contributions of Germany and even the United States. But this does not mean that Western aid will die out, it will simply mean that Western aid will become a more diverse and broadly inclusive transnational institution. As greater numbers of donors participate in the institution, we may expect that the policies created and maintained by the OECD, for example, will become *more* entrenched as international standards for aid become universal and banal. Based on the scholarship to date, it is not likely that we will see major reforms in these protocols unless some unforeseen conflict or disaster were to occur within the world of development. Nevertheless, these policies could face significant reform and may change if the power politics of those driving the institution should change.

Third, there are some emerging donors (China, Venezuela, and even Iran, for example) that represent a new challenge to the institution of aid itself. China at one time considered joining the OECD but now appears to prefer to operate autonomously. While there are many similarities to established aid practices, these "alternative donors" may mean increasing competition within the aid regime and Western donors may be faced, for the first time in their history, with a challenge to their official development assistance monopoly. This may represent what field theory calls a new "episode of contention" which is "a period of emergent, sustained contentious interaction between actors utilizing new and innovative forms of action vis-a-vis one another" (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:21). If the new alternative aid model (or models) find success in the developing world among aid-recipient nations, we may see the incumbents make appeals to "the status quo in an effort to try to stabilize the situation" (22). This is already observable in many of the current OECD efforts. We may also see attempts at reform and even "borrowing" by the OECD and established aid donors (isomorphism and diffusion working in new directions) as "perceived threats and opportunities generally change the consciousness of field actors." (22) This typically leads to the incumbents' attempt to "reconstitute the old order" which seems like a more likely outcome than a growing rift or great conflict

between the new and old donors. Yet Fligstein and McAdam also state that in "rare instances... oppositional logics may carry the day as challengers successfully sustain mobilization and slowly being to institutionalize new practices and rules." Whether the status quo is reasserted within the aid apparatus or whether the "field begins to gravitate toward a new settlement of rules and norms" (22) is really too soon to say.

One thing is certain in this regard that is relevant for development scholars: the lack of reliable data on these new donors who do not always disclose their aid practices in a transparent manner. In addition, we should caution against framing these new alternative donors as "south-south" aid. If these new donor practices are examined closely it is clear that these aid practices, while politically provocative to the Western powers, are, in fact "elite-to-elite" economic politics and not "poor to poor" counterhegemonic practices.

Fourth, it is very interesting that the increased interest in the new donors of foreign assistance have laid bare the aid apparatus for what it is and have "expos[e] rules that had been taken for granted, calling into question the perceived benefits of those rules" (Fligstein and McAdam 2012: 22) It is an economic politics designed to benefit donors. More donors want in on the game and while Western journalists may wring their hands at the "predations" of the Chinese aid business, for example, they are really only seeing the realities of aid overall--including the practices of Western donors-- for the first time.

Fifth, and most importantly, the transnational institution of aid will continue to play a *primary* role in shaping global political and economic integration. Rather than development assistance waning in the next fifty years (as many have predicted, erroneously in my view), aid could be of *increasing* global importance as more donors enter the "strategic action field" and recipient nations face greater complexity in negotiating the new terrain.

Therefore, emerging donors are a significant research opportunity for development sociologists. We do not have enough research, enough data, nor enough understanding of what the new donors are doing.⁴ Yet there are numerous "new" agencies and coalitions of agencies that are worthy of study and sociological analysis: The UN's Group of 77, The UN Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (which includes the High Level Committee on South-South Cooperation, the Global South-South Development Academy, the Global South-South Development Expo, the South-South Global Assets and Technology Exchange), and the OECD's Task Team on South-South Cooperation, just to name a few. Furthermore, sociologists should explore the list of over forty new donor nations, each with their own bilateral aid agencies, foreign assistance priorities and unique historical relationships to the developing world. Studying each of these new donors and trying to identify the complex networks that form as a result of the increasing transnational economic and political arrangements

⁴ Deborah Brautigam's website lists nine research ideas on Chinese aid alone.

that are being created each year provides us with much work to do and many opportunities to be taken.

