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Why give foreign aid?

Decision maker perceptions of the benefits to the donor state¹

Marijke Breuning

Introduction

What decision makers *say* about their state's foreign assistance programs has not been investigated in great detail. The stated reason for not doing so is the assumption that such rhetoric provides little insight into what 'truly' motivates foreign assistance policy choices. A shift away from an emphasis on statements as evidence of the motivations of individual decision makers to an emphasis on recurring themes in parliamentary debates, makes it possible to test the hypothesis that patterns of relative emphasis on debate differ cross-nationally and that these differences predispose groups of decision makers to arrive at different foreign assistance policies. The Belgian, British, and Dutch parliamentary debates on foreign assistance will provide the empirical data. Although Belgium and the Netherlands are similar in terms of traditional measures of relative size, the two have dissimilar foreign assistance policies. The British case adds a contrast: it is a larger state and may on those grounds be expected to exhibit a foreign assistance policy that differs from the other two.

Rhetoric and policy behavior

These patterns of relative emphasis in parliamentary debate provide empirical evidence of the parameters within which decision making takes place. These patterns provide insight into the scope of objectives decision makers as a group perceive to be viable options for their state's foreign assistance program. In doing so, these patterns shed light on the role decision makers as a group perceive their state to play in the foreign assistance issue area. In other words, the general tendencies in parliamentary debate provide an empirical measure of the role conceptions that groups of decision makers hold of their state with regard to foreign assistance. This ignores what Hout has termed political orientation (1991: 477). The assumption is that despite im-

portant differences in political orientation, there is an underlying commonality among the decision makers representing one state. While the sources of such role conceptions are not at issue here, they are assumed to derive from the common history of a nation and the lessons that are passed on about the common national identity.

The claim is not that a role conception *causes* a specific behavior. Rather, a role conception predisposes the group of decision makers to consider certain types of policies over others as a result of the common cognitive biases it provides (Vertzberger 1990; see also: Walker 1992, 1987, 1979; Wish 1987, 1980; Jonsson and Westerlund 1982; Holsti 1970).

As presented in this paper, the foreign assistance role conception profiles constitute ideal types that to a greater or lesser extent exemplify the actual conceptions of groups of decision makers. To the extent that one role conception is in evidence more strongly than another, the policy behaviors associated with it would be expected to be more prominent in the state's foreign assistance policy. The covariation between the rhetoric and behavior measures derives from the assumption that verbal behavior often expresses or creates intentions to act in particular ways (Johnson and Sherman 1990).

The expectation that role conceptions, as evidenced in rhetoric, provide insight into policy choices has been called into question by previous authors (Larson 1985; Jervis 1976). However, there is evidence in the social psychology literature that the failure to establish a connection between rhetoric and behavior relates to methodological problems. A similar conclusion is reached by Barling (1989) with regard to his investigations of British and French foreign assistance. He essentially argues, first, that the debate on foreign assistance sets the parameters within which policy is decided, and, secondly, that an absence of debate on this topic leads to a lack of clear direction with regard to policy decisions. In the latter case, an absence of debate will necessarily lead to a poor connection between rhetoric and behavior.

Fiske and Taylor argue that consistency between rhetoric and behavior is highest when it concerns behaviors that are prototypic of particular cognitions (1984: 371). The existence of prototypic behaviors assumes the existence of cognitions that covary with those behaviors. Fazio et al (1986, 1983) likewise argue that for an attitude to guide behavior it must first be accessed from memory and that once it has been, it influences the evaluation of new information and ultimately behavior. Pre-existing attitudes about, for instance, foreign assistance are more likely to shape behavior if they are automatically retrieved from memory when decision makers are called upon to debate this issue in parliament (Fazio et al 1986: 236). Such automaticity would argue in favor of the existence of a role conception that steadily influences policy behavior.

The important caveat is that pre-existing attitudes are not always accessed.

In the case that they are not, situational factors are more likely to shape behavior (Shavitt and Fazio 1991: 514; Fiske and Taylor 1984: 374-5). In the foreign assistance issue area, this would be evidenced by a lack of consistency in the relative emphasis in debate across time. A lack of consistency in debate indicates that current events and/or pressures shape debate rather than pre-existing attitudes.

Within the scope of this study, recurring patterns of relative emphasis on certain themes in parliamentary debate are regarded as evidence that the concomitant role conception does indeed shape the cognitions of the group of decision makers in that parliament. This does not mean that all members of that parliament say the same and think the same. However, the expectation is that despite the variation among individuals within a parliament, a general pattern should be discernable across time. In addition, the expectation is that the pattern exhibited by the parliamentary debate of one state will differ from the pattern of relative emphasis exhibited by another.

If no clear pattern of prevalent themes can be discerned, policy choices are likely to be ad hoc decisions that are driven more by either domestic or international pressures impinging on decision makers than by a clear conception of national role. No clear pattern will emerge if decision makers as a group do not clearly have a conception of their state's role in this issue area. If there is consistently very little debate on foreign assistance, the existence of a role conception must be called into question as well.

The role conceptions

The framework utilized for the empirical investigation of the decision makers' rhetoric posits four role conceptions. These have been derived from the literature on foreign assistance, specifically those studies that assume or infer motivations (Maizels and Nissanke 1984; Cassen et al 1982; Mosley 1981; McKinlay and Little 1979, 1978) and those that have summarized those motivations into the categories of humanitarian, economic, and political (e.g. Barling 1989; Hoebink 1988).

The studies by McKinlay and Little (1979, 1978) are part of a line of research that seeks to establish whether foreign aid is given on the basis of donor interest or recipient need. The former reflects the realist assumption that there must be some sort of payoff for states to engage in foreign assistance programs, while the latter reflects a humanitarian concern with the needs of Third World states. McKinlay and Little report mixed evidence and their results are supported by subsequent studies (Maizels and Nissanke 1984, Gulhati and Nallari 1988). This hints at more complex motivations. Dudley (1979) reaches this same conclusion in an effort to make sense of his mixed

findings, while Pakenham (1973) and Riddell (1987) argue that the donor interest versus recipient need dichotomy is far too simplistic. In addition, there is a literature on the Nordic states (Stokke 1989; Pratt 1989) that advances the concept of humane internationalism to explain the generous foreign assistance policies of states like Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. Other authors simply provide lists of factors that may motivate a state to provide foreign assistance (e.g. McNeill 1981; Huntington 1972; Black 1968; Nelson 1968; Chenery 1964; Liska 1960). Barling (1989) and Hoebink (1988) both simplify these listings into humanitarian, economic, and political motivations.

