The Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics (ISSN 1556-2034) is published bi-annually by the Sigma Upsilon Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, Elon University, Department of Political Science, 100 Campus Drive, Gray Pavilion, 2333 Campus Box, Elon, NC 27244. The Journal is funded by Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society, 1527 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036, http://www.pisigmaalpha.org/

The Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics was founded in the Spring of 2001 by Delta Omega Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha at Purdue University, under the name The American Undergraduate Journal of Politics and Government. With the sponsorship of Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society, the name of the Journal was changed to The Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics as of the Fall 2004 edition.

Electronic editions of the Journal are available online at http://www.psajournal.org. For further information, please contact Dr. Laura Roselle at Elon University (lroselle@elon.edu).

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The Pi Sigma Alpha
Undergraduate Journal of Politics

Fall 2020

Volume XX Number 2
Forty-First Edition

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Editor’s Preface to the Fall Edition

Here at Elon University, we are extremely grateful for the opportunity to host the Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics for the coming years. We are proud to present the Fall 2020 issue, and congratulate all authors published in this issue.

This journal seeks to highlight the intellectual curiosity that has led to innovative scholarship in all subfields of political science, scholarship that addresses timely questions, is carefully crafted, and utilizes diverse methodologies. We are committed to intellectual integrity, a fair and objective double-blind review process, and a high standard of scholarship. Through this publication, we aim to accentuate student achievements in political science research and showcase the works of undergraduate scholars, some of which has been traditionally ignored in the broader field of political science literature, despite representing the future of this discipline.

As an editorial team composed entirely of women, we understand that this occurrence is not a common one. Following the lead of the all-female American Political Science Review (APSR) Editorial Board, we are excited to promote research in the areas of “American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, public law and policy, racial and ethnic politics, the politics of gender and sexuality and qualitative and quantitative research methods.” This journal values the relationships formed through student-faculty collaboration and aims to inspire a culture of intellectual curiosity that expands far beyond the college campus. In addition to recognizing the academic endeavors of undergraduate students, we hope to further encourage and empower students to seek out knowledge and realize their potential in contributing to growing scholarship in a variety of disciplines.

In the journal’s first year, we want to emphasize our appreciation for all the individuals who have made this first publication possible. Our advisors, Dr. Laura Roselle, Dr. Baris Kesgin, and Dr. Aaron Sparks, have been unwavering in their support of us throughout this entire process. Without their consistent support and insights, this issue would not have been possible. In addition, we would like to thank the entirety of the Political Science and Policy Studies Department at Elon University, as well as our Faculty Advisory Editorial Board reviewers for all of their hard work and support.

Going forward, we are excited to create a culture within our Editorial Board that embraces these values and continues to strive for excellence for the remainder of the journal’s tenure at Elon University. Thank you for your continued support and readership of our publication, we hope you enjoy our first edition.

Sincerely,

The Editorial Board at Elon University
Submission of Manuscripts

The Journal accepts manuscripts from undergraduates of any class and major. Members of Pi Sigma Alpha are especially encouraged to enter their work. We strive to publish papers of the highest quality in all areas of political science.

Generally, selected manuscripts have been well-written works with a fully developed thesis and strong argumentation stemming from original analysis. Authors may be asked to revise their work before being accepted for publication.

Submission deadlines are October 1st for the Fall edition and February 15th for the Spring edition. Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis; therefore early submissions are strongly encouraged.

To submit your work, please email psajournalelon@gmail.com with an attached Word document of the manuscript. Please include your name, university and contact details (mailing address, email address, and phone number) in a separate document.

Submitted manuscripts must include a short abstract (approximately 150 words), citations and references that follow the *APSA Style Manual for Political Science*. Please do not exceed the maximum page length of 35 double-spaced pages, which includes references, tables, figures, and appendices.

The Journal is a student-run enterprise with editors and an Editorial Board that are undergraduate students and Pi Sigma Alpha members at Elon University.

The Editorial Board relies heavily on the help of our Faculty Advisory Board consisting of political science faculty from across the nation, including members of the Pi Sigma Alpha Executive Council. Due to the time committed to the manuscript review process, we would like to remind students to submit only one manuscript at a time.

