Do Norms Theories Matter?: Viability of Constructivist Approach for the Studies of Foreign Aid

Young Soo Kim and Joongbum Shin

This is a theoretical survey research on the viability of norms theories for studying foreign aid. The rationalist approach of international relations (IR) theory regards foreign aid as one of the mere policy tools for enhancing strategic and economic influences over recipient countries. The dominant IR paradigm, however, is lacking in accounting for such aspects of foreign aid as processes and conditions as well as rationales. Authors contend that the literature that delves into international norms, which is in line with a constructive approach, will be suggestive to enable us to fully understand the mechanism of foreign aid. This research addresses four strands of the norms literature to demonstrate how the theories that scrupulously scrutinize actors, processes and conditions of a variety of norms dynamics will be instrumental to the studies of foreign aid. The theoretical discussion is followed by the case study of global response to HIV/AIDS as an example of the potential contributions of norms theories for studying foreign aid policy. This research ends with the implications of the norms literature in a larger context of IR discipline.

Key Words: Constructivism, Rationalism, Theories of norms, International norms, Foreign aid, HIV/AIDS

* Dr. Young Soo Kim (yskim@loyno.edu) is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Loyola University New Orleans. He holds a Ph.D. degree in Political Science from Purdue University at West Lafayette. His research interests surround international relations theories, international norms, mechanism of foreign aid policy choice, politics of global HIV/AIDS and International Relations of East Asia. His work has appeared in several peer-reviewed journals such as *Asian Perspective*, *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative European Politics*, *International Politics*, *Journal of International and Area Studies*, and *International Area Studies Review*.

** Dr. Joongbum Shin (shinida@cau.ac.kr) is a Senior Research Associate in the Center for the Study of Grand Strategy at Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Republic of Korea. He holds a Ph.D. degree in International Studies from Chung-Ang University. His research interests lie in regional integration, international norms, and international development and cooperation (more specifically the Official Development Assistance). His work has appeared in a peer-reviewed journal, *Japanese Journal of Political Science* and several non peer-reviewed outlets.

INTRODUCTION: FOREIGN AID IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES

What motivates foreign aid policies? In response to the question regarding the rationales of the seemingly benevolent behavior, dominant international relations (IR) theories argue that donor countries tend to give aid in order to gain and maintain strategic and commercial interests of their own. In this strategic self-interest approach, states are thought to behave rationally in pursuit of maximizing their power and economic interests. The approach can be categorized as *rationalist* IR theories, which mainly indicate neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. The rationalist approaches tend to take state as exogenously given with fixed interests and preferences, mainly material ones. These rationalist theorists regard foreign aid as one of the tools for enhancing strategic and economic influences over recipient countries (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Berthélemy 2004; Breuning 1995; Browne 2006; Maizers and Nissanke 1984; McGillivray 2003; Sogge 2002). For example, there is ample literature in the field of political economy, which delves into the correlation between donor countries' commercial interests vis-à-vis recipient countries in trade relations and the volume of aid mainly in rigorous statistical analyses (Hoeffler and Outram 2011; Lundsgaarde *et al.* 2007; Berthélemy 2006; Younas 2008).

Despite its unquestionable contribution to the study of foreign aid (and the development studies), such research is limited, due to its epistemological orientation, being unable to unveil the motivation of donors who give aid to whom they have little strategic and economic interests over; for instance, it is found that most bilateral aids for the global fight against Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), one of the deadliest pandemics in human history¹, were not necessarily given to the countries in which donors were commercially or militarily engaged. Instead the succor was allocated to the countries of desperate need owing to the uncontrollable level of HIV prevalence rate and the lack of economic capacities to grapple with the pandemic alone (Kim 2015a, 23). In other words, it was humanitarian concerns, not donors' strategic or economic interests, that yielded the aid policy choices.² Such a normative orientation has been discussed by

1 The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reports in "Global HIV & AIDS Statistics - 2019 Fact Sheet" that the total number of deaths from AIDS-related illness reached approximately 32 million globally as additional 770,000 casualties were accrued in 2018. The report estimates that 37.9 million people are living with HIV/AIDS worldwide and 1.7 million people were newly infected in 2018 alone (www.unaids.org/en/resources/fact-sheet).