I have organized these sets of motivations along two dimensions: first, perceptions of constraint or opportunity and, secondly, perceptions of the international environment as essentially orderly or anarchic. The second dimension stretches from a universalist idealism to the realist assumption of anarchy. Within each of these basic attitudes towards the nature of international relations, the shape of actual policy furthermore depends on whether the external environment is perceived to present opportunities for or constraints on the state. These two dimensions can be utilized to create hypothesized role conceptions for the study of other foreign policy issue areas, but the conceptualization of the roles in this section was designed specifically for the study of foreign assistance policy.

Decision makers who perceive their state in terms of the *good neighbor* role conception are hypothesized to perceive constraint in an orderly environment, while those who perceive their state to play a *merchant* role do so on the basis of a perception of constraint in an anarchic environment. The *power broker* role conception is based on the combined perception of opportunity and an anarchic environment. These three role conceptions mirror the sets of motivations that have been broadly termed humanitarian, economic, and political, respectively (Barling 1989; Hoebink 1988).

The addition of a fourth role, that of *activist*, distinguishes a set of motivations that combines a perception of opportunity with that of an orderly environment. Previous authors (Stokke 1989, 1984; Pratt 1989) have included it with the humanitarian category, although they do acknowledge that what they term 'humane internationalism' differs from traditional conceptions of humanitarian foreign assistance in that there is a definite perception of self-interest attached to the desire to achieve greater international equity (Pratt 1989, 13).

The merchant and power broker role conceptions have in common the perception of anarchy. However, the power broker role conception combines this with a perception of opportunity. This role conception is understood most easily within the framework of realist assumptions (Keohane 1986, Morgenthau 1985), especially as it pertains to those states which have

the power to take advantage of opportunities. The merchant role fits the realist expectation for smaller states which of necessity tend to focus on low politics (East 1978, 1973).

The activist role conception does not neatly fit into a traditional division between high and low politics. It builds on the diagnosis that the gap between rich and poor is ultimately a threat to the economic well-being of the donor state (Lovbraek 1990; Wood 1986; Brandt Commission 1980; Pronk 1976). The activist role conception perceives order (or hierarchy) within the international environment, but also the opportunity to modify that order. The good neighbor role, on the other hand, lacks the perception of an opportunity to effectively alter the status quo and limits itself to humanitarian aid that reinforces rather than challenges the existing order. Such aid has the ephemeral payoff of building good will.

Each of these role conceptions or sets of motivations conceptualizes the perceived benefits of foreign assistance to the donor state in a different manner. Table 1 provides a summary of the four hypothesized role conceptions. The top half of the table provides a general statement of the role conceptions and associated policy objectives. The bottom half sketches the hypothesized covariations between role conceptions as expressed in rhetoric, and the policy behavior associated with it. This paper's focus is on the rhetoric. Differences in policy behavior do exist (Breuning 1993, 1992), but are not explored here.

Table 1: Hypothesized Foreign Assistance Role Conception Profiles

| National role conception | 1. Good neighbor | 2. Activist | 3. Merchant | 4. Power broker |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Decision maker perception of role | Aid is charity. Disaster relief is an extension of such thinking to an acute problem. | 'Enlightened vanguard' in negotiated transformation of the international system. | Own state is integral part of the liberal international economy. Self-interest is protecting free trade and domestic economy | Own country's role in terms of power and influence. |
| Objective guiding foreign aid | Aid is need based, but not necessarily geared towards development. Focus is on immediate needs. | Aid is need based, but need is here defined in terms of long term needs. Focus is long term stability of the system. | Aid is based on perceived needs of the donor country more than on those of the recipient. | Aid is based on need to preserve and enhance influence. |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Themes in rhetoric</i> | Ethical and moral obligation to 'help those less fortunate.' | Stability, social justice, empowerment. | Benefits of free trade, simultaneous benefits to donor and recipient. | Need to support friendly (form of) government. Responsibility to other, less powerful states. |
| <i>Policy behavior</i> | Bilateral: in specific instances (natural disaster, drought, etc.). Ad hoc, as need arises, not part of an overall plan (although resources may be allotted through regular budget process). | Bilateral: low level of tying. | Bilateral aid: expect high percentage of tied aid. | Bilateral aid: mostly tied. Greater focus on bilateral than multilateral aid. |
| | Multilateral: emphasis on agencies concerned with disaster relief, health care, etc. | Multilateral: focus on UN agencies to seek to effect structural change. | Multilateral aid: emphasis on participation in Bretton Woods institutions. | Multilateral aid: not much attention, but focus on Bretton Woods institutions. |
| | | Overall: relatively high % of GNP. Meet UN target of .7 % of GNP. | Overall: relatively lower % of GNP. Trade interests may indicate relatively higher % than for power broker. | Overall: relatively lower % of GNP. Does not meet UN target of .7 %. |

The assumption that individual differences between decision makers, who as a group represent the same state, are bounded by the parameters defined by their commonalities leads to the expectation that particular themes will be evident in the rhetoric of the decision makers of different states. For purposes of this project, the expectations regarding the relative emphasis on various role conceptions are derived from arguments that relative position within the international structure affects the type of foreign policies a state pursues (East 1978, 1973). Specifically, Hoadley (1980) concludes that small states on average pursue more generous foreign aid policies than larger states. His measure of general tendency obscures significant differences among small states, which has led Berlage (1984) to divide European aid donors into three groups. The three cases utilized in this study each represent one of these categories: the United Kingdom represents the group of large states, the Netherlands the group of small states which spends a relatively high percentage of GNP on foreign assistance, while Belgium represents the remain-

ing small states which spend less. Although Berlage finds Belgium a difficult fit for this group, using the Belgian case others factors to be held constant as is indicated below.