Please direct any questions about submissions or the Journal’s upcoming editions to the editors at Elon University: psajournalelon@gmail.com.
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Ava Bowman Thomas, Saint Olaf College
The Australian Foreign Aid-Immigration Nexus: A Tool to Uphold Policies of Detention and Deportation

Ava Bowman Thomas, Saint Olaf College

As international migrant stocks around the world continue to grow, immigrant recipient countries employ different tools to reduce irregular migration. In addition to traditional border controls, many countries utilize foreign aid to increase development and reduce migration push factors. Research shows this tactic is conditionally effective, however, little is known about whether governments choose to use foreign aid instead of, or in addition to, traditional border control policies. In order to understand this relationship, this paper explores the following question: do states that utilize foreign aid in order to reduce irregular migration do so as a substitute for, or compliment to, traditional border control methods? Through a case study of Australian border control and foreign aid regimes, this paper identifies a nuanced relationship between foreign aid and border control, and one that is subject to change depending on migrant arrival levels. Between 2001-2013 hardline policies and foreign aid were used concurrently to support immigration-related goals. This shifted in 2013 after a spike in arrivals caused the government to lose confidence in the ability of aid to reduce migration and increase funding for border patrol. Additionally, this paper explores Australia’s recent practice of offering aid to third-party countries that agree to host migrant processing centers, demonstrating that aid is not always a substitute to border control, but can be used to increase capacity of hardline policies.

INTRODUCTION

As global wealth inequality continues to grow and international transportation becomes more readily available, international migration has become a more attractive, accessible and often necessary option for people around the globe (UN International Migrant Stock 2019). Though the majority of migration occurs through legal channels, the public conversation about migration has largely focused on increases in irregular migration, asylum seekers, and undocumented immigrants. Increases in migrant arrivals can lead a country towards employing hardline border control policies, but this is only one of many tools states use to control irregular migration. Scholars have recently focused on the practice of using foreign aid to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty and underdevelopment, and the conditions under which it is most effective (Phillips and Spinks 2014; Bermeo and Leblang 2015). However, there is very little literature examining the interactions between foreign aid and traditional border control regimes. This paper aims to close this gap by exploring the following question: do states that utilize foreign aid in order to reduce irregular migration do so as a substitute for, or compliment to, traditional border control methods? In other words, when a government earmarks foreign aid for immigration-related goals, does funding for traditional border control decrease?

To test this question, this paper engages in a case study of the Australian foreign aid-immigration nexus through the examination of government documents, NGO reports, and aid disbursements. Australia presents a suitable case to examine the interactions between foreign aid and border control policies given its participation in the OECD Development Assistance Committee and use of hardline immigration policies. This research predicts that because states have finite resources, and the majority of the research shows foreign aid is conditionally successful in decreasing irregular migration, foreign aid will be used as a substitute for border control policies. Therefore, if Australia has used foreign aid to meet immigration-related goals, the amount of funding necessary for traditional border control policies would subsequently decline.

An in-depth investigation of the Australian immigration regime provided two main findings, neither of which clearly confirm or reject this research’s hypothesis of a substitutionary relationship. Instead, it revealed a more nuanced interaction between aid and border control, one that was subject to significant change depending on levels of irregular arrivals. An analysis of aid disbursements shows that for more than ten years, aid was used as a complement to hardline deportation policies, but this ended in 2013 when aid disbursements were drastically cut, and funding was shifted towards border control. Several factors that typically impact foreign aid allocation are
explored in order to understand why this shift occurred, with the conclusion that an increase in irregular arrivals led to the belief that aid was not an effective migration control tactic.

Additionally, this paper also explores Australia’s tendency to bypass the typical bilateral relationship between migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries, by offering aid to countries that agree to host migrant processing centers. This shows that aid is not always a clear alternative to hardline detention and deportation systems, but rather, an increase in foreign aid disbursements can sometimes lead to an increase in capacity for traditional punitive policies.

This paper begins with a review of existing scholarly literature on the domestic and international factors that impact aid allocation, and the effectiveness of foreign aid in reducing irregular migration. A justification of the use of the case study method as well as this research’s process for case selection will follow. This research will then present background about irregular immigration and the use of foreign aid in Australia to provide context for the current state of affairs. An analysis of the Australian foreign aid-immigration nexus is presented, followed by a discussion section that includes opportunities to build upon this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For decades scholars have understood that migration is fueled by wage differentials between immigrants’ country of origin and destination country (Sjastaad 1962), and that the function of foreign aid is not purely altruistic, but rather countries “usually give because they expect to get something in return” (Dudley and Montmarquette 1976: 133). Only more recently have scholars honed in on the potential intersections of these processes: the use of foreign aid to reduce immigration flows. Multiple studies conclude that countries that produce large migrant flows are prioritized in aid budgets (Bermeo and Leblang 2015; Vásquez and Sobrã 2016), and many scholars have noted the EU’s recent focus on using development aid to address the root cause of the surge of migrant arrivals in 2015 (Dennison et al. 2019). While not having found any research about how countries choose to balance the use of foreign aid and border control policies to meet immigration goals, scholarship focused on aid allocation strategies and the effectiveness of foreign aid as a tool to meet immigration goals helps to situate this paper in the scholarly conversation.

