

**Special Issue Editors: Monika Austaller and Mina Lahlal**

## **The end of USAID – and what it means for the new international order**

Since the beginning of 2025, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was forced to end more than 80 % of their programs in development cooperation and humanitarian aid (Debusmann 2025). Staff has been reduced from 10.000 to 15 positions. USAID would be reoriented “to align directly with what is best for the United States”, Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated (Demirjian et al. 2025).

USAID was responsible for over 42 % of global humanitarian aid. Especially in Southern and Eastern African countries, millions of people depend on humanitarian measures. USAID has always been a tool to promote soft power, too: initiatives included the support of civil society and media in countries of Middle and Eastern Europe such as Ukraine and Hungary. In 2023, top aid recipients were Ukraine, Ethiopia, Jordan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Syria (The Guardian 2025).

The idea and practice of international development has multiple roots, including in colonialism and international cooperation. Scholars generally agree, however, that it was globalized by the US commitment – following US president Truman’s Point IV speech – in the context of the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union and the desire to shape decolonization. This US commitment to development has since had a momentous impact on ideas, policies, and practices around the world.

What does a de facto end of USAID mean for social relations in countries depending on the program? This special issue invites empirical and theoretical contributions on – but not limited to – effects on the following topics, moving beyond analyses centered on interactions and security issues between nation-states to critically engage with the following:

- The “development” discourse
- Effects on the humanitarian situation and impact on global health and livelihood
- Perceptions within communities
- Differences to previous challenges to USAID
- (soft) power relations
- Opening windows of opportunities
- Human rights
- Global economic inequalities
- Gender equality
- Democracy in different regions

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## Schedule

We invite authors from any discipline to send an abstract (maximum 300 words) including title, author(s) and institutional affiliation to **monika.austaller@posteo.at** and **sophie.gleitsmann@mattersburgerkreis.at** by **October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025**. We will invite authors to write their texts as soon as possible within November, and will inform all others about our decision. The deadline for the submission of full articles (40,000 characters, including spaces) is **January 31, 2025**. After editorial assessment and double-blind review, corrections and proof-reading, the special issue will be published in print and online in autumn 2026.

## Guidelines

Please submit abstracts and full papers in **English**. Communication with the editors may take place in **English** or **German**. Further information for potential authors is available [here](#). For any questions regarding the procedures of publication, please contact **sophie.gleitsmann@mattersburgerkreis.at**. For previous articles and issues of the journal, have a look at our archive.

## Sources:

Debusmann Jr, Bernd (2025): More than 80% of USAID programmes 'officially ending'. In: BBC, 10.03.2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdx2401vn5ro>. 15.6.2025.

Demirjian, Karoun et al. (2025): Final Cuts Will Eliminate U.S. Aid Agency in All but Name. In: The New York Times, 28.3.2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/28/us/politics/usaids-trump-doge-cuts.html>. 15.6.2025.

The Guardian (2025): What is USAid and why does Trump dislike it so much? In: The Guardian, 4.2.2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/04/what-is-usaid-donald-trump-elon-musk-foreign-aid-freezes>. 15.6.2025.