Specifically, the expectation is that the power broker role will be in relatively greater evidence in the United Kingdom, while the activist role will be in greater evidence in the Netherlands. In Belgium, lastly, the merchant role conception is expected to be in greater evidence than the other role conceptions. All three states have a colonial heritage, open economies and substantial trade links with the Third World. What separates the three is the United Kingdom's membership in the Group of Seven powerful industrialized nations and its heritage of empire, the Netherlands' extensive and redistributive welfare system domestically, and Belgium's heavy dependence on international trade. Although the United Kingdom and the Netherlands also depend on international trade, the former's power status and the latter's extensive welfare orientation are hypothesized to significantly shape their external relations. In other words, in absence of either the power status or the welfare orientation, both of these states might 'default' to the merchant role.

The good neighbor role conception expresses a widely held norm in international relations and this role conception is therefore unlikely to differentiate reliably among decision makers of different types of states. The decision makers of each state are expected to refer to the themes associated with this role conception on occasion, but the other three role conceptions are expected to be more helpful in differentiating among the three states. The expectation is not that states will neatly match role conceptions, but will tend to exhibit a greater relative emphasis on one role in debates that range across all four. The role conceptions are a device to empirically establish different mixes of motives, rather than a device to place states neatly in boxes. This is another way of saying that I am interested in the scope of debate for each state.²

Data and methods

Parliamentary debates from the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom for the period 1975-90 form the basis for a content analysis which is used to evaluate the rhetoric of the decision makers of these three states. The unit of analysis of this content analysis is the 'speaking turn.' This is defined as a speech ranging in length from one sentence to a number of paragraphs, made by one speaker uninterrupted by other speakers.

For each speaking turn, an evaluation is made of the central theme(s) of that speech. This evaluation was guided by a codebook which was constructed for purposes of this project. Contained in this codebook are general

statements defining each role, followed by detailed information regarding the themes to be coded for each role category. For each theme, information is provided as to what sort of statements are to be regarded as evidence for that theme category. For instance, the social justice theme, which is a category within the activist role conception provides that

The concern of the speaker is whether the decision makers of the recipient state pursue policies that benefit especially the most disadvantaged in their society, i.e. a general concern with issues of distribution of wealth in a society. This means that the socioeconomic policies of the recipient country are [the] basis for determining [the] level of aid. (Breuning 1992, 269).

Each speaking turn was read in its entirety before making any coding decisions. Each time, the central questions were: first, what is the central point of what the speaker says in this speaking turn and, secondly, what theme category best reflects that point? For example, out of a longer speech made by Stanley in the British House of Commons, the following sentences summarize his argument: 'We cannot look only at the poorest countries. We must go beyond them and look equally closely at the poorest people in the poorest countries' (Hansard 17 March 1989: c661). This statement reflects the central point of the (much longer) speaking turn and was judged to fit the social justice theme within the activist role conception. In some cases, more than one theme was coded, but this was justified only when more than one 'central' idea is expressed in that speaking turn and when it was impossible to reconcile these as variants of one and the same theme.³ Themes were chosen over a more detailed coding of statements, because the goal was to infer the conceptions decision makers hold of their state and its role in this issue area. Theme coding appeared more likely to screen out issues to which decision makers merely pay lipservice.

Despite the fact that such theme coding involves considerable interpretive judgment of the text, the reliability of the coding is very respectable. First, it should be mentioned that all of the coding was completed by the author. The potential drawback of a single coder might be the potential for nonrandom error or skew in the data, although the use of multiple coders does not guarantee the absence of such error. The reliability figures therefore measure consistency in coding judgments but cannot attest to the absence of nonrandom error. In addition, the different language(s) used in each parliament prevented the author from being 'blind' to the origin of any particular debate. However, coding the debates for all three states in random order prevented that judgments made regarding debates coded later in the process would be unduly influenced by an awareness of patterns found in debates of the same state which had been coded earlier. In other words, the coding strategies were created in an attempt to ensure that each coding decision was made in-

dependent of any other coding decisions and was based strictly on the guidelines established in the codebook.

Second, the data reported here aggregate the theme categories into broader role conceptions. Two different measures of agreement can thus be reported regarding a reliability test of this variable: first, whether coding decisions reflect the same role conception or, secondly, whether coding decisions match with respect to the narrower theme categories. The level of agreement for the theme category variable was .85 using the first criterion, and .74 using the second criterion. The level of agreement of all variables combined was .88 using the first measure, and .87 using the second measure.⁴

The parliamentary debates were chosen because they represent speeches made in a similar setting and to a similar type of audience both across time and across the three states. These debates generally concern the (critical) discussion of the state's policy. Not all participants in the debate share equally in decision making power, but as a group they determine the parameters of debate. I do not expect the themes associated with the role conceptions hypothesized for each state to appear in that state's parliamentary debate to the exclusion of the other role conceptions. What I do expect is a pattern of relative emphasis in favor of the hypothesized role conception. The comparisons will focus both on the relative frequency with which the decision makers of the three states refer to the four role conceptions, and on similarity and differences in the content of those references.

The data are presented in the form of percentages to facilitate cross-national comparison. However, the Ns or the number of themes coded for each of the three states show great variation. This variation is the result of differences in the number and length of debates on foreign assistance both within states over time but also, more importantly, cross-nationally. These differences could be interpreted to communicate the relative importance foreign assistance occupies in the decision making of each of the three states, an issue to which I will return later. For now, the significance of these different Ns for this paper is that interpreting these data must proceed with care and conclusions must remain tentative.

The cross-national comparisons are based on the eleven parliamentary years for which there are data for all three states. These years are indicated with an asterisk in Tables 2-5. The years for which there are data for only one or two of the three states are included because these are helpful in evaluating general patterns within each of the states.