Many scholars have investigated the complex calculation donor countries make when allocating foreign aid. During the cold war and post-cold war eras, aid was typically allocated using a calculation of donor geopolitical interest and recipient need. However, Blodgett Bermeo (2016) argues that in the post-911 world, states include the desire for targeted-development in this calculation due to the belief that underdevelopment has exacerbated problems such as regional instability and migration. This shift in aid priorities can be seen within the EU’s proposed Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, which calls for each member state to donate 10 percent of the allocated funding to fight the root causes of irregular migration (European Parliament 2019). However, aid allocation is also affected by domestic politics and other pressures. Public opinion and party ideology, both its place on the right-left continuum and its relative focus on international affairs, have an impact on the amount of aid and the purpose for which it is given (Greene and Licht 2018, Heinrich et al. 2016). Additionally, actors outside of a states’ government can also have an impact on both the recipient and amount of aid donated. Youngwan Kim’s (2014) research concluded that NGOs heavily influence aid allocation in the United States. While Australia has far fewer NGOs than the United States, their recent growth and unified focus signals they may have the ability to influence aid allocation (Australian Council for International Development 2015).

Most of the literature that examines the use of foreign aid to manage migration focuses on economic aid and its potential to promote development and reduce poverty-related push factors (Bermeo and Leblang 2015; Berthélemy et al. 2009; Lanati and Thiele 2018; Gamso and Yuldashev 2018a), though some scholars have investigated the effectiveness of governance aid in reducing political push factors for immigration (Gamso and Yuldashev 2018b). The majority of this research finds that aid is conditionally effective. Several decades ago, Vententuri and Faini (1993) introduced the inverse-U or hump-shaped model, to show that while income growth in middle-income countries will decrease emigration, income growth in lower-income countries will lead to increased emigration. Another, more recent, study confirmed the continuing validity of this model (Berthélemy et al. 2009). The inverse-U model implies that foreign aid will better achieve immigration goals when given to middle-income countries rather than lower-income countries. This is due to the fact that in lower-income countries the additional income is not enough to reduce push factors, and is instead used to cover the costs of migration. For immigrants in middle-income countries that previously had enough income to migrate, the additional capital improves conditions and reduces immigration push factors. However, using newly available migration flow data rather than traditional migrant stock data, scholars at the Max Weber Institute dispute the validity of the inverse-U model, and claim that economic development reduces immigration flows from even the most poor countries (Lanati and Thiele 2018). Jonas Gamso and Farhod Yudashev present extensive research on ways to maximize effectiveness of foreign aid contributions. They find that disaggregating aid types is important, as democracy aid is much more effective at reducing immigration than economic aid (2018b). Additionally, they claim that focusing aid on rural development decreases migration flows, while giving to urban areas increases urbanization and ultimately international migration (2018a). These claims that aid is only conditionally effective provides evidence of why some countries choose
to use foreign aid as part of their immigration regime while others may not. Depending on the country of origin of their immigrant populations, giving may reduce immigration in some cases but increase it in others.

While almost all of the research done on the foreign aid-immigration nexus is quantitative, qualitative work looking at the impacts of foreign aid on individual decisions suggests that it would be effective in reducing immigration. Half of Guatemalans interviewed in a study by Monica Spohn stated that they “would not have emigrated if development programs had offered educational opportunities and jobs” (Spohn 2017:1), but in the absence of opportunities they had no choice but to migrate. Additionally, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), funded three Centers for Returned Migrant Care in Honduras (Ruiz Soto et al. 2019). These centers help deported migrants reintegrate into society through caring for their health and safety during the tumultuous first weeks after arrival, reducing incentives for repeat migration.

In short, the literature about the use of aid to manage migration is overwhelmingly focused on the effectiveness of the practice. Scholarship regarding factors that influence aid allocation may offer clues, but no existing literature has explored if certain attributes make a state more or less likely to use foreign aid as a tool to meet immigration-related goals. Additionally, existing literature has not explored the interactions between foreign aid regimes and traditional immigration policies such as border control, for example if they are substitutes for one another or used concurrently. It is this gap in the literature that this paper aims to fill using a case-study of Australia.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Case Study Method**

While many articles examine the effectiveness of foreign aid in reducing irregular migration (Berthélemy et. al 2009, Lanati and Thiele 2018, Venturini and Faini 1993), existing literature does not conclude whether governments use foreign aid in addition to or as a substitute for traditional border control. The research method best equipped to answer this question is a qualitative case study. A strength of case studies is the ability to “closely examine the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms in the context of individual cases and their capacity for addressing causal complexity” (George and Bennett 2005, 19). These strengths are important to this study as they will help determine if the hypothesized causal mechanisms of finite resources and aid efficacy impact the hypothesized outcome, decreased funding for border control policies, as well as uncover other potential causal mechanisms. Additionally, because aid allocation calculations are complex, impacted by domestic and international pressures as discussed in the literature review, the ability of a case study to “accommodate complex causal relations” (22) makes the method more appropriate than a quantitative analysis.