2 Most donor countries channeled AIDS funding multilaterally in the early stage of global fight

several scholars who contend that foreign aid is sometimes driven by ethical and humanitarian concerns shared among states (Hattori 2003; Lumsdaine 1993).

Both rationalist and normative approaches, however, are restricted in their narrow analytical focus. The focus of rationalist approach, mainly statistical analyses by political economists, lies mainly in the motivation *and* effectiveness of aid. Normative approach sticks to the sense of altruism of international society that enkindles aid. Neither approaches are likely to touch upon such complicated questions of policymaking dynamics as: *who* plays *what* role in aid policymaking?; in *what process* aid policies are determined and developed?; and under *what conditions* is aid more or less likely to increase or decrease?

We claim that *constructivist* literature can contribute to systematic theoretical framework for such policy dynamics of foreign aid. As opposed to the rationalist literature that takes interests as given and fixed based on strategic (or military) or commercial values, constructivists provide a more nuanced understanding of the *social reality* in which the interests or preferences are mutually constructed through close interaction among actors (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 393). States' behaviors tend to be compatible to the shared ideas about what is appropriate in a given context. The social reality engenders or sometimes enforces certain courses of action inferred from a logic of appropriateness. The social reality or shared ideas are called *norms*, defined as "a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity." (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891)

Extant constructivist literature rarely probes the behavior of foreign aid.³ We argue, however, the norm research has viability to provide a very insightful and implicative theoretical framework that disentangles the complicated mechanism of aid policymaking. In other words, the constructivist approach could pave a way to extricate the puzzles of causal relations with respect to the

against HIV/AIDS. In 1987, ten donor countries spent approximately \$59 million for a global AIDS funding. Seventy one percent of the funding was channeled through a multilateral route (Alagiri *et al.* 2001). The multilateral routes imply that political intentions of donor countries are less likely to be reflected in the financial flow. In other words, there are cases in which the behavior of foreign aid is not necessarily precipitated by strategic and commercial calculations of donor countries vis-à-vis recipients as the rationalist approach would contend.

3 One of the major themes of constructivist literature lies in international human rights norms and its impacts on states' practices (Sikkink 1993, 2011; Risse-Kappen 1999; Risse-Kappen *et al.* 1999; Clark 2001; Bae 2011). One of the rare but valuable constructivist research on foreign aid motivations is the work of Van der Veen (2011). In this book, he pays attention to 'framing' through which preferences or ideas of policy-makers are constructed regarding specific issues in a given time. He contends that social discourses (or legislative debates) are one of the main mechanisms under which distinctive perspectives are discussed and constituted for new policy initiatives.

motivations, processes, and conditions of aid policy choices; *why* and *how or under what conditions* international norms do resonate to establish or change foreign aid policies. This theoretical survey proceeds three-fold: first, we briefly introduce two camps of IR theories, rationalist and constructivist approaches along with distinctive epistemological and ontological stances; the following section addresses four strands of theories of norms, each of which shows how the theories have developed and been refined as causal theories that deeply scrutinize actors, processes, and conditions for a variety of norms dynamics; subsequently, a case study ensues, as one of the methodologies of this research, showing how the theoretical discourses can be applied to a real foreign aid policy decision. The case pertaining to aid for global HIV/AIDS is selected due to the remarkable international coordinating efforts made in responding to the pandemic for last three decades wherein, we believe, the constructivist framework is viable to explicate the extraordinary aid patterns. The discussion ends with the implications and contributions of the norms literature in a larger context of the discipline of IR.

INTERESTS-BASED VS NORMS-BASED THEORIES OF FOREIGN AID

Extant literature on foreign aid explains the motivation of donor countries from two main theoretical perspectives: a strategic self-interest approach and a norms-based approach. The strategic self-interests approach corresponds to a rationalist paradigm of IR including neorealism or neoliberal institutionalism. This approach considers states as rational actors who take a step of information-processing in response to external physical stimuli. From this perspective, *reality* exists out there as an objective being that reflects material values, independent of the cognition of agents. Ontologically speaking, individual human actions result in social institutions and changes. So the causal mechanism of changes is unidirectional from units to structure. The rational actors get involved in a cost-benefit analysis for maximizing material interests including strategic and economic interests. In this framework, states' motivation for aid is to enhance their strategic and economic interests over recipient countries based upon rational calculation and understanding of objective reality.