The good neighbor role conception

As hypothesized, the data presented in Table 2 show that the decision ma-

Table 2: Good Neighbor Role Conception: Relative emphasis in the parliamentary debate of the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom

| Parliamentary Year | The Netherlands | | Belgium | | United Kingdom | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------|---------|-----|----------------|-----|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 75/76* | 11.8 | 76 | 2.7 | 37 | 5.4 | 37 |
| 76/77* | 1.3 | 78 | 0. | 6 | 1.6 | 63 |
| 77/78 | 5.7 | 35 | 4.2 | 24 | -- | -- |
| 78/79 | 7.9 | 101 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 79/80* | 11.3 | 80 | 22.6 | 31 | 4.4 | 68 |
| 80/81 | -- | -- | 3.6 | 28 | -- | -- |
| 81/82* | 6.1 | 66 | 9.5 | 21 | 0. | 41 |
| 82/83* | 7.1 | 56 | 8.3 | 36 | 2.7 | 73 |
| 83/84* | 22.8 | 57 | 0. | 20 | 0. | 22 |
| 84/85* | 13.8 | 65 | 33.3 | 9 | 19.5 | 133 |
| 85/86 | 6. | 83 | -- | -- | 28.6 | 28 |
| 86/87* | 0. | 71 | 0. | 12 | 35.7 | 14 |
| 87/88 | 6.5 | 46 | -- | -- | 2.4 | 42 |
| 88/89* | 2.9 | 70 | 8.3 | 12 | 0. | 51 |
| 89/90* | 1. | 98 | 0. | 16 | 2.2 | 46 |
| 90/91* | 8.3 | 48 | 0. | 9 | 25.8 | 159 |
| all years combined | 7.2 | 1030 | 7.3 | 261 | 11.6 | 777 |

kers in none of the three states consistently give themes associated with this role conception a lot of attention in their debates. There are a few instances where good neighbor themes occupy a quarter to one-third of all references made to themes associated with role conceptions. Generally, such instances can be explained by situational factors that temporarily draw the focus to this role conception, such as the occurrence of a natural disaster or acute famine in a developing country. An example is the debate in the British House of Commons on 19 December 1990, which concerned itself with the famine in the Horn of Africa and the adequacy of the British response to this situation. In Belgium or the Netherlands such situations are often not debated separately, but they nonetheless tend to preoccupy decision makers and show up in their debates.

The large variance in the relative emphasis on themes associated with the good neighbor role supports the notion that situational factors render such themes salient rather than a firmly held conception among decision makers that international good will should significantly motivate their state's foreign assistance policy. This is most easily observed in the British debate and least easily in the Dutch debate, where the content of the references to the good neighbor role conception might more easily lead to the interpretation that this role conception plays a role, albeit a marginal one.

Such an interpretation is consistent with the frequent references to ethical and moral considerations as factors strongly shaping Dutch development cooperation in the literature (Koonings and Kruijt 1988; Voorhoeve 1985; Wels 1982). Hoebink (1988) takes issue with such interpretations. Although the relative frequency of references to the good neighbor role conception supports his point of view, the content of those references is often less concerned with situations or events than similar references in the parliamentary debate of the other two states, and focuses more often on moral obligation in general. These types of arguments are disproportionately the province of the representatives of a few small, religiously based parties. The representatives of these parties often stress Biblical themes, which is unique to the foreign assistance debate in the Netherlands. For Van Rossum, a member of the SGP or Political Reformed Party,⁵ foreign assistance policy serves a missionary function:

The greatest virtue of development cooperation lies in the propagation of the Gospel, in the simultaneous easing of spiritual and material need, consequently, aid in Word and deed. (Handelingen 7 November 1985: 1272).

At other times he focuses less on missionary work and more on a duty to help those less fortunate. Speaking for his party, he states that '[f]or us there also is a christian duty to aid people – especially those at the bottom of the society' (Handelingen 22 December 1976: 2442). This moral argument is at times supported with Biblical evidence, as in the debate where Van Rossum cites Bible texts from letters of Paul to the Ephesians and Deuteronomy to support his argument (Handelingen 15 February 1978: 862-3). Although he is a frequent speaker in debates on foreign assistance, Van Rossum is not the only small party representative employing religious themes in his rhetoric and on occasion even a minister of development cooperation finds it necessary to address such themes as well. This generally occurs in response to a speech by one of these small party representatives.

The main difference between statements by ministers and the small party representatives is that the former generally remain at the level of general principle while the latter make very direct references to specific religious teachings. In that sense, the minister's pronouncements are more in line with the type of references to moral obligation found in the Belgian and British debates, which are generally no more specific than the relatively vague sense of obligation to one's fellow human beings.

That such references to Biblical teachings are not limited to Dutch parliamentary debate on foreign assistance is pointed out during one of the debates by Honig van den Bossche, a representative of the Boerenpartij (BP or Farmer's Party): 'In the Dutch parliament the Bible is cited with regard to all sorts of policy' (Handelingen 12 November 1975: 1097). The use of such

references and citations is confined to the representatives of particular types of parties which have a steady but small representation in the Dutch parliament. To judge such pronouncements as evidence that Dutch decision makers as a group perceive moral duty as an important imperative would constitute overinterpretation. However, these type of references are unique to the Dutch debate and are therefore a notable aspect of it.

The more common type of reference to the good neighbor role conception found in the United Kingdom takes the form of debate concerning situations currently confronting decision makers. For instance, the adequacy of the British response to famine and natural disaster are the central topic of several debates in parliament. Although these debates do not exclusively focus on good neighbor themes, they make their occurrence more likely. In the 1990-91 parliamentary year, the high frequency of the good neighbor role conception derives from debates on drought and famine in Ethiopia, and a cyclone which struck Bangladesh in April 1991. With regard to the British relief effort in response to the latter event, several MPs stressed the special responsibility Britain has to this country. Labour representative Foulkes stresses the special obligation Britain has because Bangladesh is a Commonwealth state (Hansard 8 May 1991: c741), with which minister Chalker agrees (Hansard 8 May 1991: c741). Labour MP Abbott makes the connection more directly, by stressing that a number of UK citizens have relatives in Bangladesh who may have been affected by the disaster (Hansard 8 May 1991: c729). That is one way to express the historical ties with that state, which are referenced by others as well and most critically by Labour MP Loydon, who says that Britain has an obligation to lead the disaster relief effort because the British 'exploited Bangladesh to create their wealth over the years' (Hansard 8 May 1991: c739).