Much of the decision making in both foreign aid and immigration policy circles happens behind closed doors, and it is difficult to find direct evidence of the thought process of government officials. Therefore, this investigation required careful examination of parliamentary budgets, previous scholarly investigative work, aid disbursement documents, online newspaper articles, and NGO reports. In the beginning stages of this research, NGO and human rights organizations, such as the Australian Refugee Council, provided key terms used in government documents and the context needed to locate these documents online.

Through these government documents, information was gathered about the interesting interactions between the Australian immigration and aid regimes. While certain pieces of evidence were explicitly stated within the documents, the majority had to be pieced together through multiple sources over multiple years. For example, to understand the benefits Nauru received for hosting a processing facility, one had to understand how little Australian foreign policy documents mentioned Nauru before 2001 in comparison to the country’s position of prominence after the establishment of the processing center. To give another example, even though they made no mention of border security, government documents that explained the foreign policy relationship between Australia and hosts of processing facilities often provided information about the quid-pro-quo of foreign aid and border security.

My research explores aid and immigration policy between the years preceding the 2001 Pacific Solution and present day. The implementation of this zero-tolerance program marked a shift in Australia’s hardline stance towards irregular maritime arrivals, and therefore when the nexus of border patrol and foreign aid policies can be distinguished. Thus examining aid before and after this period is crucial to proving the link between foreign aid and border control. This research includes the most up to date research possible, utilizing budgets and aid disbursement information from 2019-20. However, the Australian government has not updated maritime arrival data since 2017, and does not regularly release information about the populations of Nauru and Manus Island.

**Case Selection**

When deciding on a country of focus for this research, Australia became a country of interest due to the intense focus on immigration in their domestic political conversation. Their zero-tolerance policy for irregular maritime entries has been praised by far-right world leaders like Donald Trump (Henriques-Gomes 2019). Due to the attention devoted to immigration, data on irregular arrivals in the past few decades is readily available, unlike many other countries that do not publish such statistics. In addition to these statistics, there was a wealth of research about Australian immigration and foreign aid regimes which provided enough context to justify an examination into the interactions between the two. Given that this research question requires the examination of foreign
Irregular Immigration to Australia

Australia's history of irregular immigration is distinct. Unlike the US or Canada, countries where economic migrants represent the majority of irregular migrants, most irregular migrants in Australia are refugees seeking asylum. In the grand majority of cases, when migrants reach the country, they turn themselves in to authorities and claim asylum. Additionally, irregular migrant flows are much lighter than those to the US. In 2013 at the peak of the largest wave of migration in recent history, Australia received just over 20,000 irregular maritime arrivals. In comparison, the US Department of Homeland Security apprehended 662,000 migrants in the 2013 fiscal year (Simanski 2014). However, Australia received significantly more than the 3,237 irregular migrants apprehended by Spain in 2013, another OECD country that receives the majority of its irregular migrants by boat (European Commission 2014).

Given the clandestine nature of irregular immigration, statistics about migration flows typically only include apprehensions or are projections. For this reason, it is difficult to rank Australia amongst other OECD countries, but it is clear that Australia is not a clear outlier in the number of migrants received per year.

Historically, the response to increased levels of irregular maritime arrivals has been harsh. Following a spike in asylum seekers in 2001, Australia implemented the Pacific Solution. This program funded the off-shore immigrant processing facilities in Nauru and Manus Island (PNG) with the goal of keeping track of all irregular migrants during the processing period. The Australian government ended this program in 2008, but it resumed in 2012 after a new spike in arrivals. In 2013 the government implemented Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB), committing Australia to a zero-tolerance policy for the resettlement of irregular maritime arrivals. From this point on, all irregular migrants that reached Australian shores would be turned away. Due to concerns about the unfit conditions reported at the Manus processing center, it was officially closed by the government in October 2017. However, some immigrants refused to leave the camp due to fears of violence from locals, and continued living there for weeks (The Straits Times 2017). The Nauru camp continues to operate and as of September 30th, 2019 there were 562 people at the facility (Refugee Council of Australia 2019).

Figure 1 demonstrates the impact of the Pacific Solution and Operation Southern Borders on irregular migration: the implementation of these policies led to a sharp decline in maritime arrivals. Between 2002-06, fewer than 100 migrant arrivals were reported by the Australian government. The zero-tolerance promise of OSB was taken seriously, and in 2015-16 no irregular migrants were reported to have reached Australia by boat.