The theories provide plausible explanations of aid policies of donors having significant strategic or commercial considerations, like former colonial powers or the United States (US) during and after the Cold War. The US is believed to have provided aid to its allies to compete against the Soviet Union during the

Cold War. Even in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, US's aid policy was instrumental for maintaining or even enlarging its strategic influences particularly on the Middle East (countries like Egypt, Israel and Iraq) (Alesina and Dollar 2000; Lancaster 2008; Riddell 2007). France also attempted to continue its cultural influences and absorb commercial interests through foreign aid toward the former French colonies (Stokke and Hoebink 2005; Lancaster 2008; Riddell 2007; Lahiri and Raimondos-Møller 2000). In case of Japan, aid was concentrated in the former colonies in South East Asia for commercial ties up until the 1970s (Arase, 2005; Lancaster, 2008; Riddell, 2007).

Constructivism, however, has a distinct epistemological and ontological stance, which enables us to perceive states and reality in a nuanced manner. Constructivists, though acknowledging an objective material reality, emphasize the process where social reality emerges through "the attachment of meaning and functions to physical objects." (Adler 1997, 323-324) They highlight how the "collective understanding, such as norms, endows physical objects with purpose and therefore help constitute reality." (*Ibid.*, 323-324) Epistemologically speaking, states (or states' interests) are not necessarily rational in pursuit of fixed material values. Instead, interests are "defined in the context of internationally held norms and understanding about what good and appropriate." (Finnemore 1996, 2) Social interaction among agents shapes reality; the social reality in turn informs them who they are (identity) and what they are supposed to pursue (interests or preferences). Reshaping or redefining the perception or ideas of preference changes the course of actions accordingly. With respect to the ontological stance, the causal arrows between agents and social structure are not unidirectional, but rather mutually influencing each other.

Constructivists explicate both regulative and constitutive features of social reality. In some cases, the social reality plays a proscribing role in channeling and regularizing states' behaviors by limiting feasible options within the constrained range of preferences. In other cases, the social reality *constitutes*, *creates* or *revises* interests of actors through the reconfiguration of preferences. The social reality encourages actors to behave in a certain way by prescribing what course of action is appropriate. To adopt certain policies, therefore, represents what they value or what they believe to be appropriate in conjunction with given identities.

It is worth mentioning that the rationalist and constructivist are not mutually exclusive in that the latter does not negate the former. Social reality, like norms, does not necessarily match normative or humanitarian values but rather reflect existing values, either material or normative, when/if they are dominating or

accepted without being questioned within given circumstances.⁴ From this perspective, states' foreign aid decisions are driven by certain overarching social reality regardless of the features of the ideas or norms, either moral and humanitarian values or strategic and economic preferences. Considering the theoretical intricacy, it would be not only inappropriate to bifurcate rationalist and constructivist approaches but also unfair to say that constructivism offers an alternative to a rationalist approach. Rather, the constructivist approach provides a more overarching theoretical framework for complicated behaviors of states embedded in structural constraints.

Of course, few constructivist literature exclusively focuses on foreign aid. However, given its epistemological and ontological features, theory of norms can give significant implications and insights for a research program of foreign aid policymaking by illuminating how interests (or preferences) with materialistic and/or ideational aspects are constructed. What follows is to show how existing norms research can be synthesized into four strands for building up a more generalized theoretical framework that help us understand the motivations, processes, and conditions for foreign aid policy.

FOUR STRANDS OF THEORIES OF NORMS: THEORIZING THE MECHANISM OF INTERNATIONAL NORMS FOR FOREIGN AID POLICYMAKING

FIRST STRAND: NORMS MATTER

Extant norms literature has four distinctive strands depending on varying emphases (or angles) of causal dynamics. The first strand highlights the fact that norms matter for common behaviors of states. This literature contends that global social structures exerts powerful causal effects on state behaviors. This approach originated from sociological institutionalism and world polity theory that put exclusive emphasis on the Western cultural norms that bind even non-Western countries under common cultural values (Bergesen 1980; Meyer 1977; 1980; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Thomas and Lauderdale 1987; Thomas *et al.* 1987). Inspired by these sociological approaches, numerous constructivists argue that global social structures like norms and culture shape convergent behavioral patterns of states by transforming their preferences and identity (Boli

⁴ See Payne (2001) for further nuanced discussions on coercion and persuasion in framing process for norm construction.

