Dependency Politics

Ryan Jablonski's *Dependency Politics* examines how democracy works in aid-dependent countries. He draws on over six years of fieldwork to investigate relationships between donors, NGOs, politicians and voters. He shows aid dependency changes politicians' behavior and voters' assessments of politicians' performance. He reveals that voters don't simply reward politicians for aid, rather they condition their votes on beliefs about how politicians influence aid delivery. This leads to a "visibility–uncertainty" paradox where aid can either enhance or erode democratic accountability. Revisiting assumptions about the effects of foreign aid on political behavior, he also explains how aid can cause citizens to vote against their interests and sometimes benefit opposition candidates over incumbents. Drawing on surveys, interviews, focus groups, and field experiments, Jablonski challenges conventional wisdom about foreign aid and offers lessons for balancing trade-offs over aid effectiveness, political capture, and capacity-building. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Ryan Jablonski is Associate Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He specializes in the political economy of public service delivery in low-income democracies, with particular expertise in foreign aid, voting behavior, and elite politics. His research is published in leading political science, international relations, and economics journals including the *American Political Science Review, Journal of Development Economics, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), World Development, International Studies Quarterly, British Journal of Political Science*, and *World Politics*. His research has been supported by the British Academy, the World Bank, the UK Department for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and others.

Published online by Cambridge University Press

Published online by Cambridge University Press

Dependency Politics

How Foreign Aid Shapes Electoral Behavior

RYAN JABLONSKI
London School of Economics and Political Science

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published online by Cambridge University Press

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009789134
DOI: 10.1017/9781009789127

© Ryan Jablonski 2026

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the Creative Commons
version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009789127 under a Creative
Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 which permits re-use, distribution and
reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes providing appropriate credit to the
original work is given. You may not distribute derivative works without permission. To view a
copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009789127

First published 2026

Cover image: Ryan Jablonski

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
NAMES: Jablonski, Ryan author
TITLE: Dependency politics : how foreign aid shapes electoral behavior / Ryan Jablonski.
DESCRIPTION: 1. | New York : Cambridge University Press, 2026. | Includes
bibliographical references and index.
IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2026000702 (print) | LCCN 2026000703 (ebook) |
ISBN 9781009789134 hardback | ISBN 9781009789080 paperback |
ISBN 9781009789127 ebook
SUBJECTS: LCSH: Democracy – Developing countries | Economic
assistance – Political aspects – Developing countries |
Elections – Developing countries | Political participation – Developing
countries | Liability (Law) – Political aspects – Developing countries |
Political planning – Developing countries
CLASSIFICATION: LCC KZ1318 .J33 2026 (print) | LCC KZ1318 (ebook)
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2026000702
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2026000703

ISBN 978-1-009-78913-4 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-78908-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal, 56, 1°, 28003 Madrid,
Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org.

Published online by Cambridge University Press