Foreign Aid Disbursement

Australia has historically been a reliable aid donor, and has been a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee since 1961. Participation in the DAC shows Australia's commitment to reducing global poverty and willingness to assist developing countries enter into the global economy. Between the years of 1995 and 2015, Australia consistently fell near the middle of DAC members for total aid disbursements as a percentage of Gross National Income. Though exact amounts fluctuate year to year, Australia has historically designated approximately .3% of its Gross National Income (GNI) to be used as official development assistance (Australian Aid Tracker). While this is far less than many of the Nordic countries that earmark more than 1% of their GNI for aid, it is more substantial than many Eastern European DAC members, whose aid represents between .1%-1.5% of their GNI.

Aid amounts increased in pace with inflation for decades, before a period of scale up that far outpaced inflation between 2004-2013. Both Labor (progressive) and Liberal (conservative) party administrations allocated additional money to foreign aid programs during this period. This ended in 2013, when the government began cutting aid dramatically. After five consecutive years of cuts, Australian aid disbursements reached their lowest levels since 2005 (Larking 2017). These cuts coincided with the integration of AusAID, the agency formerly tasked with distributing foreign aid, into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (Tomar and Bruere 2014). After this readjustment, the government changed the frameworks used to distribute foreign aid, focusing on “effectiveness and the accountability of aid partners” (Dept. Foreign Affairs and Trade 2014).
Figure 1: Number of Illegal Maritime Arrivals to Australia 1989-2016

Number of Illegal Maritime Arrivals to Australia 1989-2016 as reported by the Department of Immigration (1989-2008) and Customs and Border Patrol (2009-2016). Statistics do not include crew members. Because of the wide variance in maritime arrivals, some years appear to have zero arrivals but actually have a non-zero amount. To better represent these years, a full table of maritime arrivals by year is in appendix I.

Figure 2: Total Australian Aid 2000-2023 in billions of Australian Dollars

Australian Aid 2000-2023 in billions of Australian Dollars. Aid amounts for 2019-2023 are estimates given in the 2018-19 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade budget. Data from Australian Aid Tracker.
THE IMMIGRATION-AID NEXUS
Concurrent use of Border Protection and Foreign Aid

Since the adoption of the Pacific Solution in 2001, Australia has consistently utilized hardline policies in an attempt to reduce irregular immigration. Of these policies, off-shore detention in processing centers on Nauru and Manus Island receive the most attention, as they are the most clear examples of the extreme methods the Australian government is willing to use to reduce irregular migration. However, between 2001 and 2013, Australia also utilized foreign aid to meet immigration goals, proving that these tactics can be used concurrently.

As noted in the literature review, there are many domestic policy priorities and international expectations that ultimately factor into the equation a state uses when allocating aid. While it’s difficult to definitively prove that Australia allocated aid with the goal of reducing migration, comparing the nationalities of migrants in the Nauru and Manus detention facilities to the countries that receive development aid reveals correlations between the two. Between 2013 and 2017, the top countries of origin for migrants in processing centers were Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Somalia, Bangladesh, and Sudan (Figure 3; Australian Refugee Council). Some of these countries are part of the Asian-Pacific region, the traditional recipient of the majority of Australian aid due to geographic proximity and the importance placed on regional stability (Australian Aid Tracker; “Making Performance Count”). It is therefore difficult to decipher whether aid is given due to these countries for traditional interests or for immigration purposes. However, looking specifically at the Middle Eastern countries of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan helps to identify the connection between immigration flows and foreign aid priorities.

Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan may have not otherwise received aid due to their geographic distance from Australia, yet each received millions of dollars in aid in the first decade of the 21st century, providing evidence that the government used foreign aid to meet immigration goals. Pakistan received only A$2 million in aid in 2001, but was granted more than A$100 million in 2012, far outpacing the overall growth of aid. Similarly, aid to Afghanistan increased almost eightfold, from A$26.5 million to A$197 million in 2012 (Australia Aid Tracker). Aid to Iraq does not present as clear of a pattern, as aid disbursements have been tumultuous and closely tied to the ongoing war. In 2001, Australia gave over A$100 million in humanitarian assistance (AusAID 2002). In 2012-13, Iraq received A$26.9 million in aid (AusAID 2012). Though it did not undergo the explosion in growth that Afghanistan and Pakistan received, this amount of aid is still notable given its geographic distance from Australia. The rapid growth of aid to these countries shows that they were a priority to AusAID, even though they are not part of the Asian-Pacific region, the nationalities of immigrants sent for offshore processing at Nauru and Manus Detention Facilities between 2013 and 2017. Data from Refugee Council of Australia.