1998; Crawford 2000; Klotz 1995; Lumsdaine 1993; Nadelman 1990; Ramirez *et al.* 1997; Strang 1991). The research is meaningful in that it pinpoints norms as major causal forces under the situation where interest-based approaches are predominant in IR. However, this approach remains silent with respect to *who* played *what* roles, and *how* norms developed. The second strand circumvents the problem by paying special attention to *agency* and *process* for grasping the causal mechanism.

SECOND STRAND: DYNAMICS OF AGENCY AND PROCESS

The second strand of norms literature delves into the puzzles left unpacked by the first strand. The research, first of all, examines agency: *who* initiated and enforced (or recommended) *whom* to adopt norms (Finnemore 1993; Gurowitz 1999; Katzenstein 1996; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse-Kappen 1994; Strang and Chang 1993; Clark *et al.* 1998; Ingebritsen 2002). The scholars are particularly attentive to the roles of various norms takers (state bureaucrats, political elites, or the public) and norm givers or deliverers (state or non-state actors and policy networks).

Figure 1. A Causal Mechanism of Social Pressure of Transnational Networks (Bottom-up)

They also touch upon another unexplored topic of *process*. As seen in Figure 1, a bottom-up approach explores how non-state actors or transnational

policy networks mobilize international public, who are domestic constituents at the same time, to put pressure on their political elites or bureaucracy to accept certain norms and change behaviors. Keck and Sikkink highlight how transnational advocacy networks work internationally to mobilize and bind both domestic and international public together on specific issues by shared values, common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services (Keck and Sikkink 1998). This mechanism is called a 'bottom-up' approach (see Figure 1).

Figure 2. Vertical Learning and Teaching of an International Institution (Top-down)

A 'top-down' approach displays an opposite causal direction of norms diffusion addressed by the bottom-up approach, with two distinctive patterns. The distinction is derived from different views on the role of international institutions. First of all, international institutions (or epistemic community), as a promoter of norms, invoke 'teaching' about meaning and value of newly emerging agenda. They persuade domestic governments to change behaviors by reinterpreting the issues and redefining interests in certain fashions (Haas 1992). The change occurs through vertical learning as seen in Figure 2. Teaching and learning, however, does not always take place in a vertical way. Institutions can also play a role as a 'site' whereby common identities are created through social interaction (Gurowitz 2006, 311). The shared identities determine interests and preferences of the members embedded in the site. The process of interaction and socialization among states under institutional structure is called a 'horizontal learning' (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Horizontal Learning within an International Institution (Top-Down)

THIRD STRAND: DOMESTIC CONDITIONS FOR NORMS RESONANCE AND POLICY VARIATION

The third strand examines domestic conditions for policy variations of states under encompassing structure of norms. Though the first strand takes norms as the global social structure that homogenizes the behaviors of members, it bypasses cross-national variations; the cross-national policy variations are worth closer scrutiny for disentangling the puzzle of idiosyncratic responses of actors placed under the common overarching structure. The third strand of norms literature theorizes the causal dynamics in regard to the domestic conditions in which international norms are (more or less likely) resonating, leading toward distinctively policies of respective governments; the domestic conditions, as intervening variables, filter the processes and politics of domestic resonance of the norms, determining the directions of a causal arrow, either top-down or bottom-up. Varying domestic settings, such as regime type, civil war, domestic organizations and domestic identities, also differentiate the way in which each state reacts to the norms. Checkel underscores the effects of domestic settings to norms compliance:

[H]aving demonstrated that social construction matters, they must now

address when, how, and why it matters, clearly specifying the actors and mechanisms bringing about change, the scope of conditions under which they operate, and how they vary across countries (Checkel 1998, 325).