Debates focusing on specific emergency responses to disaster are not held in Belgium or the Netherlands. One could argue that such debates are an indication that British decision makers, to a greater extent than their Dutch or Belgian counterparts, perceive good neighborliness to be of some importance. One could alternately argue that these debates are evidence of a status quo orientation and the relief efforts merely seen as relevant in support of maintaining Britain's power and influence. That such a sense of responsibility does not necessarily reflect altruistic motivations is expressed in the desire to get a return in terms of prestige for such aid. Conservative MP Jessel expresses a preference for bilateral foreign assistance specifically for such reasons:

Apart from the primary and basic aim of helping to assuage poverty in the Third world ... I want Britain to obtain the maximum possible credit and goodwill abroad for what we are doing. I want the recipient countries to know that the aid is coming from Britain. (Hansard 17 March 1989: c696)

Whether aid serves as a mechanism for the maintenance of influence and prestige, or flows out of post-colonial obligations, British decision makers have distinct views about the reasons their state should provide such assistance.

Belgian decision makers appear less certain and tend to express themselves in more general terms, as may be evidenced by Van Elewycck's (SP) observation that '[f]ood aid, understood as emergency aid is necessary to save large population groups from starvation' (PH/AP 16 March 1983: 1747).⁶ The necessity to incorporate such a component in the aid program is underlined by other representatives of both the Flemish and Walloon language communities, although it is understood that 'our development cooperation cannot be solely charitable' as is stressed by Mayence-Goossens during her tenure as state secretary for development cooperation (PH/AP 23 April 1982 p1428).

In sum, although the relative frequency of references to the good neighbor role conception does not clearly distinguish the three states, the content of the rhetoric regarding this role conception is very different for each of the three states.

The activist role conception

A comparative assessment of the relative emphasis on the activist role conception does not clearly show Dutch decision makers to consistently stress this role conception to greater degree than decision makers of the other two states, as was hypothesized (Table 3). However, the Dutch decision makers certainly emphasize this role conception more often and more consistently than do their British counterparts. The difference in emphasis between the Dutch and Belgian decision makers is less pronounced than expected, although the Belgian emphasis on this role is less consistent than that of their Dutch counterparts. Interpretation of the relative emphasis Belgian decision makers place on the activist role conception is handicapped by the small N's for a number of parliamentary years for this state. However, some differences between the rhetoric of the decision makers of these two states can be discerned when the content of the references made to this role conception are examined.

Dutch decision makers tend to be concerned with the structural causes of poverty and with creating better conditions for the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in the Third World. The reason for such a focus is given by Terpstra, a member of parliament for the liberal party (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie or VVD), who stresses rural development themes and production for the home market as a necessary first step for the Third World. She explains herself by citing Confucius: 'it is better to teach a poor man to catch a fish than to give him one when he is hungry' (Handelingen 19

Table 3: Activist Role Conception: Relative emphasis in the parliamentary debate of the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom

| Parliamentary Year | The Netherlands | | Belgium | | United Kingdom | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------|---------|-----|----------------|-----|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 75/76* | 47.4 | 76 | 53.1 | 37 | 27. | 37 |
| 76/77* | 51.3 | 78 | 50. | 6 | 44.4 | 63 |
| 77/78 | 48.6 | 35 | 45.8 | 24 | -- | -- |
| 78/79 | 52.5 | 101 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 79/80* | 45. | 80 | 25.8 | 31 | 33.8 | 68 |
| 80/81 | -- | -- | 32.1 | 28 | -- | -- |
| 81/82* | 60.6 | 66 | 28.6 | 21 | 31.7 | 41 |
| 82/83* | 30.4 | 56 | 38.9 | 36 | 21.9 | 73 |
| 83/84* | 36.8 | 57 | 45. | 20 | 0. | 22 |
| 84/85* | 35.4 | 65 | 11.1 | 9 | 20.3 | 133 |
| 85/86 | 21.7 | 83 | -- | -- | 32.1 | 28 |
| 86/87* | 54.9 | 71 | 25. | 12 | 0. | 14 |
| 87/88 | 37. | 46 | -- | -- | 14.3 | 42 |
| 88/89* | 20. | 70 | 41.7 | 12 | 31.4 | 51 |
| 89/90* | 42.9 | 98 | 62.5 | 16 | 32.6 | 46 |
| 90/91* | 70.8 | 48 | 44.4 | 9 | 15.1 | 159 |
| all years combined | 43.4 | 1030 | 36.8 | 261 | 24.1 | 777 |

February 1980: 3133). This sums up well the attitude behind her party's support for activist themes and displays a slightly different emphasis than is found among labour party (Partij van de Arbeid or PvdA) representatives, who tend to stress equitability of outcome rather than empowering individuals with skills. Labour representatives also tend to make a more direct connection with international structural issues, as in Verspaget's observation that the 'less aid there, the more refugees here is a painful paradox' (Handelingen 23 January 1990: 1435). This last sentiment is not voiced exclusively by labour party members, but is a sentiment shared by the more conservative Christian democrat (Christen Democratisch Appel or CDA) members of parliament as well (De Hoop Scheffer, interview).