Figure 3: Nationalities of Immigrants at Nauru and Manus Detention Facilities 2013-2017

- Iran
- Claimed Stateless
- Pakistan
- Afghanistan
- Sri Lanka
- Iraq
- Somalia
- Bangladesh
- Sudan

Nauru: 
Manus Island:
The Australian Foreign Aid-Immigration Nexus: A Tool to Uphold Policies of Detention and Deportation

Traditional recipients of Australian aid. Immigration patterns offer an explanation, seeing that these three countries are the origins of many irregular immigrants from the Middle East, as evidenced by populations on Nauru and Manus. Neighboring countries that do not produce heavy migration flows receive less aid and attention in AusAID annual reports. This can be clearly seen in Figure 4, which displays Australian aid disbursements at the height of the scale-up in 2012-13. Both Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq receive large amounts of aid given their geographic position.

The map also indicates a large amount of aid was given to Palestine. It is probable that Palestinians are represented amongst the migrants who identify as stateless in the processing centers, given that the general delegation of Palestine to Australia reports that the 2011 census counted more than 10,000 Australians with Palestinian ancestry. However, it is difficult to decipher if aid was allocated with regards to migration seeing that Palestine would likely receive aid in any case due to the on-going humanitarian crisis.

It is important to note that the populations of the processing centers are constantly changing due to international economic and political factors. Given that the Australian government does not regularly release or update statistics about the facilities, (Refugee Council of Australia 2019), using data that compiles migrant populations from 2013-2017 is the most accurate way to compare irregular migration flows and foreign aid disbursements.

Reducing Foreign Aid in Favor of Border Protection Policies

After several years of nearly zero irregular maritime arrivals, boat landings increased significantly in 2008. Arrivals continued to grow exponentially for several years, reaching a high point of more than 20,000 migrant arrivals in 2012-13 (Phillips 2017). The increase in arrivals led to the creation of Operation Sovereign Borders (OSB) in 2013. OSB took Australia’s hardline policies to a new extreme, asserting a zero-tolerance policy for irregular immigration. After the implementation of the program, no one, who traveled to Australia without a visa would be able to stay in the country, including asylum seekers. Upon arrival, all migrants would be returned to their home country or point of departure (Operation Sovereign Borders). The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has only released budgets for the 2015-20 fiscal years on their website, but it is clear that since OSB, the government has spent exuberant amounts of money to keep Australia’s borders closed. Despite saying each year that the next year’s costs will drop significantly, the government has consistently spent A$1 billion or more per year on operating offshore detention facilities (Figure 5). In addition to these staggering amounts, border enforcement costs more than A$1 billion each year and is steadily increasing (DHA Budgets 2015-2020).

During this same period, Australian aid disbursements significantly decreased for the first time in decades, with...
countries producing large populations of irregular migrants bearing the brunt of these cuts. Between 2013 and 2017, total aid was reduced by 20%. The same countries that saw the most growth under the previous period received significant cuts in aid. By 2017, Afghanistan received 50% less aid, and Pakistan received 40% less aid. Iraq continued to receive high amounts of humanitarian aid, including a A$100 million humanitarian relief package for the country. Despite continued aid to Iraq, the disproportionate decrease in aid to Afghanistan and Pakistan is evidence of Australia moving away from using foreign aid as a tool to reduce immigration. Decreases in aid were largely due to the perception that aid is not effective in reaching its specific stated goals. Following the absorption of AusAID into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2013, DFAT released a report highlighting the new framework that would be used when allocating aid. The report repeatedly emphasizes that in the future, aid partners would be held accountable for improving conditions designated by the Australian government or would suffer aid cuts. These changes signal that the government believed that the aid program, including aid used to meet immigration goals, was ineffective. Even after large increases in aid, migrant arrivals surged between 2009-2013. This could be interpreted as the failure of development aid to meet its goals and cause the outsized reduction in aid given to countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, as mentioned above. During the years following the implementation of OSB, the government shifted its attention towards border control and away from foreign aid when working to reduce irregular migration.

**Giving aid to third party states willing to detain migrants**

As mentioned, the off-shore detention camps have been costly and receive significant scrutiny from human rights organizations and the international community at large. Why would any state choose to host one of these centers, given their poor reputation and that the immigrant resettlement process would not likely affect their domestic affairs? The answer lies in a quid-pro-quo; Australia promised large sums of aid to countries that agreed to host migrant processing centers or accept unwanted asylum seekers.

