

As USAID Retreats, China Pounces, *Politico*, 11 Feb 2025

If USAID is packing up and moving out, China seems all too happy to move in.

That's the trend that longtime U.S. China watchers and aid workers are already noticing in the weeks since President **DONALD TRUMP** and his ally **ELON MUSK** moved to dismantle and shake up the U.S. Agency for International Development.

China is quickly making moves to fill in gaps left behind by the Trump administration's abrupt moves to almost entirely halt and wind down USAID operations worldwide, from the Indo-Pacific to South America.

In Nepal, Chinese officials have reportedly signaled to the Nepalese government that Beijing is willing to step in to replace USAID's void with development funding of its own, [the Annapurna Express reports](#). Officials in the Cook Islands, a strategically important island chain in the Indo-Pacific, [said they expect the withdrawal of USAID from the region to provide an opening for China](#). In Colombia, which received around \$385 million in USAID funding in 2024, non-governmental organizations that received USAID funding say the Chinese government [is interested in putting up money to help fill](#) the void.

These are early signs, but taken together, it has some analysts on both sides of the political spectrum warning that USAID's dismantlement will undercut U.S. global competition with China in the long-run.

"China is already reaching out to partners," said **FRANCISCO BENCOSME**, who served as USAID's China policy lead during the Biden administration. "They will fill in the void in places like Cambodia and Nepal, and those are just the places we know about."

On the Republican side, **MICHAEL SOBOLIK**, a China analyst at the Hudson Institute think tank and a former aide to Sen. **TED CRUZ** (R-Texas), said USAID helped offer an alternative to China for developing countries looking to outside investors for infrastructure and telecoms development. USAID also aided media outlets in Africa, Southeast Asia and elsewhere where Chinese-controlled media outlets such as Xinhua are ascendant, he noted.

"Sure, USAID was doing some highly questionable stuff that's worthy of review. But don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Beijing is hoping we do exactly that," Sobolik said.

Democrats on the House Select China Committee, led by Rep. **RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY** (D-Ill.), have drawn up a new strategy to hammer the Trump administration on how dismantling USAID will hand a win to Beijing, according to a [three-page document of talking points](#) obtained by NatSec Daily.

“When the Chinese Communist Party is aggressively investing abroad, rerouting supply chains, and buying authoritarian favor through elite capture, the United States must double down on USAID’s work, not stifle it,” the document said.

But the GOP side of the committee isn’t stepping up to defend the agency. Asked for comment by NatSec Daily, the committee replied with a broad statement saying it “has full trust in Secretary Rubio’s ability to effectively handle critical human rights and development issues.”