Belgian decision makers, on the other hand, most frequently express themselves in abstract language. They argue that the peaceful transformation of the international system is important, and that such a goal should guide Belgian policy, but they rarely put forward concrete proposals to achieve such a goal. The francophone nationalist Outers (FDF), for instance, observes that 'we live in a crucial period of the history of humanity,' which renders it incumbent on the government to 'establish new equilibria between the nations that have and those that don't' (AP/PH 7 July 1981: 2773). The Flemish Christian Democrat Steverlynck (Christelijke Volkspar-

tij or CVP) also expresses the view that it is in Belgium's long term self-interest to play its part in building a more stable international order, while Daras (Ecolo, the francophone green party) argues that:

It is essential that we let go of the logic of short term interest in development cooperation. The true interest should aim at fighting extreme poverty, not only for moral reasons but also because in doing so, we will reduce tensions on a world scale and, as a result, we will enhance our own security. (AP/PH 12-3-84: 1995)

The observation that a stable international environment is in Belgium's long term interest is thus expressed by representatives of both language communities and not limited to a particular political ideology, but all those who address this issue do so at an abstract level.

British decision makers similarly are aware that the divide between rich and poor should be of concern to them because of Britain's reliance on foreign trade. Labour MP Grant:

I believe that the biggest threat to peace is world economic anarchy and a situation in which the majority of the world's population exists in appalling degrees of poverty and wretchedness while the rest of us enjoy relative happiness and prosperity. ... World peace must be founded on prosperity and good neighbourliness among all of us. That message cannot be repeated too often. Our prosperity as a trading nation depends to a great extent on that understanding. (Hansard 7 November 1975: c870)

Similar sentiments are expressed by Luce, Conservative:

My view is that until we in the West can work effectively with the countries of the Third World, particularly the poorer ones, to encourage a greater degree of rural and agricultural development, there will be continued political instability in the Third World and the long-term prospects for more trade between it and the Western world will be hampered. (Hansard 20 December 1976: c126)

Both speakers argue that although the Western industrialized states may be more powerful, there is a level of mutual dependence that should not be ignored if Britain is to keep its longer term interests in mind. In other words, references to the activist role conception frequently display a close link with the perception that international trade is important to Britain. While both Belgian and British decision makers tend to focus on the link with the long-term welfare of their own societies, Dutch decision makers tend to focus more on the inequalities and injustices of international structures.

Table 4: Merchant Role Conception: Relative emphasis in the parliamentary debate of the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom

| Parliamentary Year | The Netherlands | | Belgium | | United Kingdom | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------|---------|-----|----------------|-----|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 75/76* | 18.4 | 76 | 35.1 | 37 | 37.8 | 37 |
| 76/77* | 29.5 | 78 | 33.3 | 6 | 28.6 | 63 |
| 77/78 | 14.3 | 35 | 29.2 | 24 | -- | -- |
| 78/79 | 13.9 | 101 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 79/80* | 15. | 80 | 22.6 | 31 | 38.2 | 68 |
| 80/81 | -- | -- | 42.9 | 28 | -- | -- |
| 81/82* | 25.8 | 66 | 52.4 | 21 | 48.8 | 41 |
| 82/83* | 30.4 | 56 | 44.4 | 36 | 19.2 | 73 |
| 83/84* | 5.3 | 57 | 40. | 20 | 22.7 | 22 |
| 84/85* | 29.2 | 65 | 22.2 | 9 | 15. | 133 |
| 85/86 | 21.7 | 83 | -- | -- | 17.9 | 28 |
| 86/87* | 22.5 | 71 | 41.7 | 12 | 35.7 | 14 |
| 87/88 | 23.9 | 46 | -- | -- | 31. | 42 |
| 88/89* | 18.6 | 70 | 25. | 12 | 25.5 | 51 |
| 89/90* | 18.4 | 98 | 25. | 16 | 21.7 | 46 |
| 90/91* | 12.5 | 48 | 22.2 | 9 | 15.1 | 159 |
| all years combined | 20. | 1030 | 35.2 | 261 | 24.1 | 777 |

The merchant role conception

Belgian decision makers consistently place a greater emphasis on the merchant role conception than do their British or Dutch counterparts, which is as hypothesized and can be discerned from Table 4. They also emphasize this role conception fairly consistently. However, it is difficult to tell whether this may indeed be interpreted as evidence that Belgian decision makers are in any significant manner guided by a merchant role conception. As indicated in the previous section, Belgian decision makers also make reference to activist themes fairly often. The main reason for caution is that for a number of parliamentary years the N is quite small, as is the N overall (261), certainly when compared to the Netherlands (1030) and the United Kingdom (777). Such relative lack of debate on the issue may mean lack of a well-developed role conception (Barling 1989), as was discussed in the introduction. Despite the fact that the data show a pattern of relative emphasis that is in the expected direction, the assessment must remain tentative because of this relative lack of debate – and therefore data.

The statements of Belgian decision makers resemble those made by British decision makers. Both argue that there must be a return to the domestic economy to justify the expenditure. Belgian state secretary Mayence-Goos-

sens states, for instance, that the driving force behind her policy is to 'know how to aid the Third World while simultaneously stimulating the Belgian economy' (AP/PH 26 October 1982: 181). Earlier she had been somewhat more circumspect, saying that

I agree that our cooperation must be selective and must benefit especially the needs of those who suffer. ... It must not be an extension of international trade, I emphasize this. But it is no less important ... to come to a better integration of development cooperation and foreign trade. One must take care that our economy in crisis receives a just return, if possible. (PH/AP 23 April 1982: 1426)

This sentiment is not limited to the period Mayence-Goossens was in charge of development cooperation, as Ryckmans-Corin (PSC) a few years earlier equated the desire to benefit the donor with interdependence: 'The economic effects of development cooperation cannot be denied and are not scandalous. That's interdependence.' (AP/PH 19 November 1980: 304). Such statements are made by representatives of both the Flemish and Walloon language communities. According to Franck (1987: 65) the relation between development cooperation and trade is more and more articulated and admitted, but the data do not bear this out.