The two countries that currently host migrant processing centers receive large amounts of aid from Australia. In 2017, Nauru, a small island with a population of 13,000 received more than A$25 million in aid, amounting to more than 25% of their GDP (Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2019). As a tiny state in Micronesia, Nauru is not a security threat or potential trade partner, and therefore does not fit the aid partner priorities the government set out in 2014. Rather, the aid to Nauru is intimately tied to hosting a migrant processing facility. Prior to the creation of this center in 2001, Nauru was not an important part of the Australian aid regime.

![Figure 5: Australian Offshore Detention Estimated vs. Actual Management Costs, 2014-2020](image)

Actual operation costs of offshore detention compared to the estimate given by the previous year’s budget. Amounts in billions of Australian dollars. Data from Australian Department of Home Affairs.
The country was mentioned only briefly in earlier annual aid reports, to acknowledge a scholarship program and the eradication of a species of fly (AusAID 1999, AusAID 2000, AusAID 2001). This changed dramatically in 2001-2002, as Nauru was mentioned 17 times in the annual aid report. This report included specific challenges on Nauru that the Australian government intended to combat, specifically the end of phosphate-mining and lack of basic medical services (AusAID 2002). These problems did not occur spuriously in 2001. It is likely the increased attention on Nauru is due to the detention center built on the island the same year, and that these problems were simply a way of justifying the A$19 million given to the island. Interestingly, the subtotal for the Pacific region in the 2002 AusAID report includes only A$2 million of this aid, while the vast majority, A$18.8 million was listed as “Nauru additional” and excluded from the subtotal. This extra aid was committed “as part of Australia’s response to ‘people smuggling’” (AusAID 2002).

The term “people smuggling”, though indirect in phrasing, is a reference to irregular maritime immigration. Many of the migrants arriving by boat pay smugglers to help them in their journey (UNHCR 2015), and thus a response to people smuggling is synonymous with a response to irregular migration. This is confirmed by examining the original text of the Pacific Solution that called for the creation of the Nauru processing facility. According to a Senate Committee report on the terms of the Pacific Solution, the agreement with Nauru to build a processing center included “extra development assistance under the FAA and MOU [totaling] A$26.5m. A$19.5m was allocated for 2001-2002 and A$7 million in 2002-2003” (Select Committee 2013, 10.38). According to the Development Policy Institute, aid has continued to flow to Nauru at around A$20 million per year (Australian Aid Tracker), yet there could potentially be more aid that is not published in official documents. For example, budget papers in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 “did not even reveal the amount of additional aid allocated for Nauru, stating that the figure [was] ‘not for publication’” (Macelllan 2013). It is clear that Australia used foreign aid to support an offshore processing center in Nauru, and ultimately their zero-tolerance policy for irregular maritime arrivals.

While Papua New Guinea did not receive an increase in aid in order to incentivize the creation of the Manus Island processing center, a quid-pro-quo can also be observed in the fine print of the agreement. Unlike Nauru, PNG fits the framework for an aid partner given its size, colonial ties to Australia, and history of instability. Australia has consistently given millions of dollars in aid to the country since its independence. Additionally, the Pacific Solution explicitly states that unlike the agreement with Nauru, there would be “no additional development aid provided to PNG under the MOU” (Select Committee 2013, 10.54). Nonetheless, there is evidence that the deal between the two countries relied heavily upon previously allocated foreign aid. While the country did not receive additional aid, projects already in place were prioritized. In 2002, the PNG Minister for Foreign Affairs claimed that the establishment of the processing center “resulted in the fast tracking of important AusAID projects for Manus, such as the Papitalia High School, Police Housing and upgrading of the Momote airport” (Select Committee 2013, 10.54). Additionally, in order to equip the island to hold more than a thousand refugees, sewage, water, and electricity systems were upgraded, presenting obvious advantages to the government of PNG.

While Australia did not give additional aid during the construction of the detention center, PNG received aid in response to the reopening of the facility in 2013 after a five year hiatus of the Pacific Solution. A MOU signed between the two countries in 2013 stated in exchange for accepting refugees Australia “would develop a package of assistance and other bilateral cooperation, which will be in addition to the current allocation of Australian development cooperation assistance to PNG” (Memorandum 2013). This resulted in an increase in aid to PNG in a time when many countries saw major cuts in assistance. During the aid scale down, when many countries saw reductions of 50% or more, Papua New Guinea’s budget received a cut of only 4.6% (Tomar 2015). It is also important to note that as Australia’s largest recipient of aid, receiving more than A$500 million each year, PNG most likely feels pressure to grant Australia’s requests, even if no additional aid is promised. The loss of Australian aid would be an enormous blow to the PNG economy, and given that Australia has proven that they are willing to cut aid by up to 70% in a single year (Tomar 2015), PNG may feel that they have no choice but to implement Australia’s border control regime.