It is maintained that international norms are more easily accepted and internalized if/when domestically legitimized value or ideas shared among people are congruent with the norms (Cortell and Davis, 2000; Checkel, 1997; Gurowitz, 1999; Bae, 2007). Meyer and Strang contend that “the degree of cultural match between global norms and domestic practice are essential in determining the pattern and degree of diffusion.” (Meyer and Strang 1993, 503-504) The ‘cultural match’ is “a situation where the prescriptions embodied in international norms are convergent with domestic norms as reflected in discourse, the legal system (constitutions, judicial codes, laws), and bureaucratic agencies (organizational ethos and administrative procedures).” (Checkel 1999, 87) Cortell and Davis reverberate that the domestic acceptance of international norms depends on ‘domestic salience’ that justifies the legitimacy of the norms in the domestic realm (Cortell and Davis 1996). Gurowitz sheds light on identities “that make the state a *priori* more or less likely to adopt international norms *per se*, regardless of their content.” (Gurowitz 2006, 309) Each state has its own distinctive identity based upon varying historical backgrounds, which determine its proclivity of openness to specific or any kinds of international norms for their domestic diffusion.

The third strand also explores how the type of a causal mechanism of norms diffusion is predicated on the institutional arrangement of state-societal relations (liberal, state-above-society, statist, or corporatist). Depending on how centralized a decision-making authority is within the domestic institutional arrangements and how accessible the policy-making process to societal actors, the viable causal paths vary, either elite-learning (top-down) or societal pressure (bottom-up), or a combination of both.

FOURTH STRAND: THE ROLES OF NORMS ENTREPRENEURS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NORMS

The fourth strand provides more detailed and nuanced analyses and narratives of the role of so-called ‘norms entrepreneurs’ who are major actors (international and domestic) for developing norms that provoke policy changes in each stage of norms building, norms cycle and norms cascade (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Clark 2001). For example, human rights norms entrepreneurs persuade states to take hold of norms of international human rights by framing the issues with new

languages and interpretations for appealing audiences.⁵ Then they “act as agents of socialization by pressuring targeted actors to adopt new policies and laws and to ratify treaties and by monitoring compliance with international standards” at the stage of norms acceptance (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 902). Norms subsequently acquire a ‘taken-for-granted quality’ and become consolidated as habitual and commonsensical practices with no need of public debates and questioning.

Local agents (norms-takers) as well as international actors (norms-givers) are highlighted in the literature of norms diffusion. Acharya highlights the role of local agents that galvanize institutional changes in South East Asia (Acharya 2004). The agents, as norms-takers, “promote norms diffusion by actively borrowing and modifying transnational norms in accordance with their preconstructed normative beliefs and practices.” (*Ibid.*, 269) Localization of international ideas depends on the local actors who contributed to building ‘congruence’ between international and domestic norms by “the active construction (through discourse, framing, grafting, and cultural selection) of foreign ideas” in conformity with preexisting regional norms (*Ibid.*, 245).

Norms and identities gradually become tenable causal variables even in the most self-sufficient field of study with material and rationalist foundation of thoughts like international political economy. There are several political economy researches that underscore how elites’ ideas and perceptions matter for policy changes in trade practices, financial policy choices, and the pattern of integration or disintegration (Abdelal *et al.* 2010; Duina 2006; Blyth 2007; Jabko 2006). Agents’ ideas constitute viable choices of definition, diagnosis, and prescription for financial policies or systems. The agents contribute significantly to the process and mechanism of social learning for policy changes. Furthermore, Raymond *et al.* introduce the process wherein institutional changes are made through such norm-based strategies as *normative reframing* or *normative innovations* (Raymond *et al.* 2014). They describe how effective the strategies were in reshaping the institutions of climate change and violence against women through challenging the existing problematic norms.

Having discussed the multifarious configurations of norms theories, it is time to proceed to a case study to vindicate how the study of such norms dynamics associated with actors, processes and conditions can be applied to a real

5 Price (1998) addresses the strategy of ‘grafting’ for norms diffusion. In generating norms prohibiting antipersonnel landmines, norms entrepreneurs attempted to associate the norms with already delegitimized practices of warfare such as weapons of mass destruction including chemical weapons.

empirical scene whereby major donors have grappled with one of the deadliest sexually transmitted diseases called HIV/AIDS. The following case study a viable example of a contribution of norms literature to the research on foreign aid.

