

**Brookings' and former USAID Mission Director Patrick Fine's Warning.** By Anna Gawel, *Devex Newswire*, 18 Aug 2025

### **Going backwards?**

The development sector has strived to move beyond its past colonial mindset, blamed for perpetuating inequality between the global north and south. But will the loss of billions in development dollars [usher in a new kind of colonialism?](#)

That's the question Patrick Fine of the [Brookings Institution](#) poses in an opinion piece for Devex.

“Unfortunately, what is replacing the faltering international development industry looks extractive, coercive, and exploitative, **echoing the colonial era's scramble for resources and influence** through conquest, proselytizing, and exploitative trade,” he writes.

“**Colonialism's 'three Ms' — mercenaries** (the Wagner Group in the Sahel), **missionaries** (Islamic extremists and Christian fundamentalists), and **merchants** promoting ‘trade not aid’ — again compete for resources and influence,” he adds. “This environment favors authoritarianism and stokes ethnic and tribal divisions for plunder and profit.”

**He wouldn't describe this new era as neocolonialism**, however, given how complex and crowded our multipolar world has become. Still, the prevailing narrative of might makes right doesn't bode well for the global south.

“Replacing goals of sustainable development and shared prosperity with ideologies of narrow self-interest is bound to result in an increasingly contested, unpredictable, and unhappy world.”

**Opinion:** [Is global development decolonizing or recolonizing?](#)