British decision makers also desire to benefit domestic trade and industry with their state's foreign assistance program. Labour MP Lestor makes a connection with the debt issue, arguing that the Third World's debt problems have damaged North-South trade relations and as a result have had a negative impact on the North's economies. The implication for her is that '[w]e need to achieve debt reduction that will enhance growth in trade' (Hansard 17 March 1989: c640), because this would 'also help our export performance' (Hansard 17 March 1989: c643). Conservative MP Tugendhat had made this connection many years earlier and argued it in terms of domestic support for a strong foreign assistance program:

It is important that the Government and everyone else supporting the cause of aid and development should be prepared to argue more strongly the case of self-interest as well as idealism. We must say frankly that British people who work in British industry need the markets. We must point out that it is a matter not only of handing over resources and not being able to spend on housing or other desirable projects, but of building up markets that our factories and industries will be able to serve. It is necessary to draw attention to that direct self-interest. ...

Many of those concerned with aid and development in the House believe that if we cannot demonstrate a self-interest, it will be difficult to get the support that is needed to sustain the programme that we want to be implemented. (Hansard 7 November 1975: c793-4)

Like the Belgian decision makers, the British clearly perceive the funds allocated to foreign assistance as part of a small pie for which lots of interests

compete. The British, moreover, take the point of view that this concerns the taxpayers' money and that expenditures must benefit these taxpayers in first instance.

Dutch decision makers are more circumspect in their references to this role conception. Generally, they stress that while it is all right to benefit the domestic economy, this is not what foreign assistance in the first instance should be about. Minister De Koning, for instance, discusses the benefits that can accrue to the Dutch economy as a result of its foreign assistance but is careful to point out that investments made with such funds should in the first instance serve the recipient state:

investments abroad can contribute, sometimes directly, more frequently indirectly, to the improved health of the Dutch economy. Therefore I am not saying that investments abroad only serve the interests of the Dutch economy. Yet, first and foremost, they are to serve the interests of the economies of developing countries. (Handelingen 21 February 1980: 3250)

While he initially stresses the return on investment to the Netherlands, he seems to change his mind mid-thought to focus on the less selfish objective of serving the interests of the recipient states.

Christian Democrat De Hoop Scheffer almost apologizes for making the link between foreign assistance and its potential benefits to Dutch trade and industry:

We can and may talk about the relation between development cooperation and trade and industry, but we must understand that developmental relevance should always come first. (Handelingen 29 November 1988: 1703)

While De Hoop Scheffer implicitly acknowledges that Dutch trade and industry stand to benefit from the state's foreign assistance program, his statement is typical of the manner in which the link between development cooperation and the Dutch private sector is often discussed in parliament. It is held that development should be the primary purpose, but if Dutch trade and industry can benefit in the process, this is certainly acceptable. This need to couch the rhetoric in this manner sets the Dutch decision makers apart from their Belgian and British counterparts.

The power broker role conception

The power broker role conception consistently occupies a more prominent position in parliamentary debate in the United Kingdom than in the other two states (Table 5). This is conform the expectation with regard to the British debate. Generally, the debate over Britain's role in international organi-

Table 5: Power Broker Role Conception: Relative emphasis in the parliamentary debate of the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom

| Parliamentary Year | The Netherlands | | Belgium | | United Kingdom | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------|---------|-----|----------------|-----|
| | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| 75/76* | 22.4 | 76 | 27. | 37 | 29.7 | 37 |
| 76/77* | 17.9 | 78 | 16.7 | 6 | 25.4 | 63 |
| 77/78 | 31.4 | 35 | 20.8 | 24 | -- | -- |
| 78/79 | 25.7 | 101 | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 79/80* | 28.8 | 80 | 29. | 31 | 23.5 | 68 |
| 80/81 | -- | -- | 21.4 | 28 | -- | -- |
| 81/82* | 7.6 | 66 | 9.5 | 21 | 19.5 | 41 |
| 82/83* | 32.1 | 56 | 8.3 | 36 | 56.2 | 73 |
| 83/84* | 35.1 | 57 | 15. | 20 | 77.3 | 22 |
| 84/85* | 21.5 | 65 | 33.3 | 9 | 45.1 | 133 |
| 85/86 | 50.6 | 83 | -- | -- | 21.4 | 28 |
| 86/87* | 22.5 | 71 | 33.3 | 12 | 28.6 | 14 |
| 87/88 | 32.6 | 46 | -- | -- | 52.4 | 42 |
| 88/89* | 58.6 | 70 | 25. | 12 | 43.1 | 51 |
| 89/90* | 37.8 | 98 | 12.5 | 16 | 43.5 | 46 |
| 90/91* | 8.3 | 48 | 33.3 | 9 | 44. | 159 |
| all years combined | 29.4 | 1030 | 20.7 | 261 | 40.3 | 777 |

zations focuses on the ability of its decision makers to play a leadership role within such bodies. The debate regarding the Conservative government's decision to pull out of UNESCO is a case in point. The decision was criticized equally from both sides of the House. Former minister of overseas development Hart (Labour) stressed the loss of influence associated with the departure:

... it is not possible to reform from the outside. Just as the United States no longer has the slightest influence in UNESCO, so we, henceforth, will cease to have any influence there. (Hansard 22 November 1984: c448)

Conservative Heath concurs:

Increased influence in diplomacy is never achieved by opting out. ... I lament the decision that has been taken on UNESCO, which I consider to be wrong. It will achieve nothing and I hope the Government will change it. It will certainly fail to extend our national influence. (Hansard 22 November 1984: c441-2)

The criticisms regarding the decision to pull out of UNESCO illustrate that despite some differences, both Labour and Conservative decision makers see Britain's role in this issue area to a large degree in terms of exercising its influence and leadership. Such a theme also shows up in debates that concern dis-

aster relief efforts. As indicated above, the need to respond is not solely conceived in terms of the good neighbor role, but also in terms of the need to provide international leadership. Chalker (Conservative), the current minister for overseas development, thus argues in a debate concerning the situation in the Horn of Africa that: 'The essential job before us is to galvanise the whole international community and other bilateral donors' (Hansard 19 December 1990: c298-299).

In addition to a desire to exercise influence, British decision makers also express a sense of responsibility. This dovetails with the language they use with regard to the good neighbor role conception. For example, Liberal MP Alton comments that '[i]t is the powerful of the earth who must bear the greatest responsibility. If through inertia they do nothing, it is they who will be blamed.' (Hansard 11 February 1982: c1153).