CASE STUDY: APPLICATION OF NORMS THEORIES TO FOREIGN AID FOR HIV/AIDS

Foreign aid for HIV/AIDS stands out given the fact that international community has been extraordinarily committed to global fight against the pandemic for more than last three decades. When it comes to the pattern of foreign aid, the international battle is characterized as both convergence and divergence of donors' funding. At first, most major donors in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) converged in the commencement of the funding within a relatively short period of time since the US had initiated its assistance in 1986. The convergent aid initiation was quite exceptional comparing to other development agenda such as food aid or other health issues. Donors, however, varied in the patterns of funding development; some countries, like the US and Sweden, showed dramatic increases while others, like Japan, were unwilling to get financially committed. Still, others like France and Germany, were placed in the middle with an incremental increase (Kim 2016, 344).

We claim that the remarkable patterns of aid policy choices are well explicated by the constructivist framework. Firstly, norms matter in engendering homogenous behaviors among actors under a certain normative framework, according to the first strand of norms literature. As of the aid commencement for the global health emergency, the convergent aid decision was attributed to the idea of urgency and obligation of international cooperation to the pandemic shared amongst DAC members. So-called 'norms of global response to AIDS' exhorted the major donors to urgently and cooperatively respond to the global health crisis (Mann 1987; Mann and Kay 1991; Merson 2006; Slutkin 2000; Will 1991).⁶

The questions of who played what roles for the norms to work for the aid initiation can be captured by the second and fourth strands of norms literature. Several actors, like the World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS or OECD, played a pivotal role as a norms entrepreneur in developing and disseminating

⁶ See Kim (2015a) for further discussion of the process of the establishment of the norms of global response to HIV/AIDS.

the norms.⁷ The WHO, amongst others, was particularly *sui generis* in crafting and proliferating the international norms. It convened various international forums like consultation meetings and annual International AIDS Conferences as platforms or sites within which to problematize the issue and to invoke international awareness. State leaders gradually became cognizant of and even alarmed at the deadliness of the disease. The WHO also organized an overarching institutional network that orchestrated global coordination; the Global Programme on AIDS (GPA) was the most significant institution whose exclusive roles ranged from research and surveillance for collecting information and data to the establishment and implementation of national AIDS programs of recipient countries. Dr. Jonathan Mann, as the incipient Director of the GPA and an individual norms entrepreneur contemporaneously, advocated a perception of AIDS as “a global problem which requires international solidarity” in various international gatherings for urging all members in international society to cooperate in the global battle (Kim 2015a, 31).

The shared idea of international collaboration was promulgated in the official resolutions of the WHO and the United Nations (UN). The UN passed a formal resolution (Resolution 42/8) on AIDS on October 26, 1987, which was an unprecedented official resolution exclusively targeting a specific disease for the first time in UN history. The resolution made the response to HIV/AIDS as high priority and “the central issues of our time in demanding global solidarity.” (UN 1987) In 2000, the UN Security Council proclaims “the need for coordinated efforts of all relevant United Nations organizations” in Resolution 1308 (Security Council 2000); the pandemic was recognized as a threat to international peace and security which required a sense of urgency for financial contributions. The UN commitment culminated in the Millennium Declaration on 8 September 2000. The Declaration elucidates the goals regarding AIDS control as one of the visions and clarifies the efforts “to have, by then [2015], halted, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS” and “to help Africa build up its capacity to tackle the spread of the HIV/AIDS.” (General Assembly 2000)

It can be said that norms matter for the commencement of the financial commitment for responding the threat posed by the epidemic, to which the first

⁷ Kim (2014) elaborates the process of ‘social learning’ that triggered similar foreign aid policy choices for HIV/AIDS among DAC members. The Peer Review is a self-monitoring system of DAC, in which each member is systematically examined and assessed by other countries for adopting best practices in accordance with established standards and principle or the norms of the OECD (www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/16/1955285.pdf). The monitoring system is a mechanism to stimulate sense of identity or ‘peer pressure’ to follow what is believed to be appropriate behaviors among the members.

strand of norms literature is applied. Also the agencies, processes and dynamics of norms development, which the second and fourth strands mainly inquire into, help us to understand how specific actors played a role in creating and disseminating the ideas of urgency that galvanized major donors' aid policy for HIV/AIDS.