What may the distant future hold? Given the trend of an increasing number of nations joining the OECD and/or contributing development assistance, it is possible that in the next fifty years the number of countries in the world giving aid may actually surpass the number receiving aid. The number on the list now is approaching sixty or seventy nations with donor activities. We may arrive soon at an “aid donor tipping point” of one hundred or more (over half the world’s nations). The corollary to this growing world “donor space” is, of course, a shrinking world “recipient space.” The “North” becomes larger than the “South” for the first time in human history. A future in which there are more donors than recipients, in turn, could create greater competition among donors over the shrinking global space in need of aid. This would result in a “race to the bottom” of an entirely different variety than what is typically discussed! Donors of development assistance could be subsequently overwhelming the spaces “in need of development” with greater and greater attention and resources. For the more optimistic among us, such an “aid donor tipping point” could begin the final sustained and accelerated effort to eradicate global spaces of poverty throughout the world – including, maybe, those remaining “pockets of poverty” in the “global north” (lest we forget the development needs in places like the Mississippi delta and inner-city Detroit). For the more pessimistic (and perhaps ecologically-minded) among us, however, such a process could certainly mean “the near culmination of the centuries-long process of capitalism’s extensive enlargement” (Robinson 2004: 7) and an acceleration of the Faustian tragedy in which “development authorities everywhere have accumulated powers that are enormous, uncontrolled and all too often lethal” (Berman 1982: 75).