Dutch decision makers also express a desire to play an active role in international organizations, although this is more often phrased in the language minister Schoo uses in reference to debt relief negotiations. She maintains that 'the Netherlands has set a significant example' (Handelingen 24 October 1985: 807). Such wording implies that these decision makers are well aware that their state has little coercive capability. When they do not put their arguments in terms of setting an example, Dutch decision makers argue either openly or implicitly the rightness of the conviction they espouse. There appears to be a sense that an important contribution ought to be made and that it is not entirely impossible to do so. Minister Bukman stops short of overtly claiming Dutch influence on the World Bank, while simultaneously hinting at exactly that when he says that

[i]f the World Bank nowadays gives a lot of attention to issues such as the environment, involvement and population policies, then I am not so pig-headed as to attribute this to the Netherlands, but we did play a forceful role in those discussions. (Handelingen 30 November 1988: 1775)

His successor minister Pronk displays far less of this sort of modesty when he expresses the opinion that

our membership in the relevant Bretton Woods institutions offers us the possibility to attempt to actively influence the developmental character of those adjustment programs as much as possible. (Handelingen 24 January 1990: 1548-9)

Although Pronk does not go so far as to claim that the Netherlands is in the driver's seat in these organizations, he obviously is convinced that its representatives can have a real impact on the decision making within these organizations.

The Dutch discuss their involvement in international organizations in terms of exercising influence, but they do not speak in terms of a leadership

role as is common in the British parliamentary debates. Yet they also do not position themselves as having to go along with what more powerful members of such bodies decide, as the Belgians do in their debates. This general tendency to view their state as a participant rather than a leader or at least a state with some influence in international organizations is criticized by De-meester-de Meyer (CVP):

Don't we as a state act a bit too cautious? Shouldn't we determine a strategy now so that our role in the future will be enhanced with regard to the determination of policy? (PH/AP 4 July 1979: 1157)

This statement is an isolated incident in debate that most often stresses Belgium's dependence on others.

Discussion and conclusions

The four role conceptions have pinpointed some differences in the relative frequency with which various themes are addressed in the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. As hypothesized, the good neighbor role conception played a minor role in the parliamentary debate in each of the three states. The relative emphases on the activist, merchant, and power broker roles by, respectively, Dutch, Belgian, and British decision makers are all in the expected direction.

The Belgian decision makers do refer to the activist role conception quite often, however. The small amount of data makes this case the most difficult to interpret. Two possible interpretations are that, first, the small N or lack of debate means that Belgian decision makers do not have a well-developed conception of their role in this issue area. Secondly, the relatively equal emphasis on the activist and merchant role conceptions means that there are competing points of view regarding why Belgium should have a foreign assistance program. Either way, Belgian decision makers are likely to be more often driven by domestic or international pressures than by a conception of their state's role in this issue area.

The content of the statements made by decision makers across the three states shows that the good neighbor role conception is expressed differently in each. Dutch decision makers are the only ones to use Biblical references, the British discuss their obligations in terms of their colonial heritage, and the Belgians stay at a fairly general level with their remarks.

Both the activist and merchant role conceptions are expressed in a similar manner in the statements of Belgian and British decision makers, but these two groups differ from the Dutch. The latter consistently refer to benefits to the domestic economy as an acceptable side-effect that, however, must not

become the focus of foreign assistance. It is as if openly stating that aid must also benefit the domestic economy, as occurs in Belgium and the United Kingdom, is a taboo subject for Dutch decision makers.

The power broker role conception shows that the Dutch and British both perceive themselves as influential in the international arena, although the Dutch conceive this more moderately than the British who seek to play a leadership role. The Belgian decision makers most often perceive their state as a 'team-player' internationally: a participant but not a leader.

In conclusion, the role conception framework has been instrumental in identifying some basic differences in how the decision makers of each of these three states perceive foreign assistance and the reasons why their state should provide it. It has also pointed at consistencies over time. These can be argued to exist more reliably for the Netherlands and the United Kingdom than for Belgium. The relative lack of debate for the latter case makes the argument for the existence of a role conception there less strong. The differences in the manner in which similar themes are addressed cross-nationally point to the possibility that a more detailed analysis of parliamentary debates may be useful to further define the common cognitive biases that groups of decision makers share and that shape the parameters of their decision making.

Frameworks such as the one utilized here and the proposed extension of it will not allow point predictions regarding the policy behavior of states. What such investigations can yield, is an understanding of the options that the leaders of states are likely to perceive and thus make their policy choices more intelligible. In sum, it provides insight into 'where they are coming from,' or 'what makes them tick.'

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 6-11, 1993. The research was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (DIR-9113599) to the Mershon Center Research Training Group on the Role of Cognition in Collective Decision Making at the Ohio State University and by a research grant from the Graduate School of the Ohio State University.

2. More elaborate explanations of both the framework and the expected differences in the relative prominence of the role conceptions in the debate of the Dutch, Belgian, and British parliaments can be found in Breuning 1993, 1992.

3. A more elaborate version of this example and complete coding instructions can be found in Breuning 1992, Appendix A.

4. The coefficient of reliability calculates the ratio of coding agreements to the total number of coding decisions. The formula is: $2M/N_1 + N_2$, where M is the number of coding decisions on which the two judges were in agreement, and N₁ and N₂ reflects the

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number of coding decisions made by judge 1 and judge 2. For the results reported here judge 1 reflects the data coded originally, while judge 2 reflects data recoded for the purpose of calculating the reliability of the coding decisions. This method of calculating the coefficient of reliability is explained in Holsti (1969: 140).

5. The SGP is a small party with a steady following among very orthodox Calvinists (Irwin 1989: 155).

6. PH/AP refers to Parlementaire Handelingen/Annales Parlementaires. If PH is listed first, the original quote was in Dutch. If the order is reversed, i.e. AP is listed first, then the original quote was in French.

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