In addition to the convergence, the varying level of financial commitment among donors can be explicated by the third and fourth strands of norms literature pertaining to the processes and conditions of domestic resonance or internalization of international norms. At first, the discrete increase is predicated upon how HIV/AIDS is perceived in domestic realms. In other words, the norms of global response was more likely domestically accepted for aid policy when it was congruent with domestic understanding or perception of the pandemic as threats requiring immediate responses. Figure 4 shows a varying perception of AIDS and the level of funding for AIDS in the US, France, and Japan. The second chart of the figure illustrates the hierarchy of funding (in amounts) of the three countries. The third chart shows the public's view of AIDS; 68%, 39% and 13% of the public chose AIDS when asked "what would you say is most urgent health problem facing this country at present time?" The higher the threat perception the more foreign aid was committed, which is a positive correlation between the size of funding and the public's view. The perception or frame, thus, matters as an intervening variable that conditions domestic diffusion of international norms.

Secondly, then how was the domestic perception constructed and by whom? The fourth strand norms literature gives us a clue for complicated perception-making processes of respective donors. Firstly, a perception is constructed by determinants like the role and attitude of the media which *indirectly* influence policies by "structuring what people think" on the issue at the stage of agenda setting (Van Belle *et al.* 2004, 92).⁸ The media established social discourses through perpetuating certain images and meanings of the newly introduced health agenda. It screened, sorted and delivered the stories of related focusing events as well as scientific discoveries of the medical and scientific communities.

⁸ For further discussion on the media and AIDS, see Dearing and Roger (1992) and Konick (2003).

Figure 4. Global AIDS Funding, AIDS Cases, View on AIDS and Degree of Concern in 1987

Source: Mann et al. eds (1992, 520-521); Mann and Tarantola eds (1996, 381-383); Webb (1988, 351)

In the very early 1980s, the disease was rarely covered by the media due to its sexual and moral connotations; the agenda with such connotations was regarded as being inappropriate for public discourse. When the articles on AIDS began to appear since the early to mid 1980s, the media generated public misperception by characterizing the disease as 'gay disease' or 'foreign disease.' The homosexual characterization was attributed to a relatively higher proportion of homosexuals amongst people with HIV or AIDS patients. According to Sontag, the media paid exclusive attention to the statistics so that HIV/AIDS was perceived only as 'gay disease.' (Sontag 1989) AIDS was also framed as 'foreign' disease, especially in Japan as the media highlighted several cases in which Japanese females were infected through sexual relations with foreign males (Dearing 1992).⁹ The false notion due to the dramatizing characterization in the media coverage created unfavorable condition for the domestic resonance of the international norms. The mismatch between international norms and domestic perception resulted in no aid policy responses among major donors in the early 1980s.

It was the mid-1980s onward when the US instigated and dramatically

⁹ See Kim (2015b) for more discussions on the construction of image of AIDS in Japan.

developed its global AIDS funding along with changes in media attitude (Kim and Shin 2017, 528-529). During this period, the media framing has changed in the way that the mysterious new health crisis was objectively and scientifically introduced; the US media attitude was “to inform but not inflame, to educate but not alarm” in reporting the sexually transmitted disease (Kaiser Family Foundation 1996). A study released from the Institute for Health Policy Analysis found that “media coverage has been careful, [and] and informative.” (Konick 2003, 27) As opposed to the US, Japanese media remained unaltered in the HIV/AIDS-related coverage; for example, the media perpetuated the nickname of AIDS as *kurobune*, translated as a ‘black ship’ on which Americans invaded Japan in 1853. The foreign perception was intensified when the already denigrating and threatening historical legacy with the US was linked to the newly emerging health threat (Treat 1999). The false notion stymied Japan’s aid for HIV/AIDS till the early 1990s (Kim 2015b).

Secondly, the roles of civil society organizations including AIDS-related nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or AIDS community-based organizations (CBOs) must be also critical in donors’ global AIDS funding decision; the discussion of agency, dynamics and conditions in the second, third and fourth strands of norms literature is indicative of the aid increases of the US and France since the late 1980s. In case of France, medical communities like the Association for Research on AIDS (ARSIDA) and the Association of Gay Physicians (AMG) educated the public as well as gays on the scientific knowledge about the mode of transmission of HIV based upon their original scientific research on the origin of AIDS (Pollak, 1990). Not only such organizations with a medical expertise but also another AIDS-related NGOs contributed to determining how the pandemic was domestically viewed by correcting the widely spread misleading and (sexually) discriminatory images¹⁰; for instance, AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in the US and AIDES¹¹ in France launched education programs and mobilized not only sexually minority communities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) but also regular citizens for social protests as well as traditional ‘politicking’ like lobbying governments for more committed policy responses.