FIGURES

Figure 1: Established and “Emerging” donors

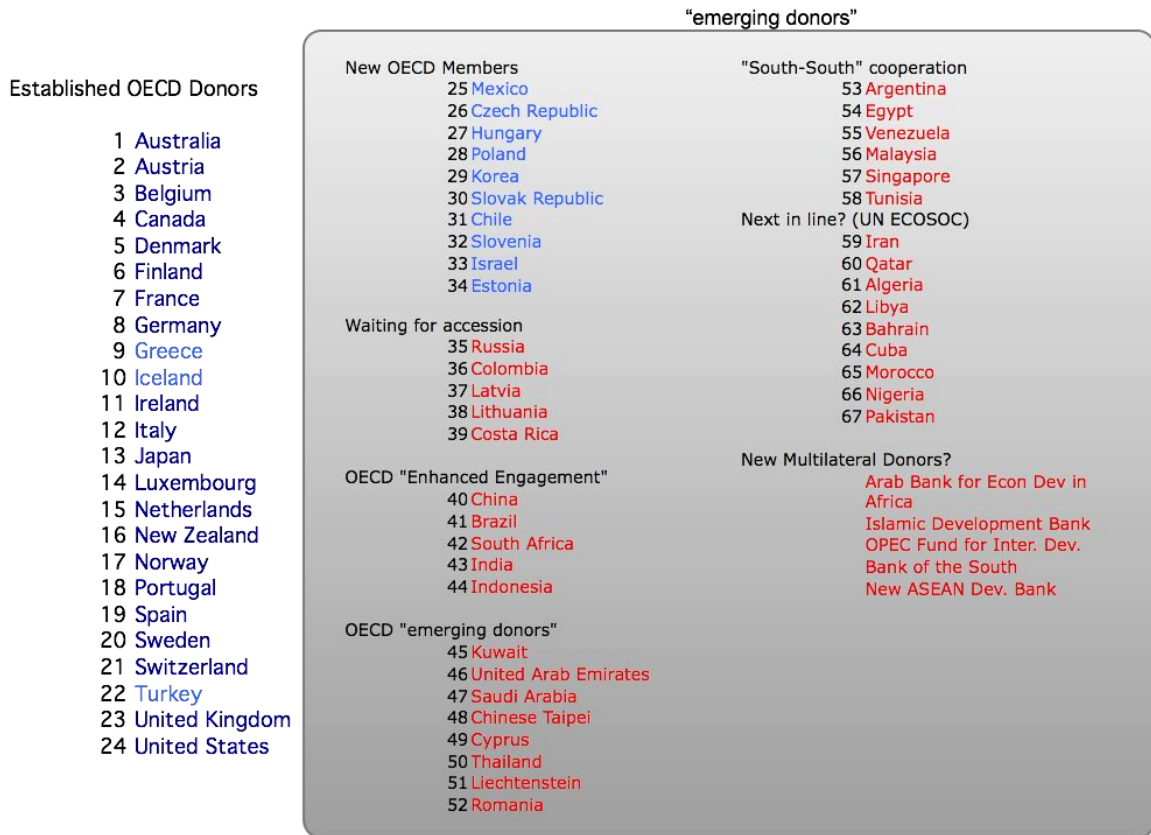


Figure 2: Aid Donors, 1960-2010

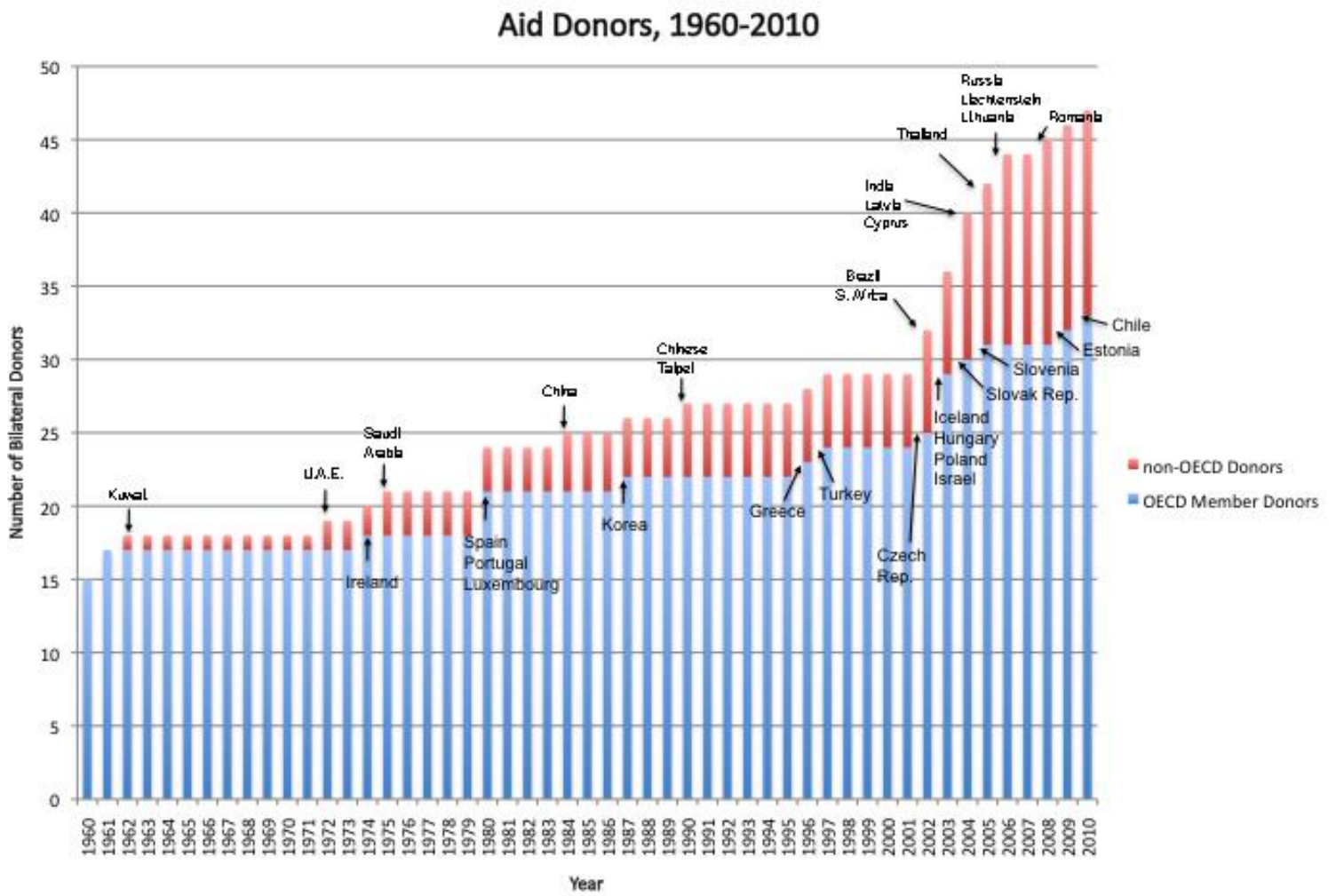


Fig 3:

New Donors of Development Assistance

Figure 3: Global Development Assistance

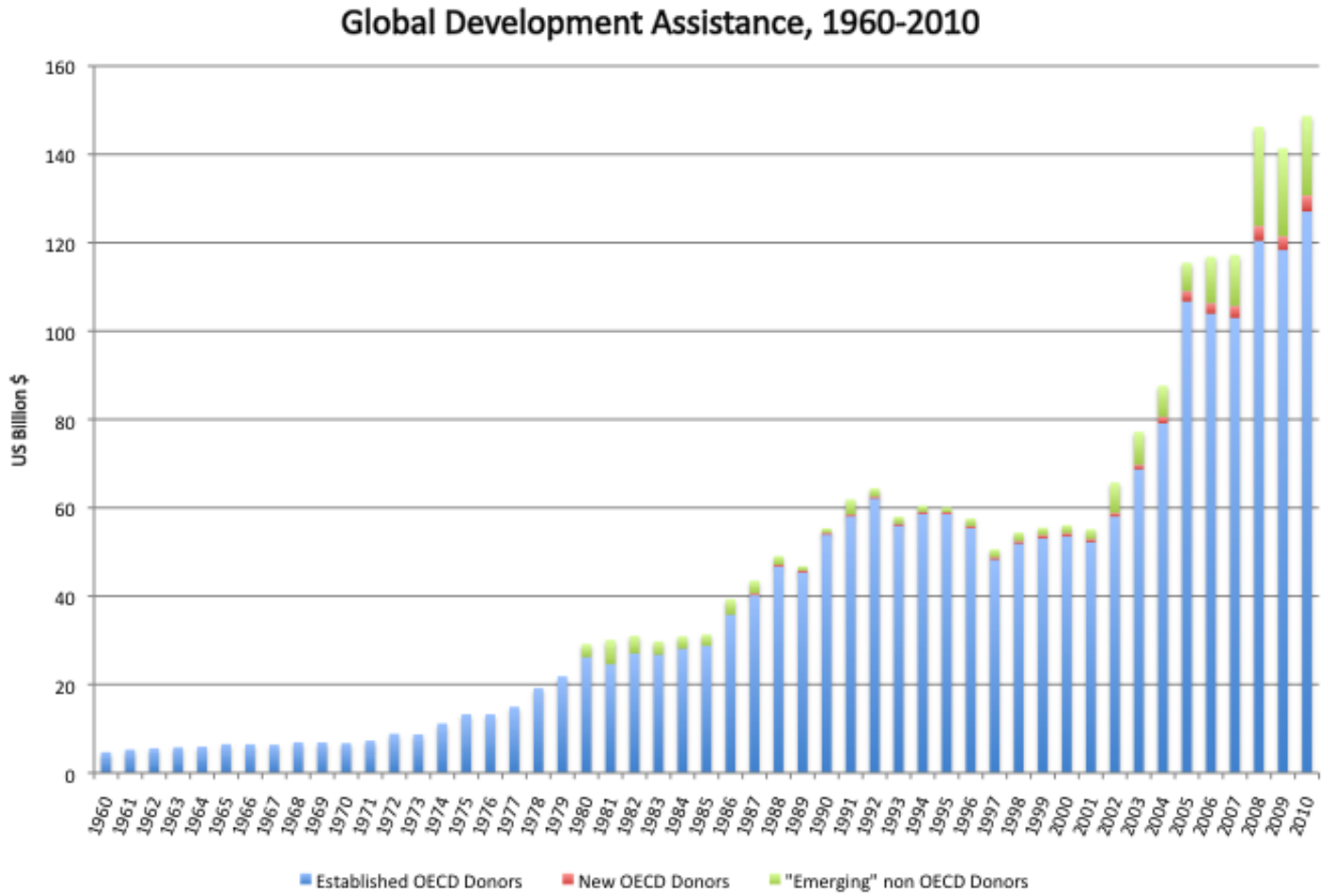