Nauru and PNG avoided the majority of aid cuts discussed in the previous section, showing that the government viewed this aid as effective under the new guidelines set forth by the DFAT. This is not surprising given that Operation Sovereign Borders, a plan that revolved around the offshore processing centers, reduced arrivals to zero within a few years of implementation.

**DISCUSSION**

An analysis of the Australian foreign-aid immigration nexus reveals a more nuanced interaction between the policies than the predicted substitutionary relationship. Following the literature that finds foreign aid to be effective, this research predicted that the success of foreign aid would act as a catalyst for the reduction of funding for hardline policies, as they would become less necessary. However, as discussed in section 5b, the shift away from using aid reflects the opposite, a lack of confidence in the efficacy of this policy. Although an analysis of the reasons why Australia’s development aid failed to yield a reduction in migration is beyond the scope of this paper, a possible explanation is that aid was not given enough time to meet its goals. Alternatively, the states with the highest migration flows to Australia could be those in which
an increase in income will lead to an increase in migration as predicted by the inverse-U model (Venturini and Faini 1993). Understanding why targeted development aid didn’t result in decreased irregular migration rates is a promising topic for future study.

The case study also showed that the second hypothesized causal mechanism, finite resources available for immigration control, did not play a role in the Australian aid-immigration nexus. While Australia was committing more aid to immigrant-sending countries, as described in section 5a, the government also exponentially increased funding committed to border control (Parliament of Australia 2013). The concurrent increase in aid disbursements and funding for border patrol is evidence that, if Australia had a finite amount of money to be allocated towards border patrol, they had not yet reached the limit.

The results of this case study raise a new question, why did Australia stop using foreign aid as a tool to control irregular migration? It appears that a spike in irregular arrivals and a lack of confidence in the efficacy of development aid to meet immigration goals were the drivers of this policy shift. Following the exponential increase in arrivals beginning in 2010, frameworks for aid allocation were changed to focus on “effectiveness” and subsequent cuts to aid allocated to countries with heavy migration flows. An investigation initially focused on this question would help determine if increased arrivals and lack of confidence in aid efficacy caused Australia to shift its focus from development aid to border control. Additionally, given that an increase in arrivals to Europe led the EU to increase focus and funding for development aid, this finding also presents an interesting question for further study: why does an increase in irregular migration lead some countries to increase funding for development aid, while others abandon the practice?

Other potential mechanisms such as public opinion and party ideology that are often considered in the aid allocation process should be considered in other case studies, but do not seem to play a direct role in the Australian case. Poll data reveals that public concern about irregular migration has stayed relatively steady during spikes in boat arrivals (Munro and Oliver 2019). Additionally, both labor (progressive) and liberal (conservative) governments increased aid during the period of scale up, and it was under a labor government that border control funding more than doubled in 2010.

CONCLUSION

By examining interaction between two migration-control strategies, this paper attempts to understand how states use the tools available to them to control irregular migration, and adds clarity to existing scholarship about the use of foreign aid for immigration-related goals. While the hypothesized causal mechanisms failed to explain the interactions between development aid and border control, the study revealed two potential mechanisms that explain why a state would choose to stop using development aid and increase its focus on hardline policies. In the Australian case, an increase in arrivals led to a lack of confidence in aid efficacy, ultimately leading to the prioritization of border control over targeted development aid. This conclusion provides an interesting jumping-off point for future research: does an increase in arrivals lead other countries to abandon their targeted-development aid program? A quantitative study investigating how foreign aid budgets change in reaction to rising or falling migration numbers could reveal interactions and trends that would compliment the findings of qualitative study. Ultimately, more research needs to be done to understand how external factors impact which tools governments choose to use in order to meet immigration-related goals.

The findings of this paper also raise several ethical questions about the use of foreign aid as a tool to meet immigration goals. Used in the traditional sense, as is most often discussed in existing scholarship, foreign aid can prevent both the dangers associated with international migration, and potential detention upon arrival to the destination country by improving conditions in a migrant’s country of origin and reducing push factors for migration. However, when given to a third party, Australian aid was simply a proxy for hardline policies, encouraging other states to assist with their zero-tolerance regime. The human rights abuses documented at the Nauru and Manus island detention facilities are evidence that using foreign aid to meet immigration-related goals does not necessarily protect the rights or welfare of migrants, but can actively cause harm.
Appendix 1: Number of irregular maritime arrivals, excluding crew, reaching Australia between 1989-2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Migrant Arrivals</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Migrant Arrivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>2010</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>339</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>4565</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from Australia Department of Immigration (1989-2008) and Customs and Border Control (2008-2016)

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The Australian Foreign Aid-Immigration Nexus: A Tool to Uphold Policies of Detention and Deportation