The inchoate expansion of Japan’s aid since the early 1990s came along

10 ACT UP is the nation’s first and most vital modern activist movement specializing the epidemic in US in the mid 1980s. For more information, see Stockdill (2003). French AIDS civil organizations are well described in Steffen (1993).

11 The name of the association, French word aides, means ‘help’ in English but sounds like AIDS. This is a word play having dual meanings of help and AIDS.

with the emergence of gay and lesbian civil organizations like AIDS Action or OCCUR.¹² AIDS Action, an overarching gay community umbrella structure covering several small gay rights advocacy groups, built hotline services within the gay community and distributed cards containing information on safe sex and AIDS for the general public (Ikegami 1997, 52). The Japanese public and government were enlightened of the critical importance of early responses to AIDS by the activities of LGBT communities as well as hemophiliacs or drug users. Ikegami points out that the policy transformation was feasible as the activities of civil society groups enhanced the awareness of AIDS and put pressure on the government apparatus through civic participation (Ikegami 1997, 53). Umenai *et al.* also argue that the Japanese government undertook the global financial commitment based on the recognition of the “global threat of AIDS.” (Umenai *et al.* 1997, 60) Yonemoto echoes that the change was the reflection of changed understanding of AIDS as “an emergency.” (Yonemoto 1997, 18)¹³ The anecdotes of three countries illustrates how domestic perception was corresponding to international ideas for aid development, which the third and fourth strands norms theories can be pertained to.

In sum, this brief case study shows how suggestive the constructive approach is to explain the mechanism of foreign aid for HIV/AIDS. The theoretical framework delves into the questions regarding the international norms and global AIDS funding; how can the concerted efforts of the international community against the then newly emerging health catastrophe be understood?; who were, if any, the major actors and what roles did they play in the commencement of aid?; Why, how, and under what conditions did the major donor countries pose an idiosyncratic pattern of aid development? Existing norms theories provide viable explication of the emergence, development, and proliferation of the norms and the roles that diverse norms entrepreneurs played, the process of norm internalization, and the conditions of domestic resonance of the international norms for the aid policy establishment.

¹² Feldman and Yonemoto described the emergence and the roles of OCCUR (Feldman and Yonemoto 1992, 356-358).

¹³ See Kim and Shin (2017)’s comparative study of the US and Japan, which illustrates distinctive domestic conditions that determine internationalization of international norms of global response to HIV/AIDS for aid policy establishment.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: CONTRIBUTION OF NORMS LITERATURE TO BUILD THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR FOREIGN AID POLICY AND BEYOND

We contend that the norms literature contributes to the systematic theoretical framework which accounts for foreign aid policy dynamics. Existing norms theories pinpoint the four strands: 1) the significance of the social structure that shapes convergent behavioral patterns among actors; 2) the role of international institutions either as norms teachers, a norms promoter or a site in which socialization among actors takes place; 3) the influence of domestic conditions for policy variation; and 4) the process in which norms entrepreneurs play a role in developing international norms.

The case study of global response to HIV/AIDS shows how the literature can answer the abovementioned questions on the foreign aid policy mechanism in practice. The confluence of foreign aid choices is well explicated by the constructivist frameworks: the norms of global response to AIDS mattered (the first strand); the WHO played a pivotal role in developing and spreading (or inculcating) the norms to the DAC members in a ‘top-down’ manner (the second and fourth strands); the cross-national variance of the aid among donors was determined by the domestic salience of the agenda provoked by certain perception that matches the international understanding of the pandemic (the third strand). The case study likewise explores how distinctive social atmosphere or cultural background affected varying levels of the financial commitment.

We finally claim that existing constructivist research is able to contribute to the discipline of IR in general by unraveling the puzzles of foreign policy decisions, above and beyond mere foreign aid policymaking. The four strands of norms literature will be able to provide useful theoretical tools with which to account for the origins, development and variations of foreign policies. Moreover, the norms theory will be able to pave a way to build more generalized theoretical frameworks of foreign policy behaviors, which uncover the motivations of various actors, and the processes and structural conditions under which certain foreign policies are construed.

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