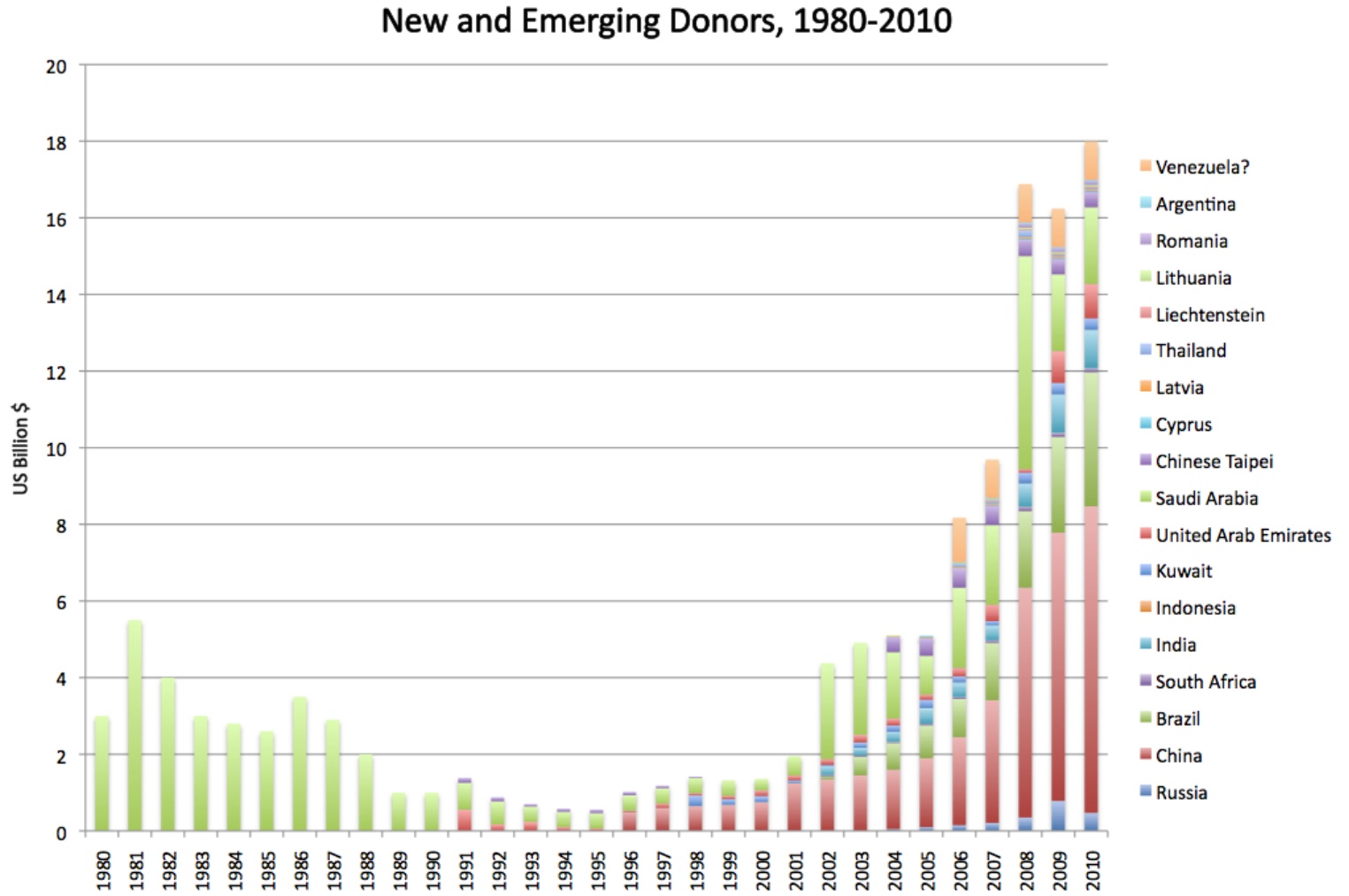


Figure 4: New and Emerging Donors, 1980-2010



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