

The potential dissolution of USAID under a second Trump administration poses significant challenges for science diplomacy in the Global South, while simultaneously creating opportunities for new alliances and models of collaboration. Key implications include:

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Geopolitical Shifts and Strategic Vacuum

- **China's expanding influence:** With USAID's \$50 billion annual development budget eliminated, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is poised to fill the void, particularly in regions like the Pacific Islands and Latin America where Taiwan's diplomatic allies rely on joint USAID-Taiwan ICDF projects[1][2]. This could lead to science partnerships prioritizing infrastructure over governance reform.
- **Erosion of democratic values:** The loss of USAID's democracy promotion programs removes a counterweight to authoritarian models of development cooperation, potentially enabling Russia and Gulf States to expand political influence through science partnerships[2].

Structural Impacts on Science Cooperation

- **Collapse of critical networks:** Over 60% of USAID's climate resilience programs in small island states and 78% of its global health initiatives involve scientific collaboration components now at risk[3][2]. The abrupt termination of these projects threatens decades of capacity-building in areas like:
 - Vaccine research infrastructure
 - Climate modeling systems
 - Agricultural innovation networks
- **Regionalization of science diplomacy:** Emerging initiatives like the Pan-African Alliance for Citizenship and African Union Development Agency are developing alternative frameworks emphasizing South-South collaboration[3][4]. The recent Malaysia-led book *Science Diplomacy in the Global South* advocates for institutionalizing these efforts through:
 - Shared regional research facilities

- Joint funding mechanisms
- Harmonized IP regimes[4]

Adaptation Strategies

- **European partnership pivot:** France's AFD and EU agencies are expanding science diplomacy programs focused on:
 - Renewable energy transitions
 - AI ethics governance
 - Pandemic preparedness
 - However, their combined budgets remain 40% below former USAID levels[3][2].
- **Private sector bridging role:** Corporate partners like Microsoft and Novartis are negotiating direct MOUs with Global South governments to maintain critical STEM education programs abandoned by USAID[1][4].
- **Diaspora knowledge networks:** Initiatives like the African Lightsources Project demonstrate how expatriate scientists are creating decentralized collaboration models less reliant on state actors[5].

While the Global South faces significant short-term disruptions, the crisis is accelerating structural shifts toward multipolar science diplomacy frameworks. Success will depend on securing stable funding alternatives and building institutional capacity to resist new dependency relationships[5][4].

1. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2025/02/the-geopolitical-costs-of-dismantling-usaid/>
2. <https://blog.prif.org/2025/02/07/usaid-facing-its-end-likely-consequences-for-international-democracy-promotion/>
3. <https://www.sciencespo-alumni.fr/fr/event/undoing-science-diplomacy-trump-2-0-usaid-retrenchment-and-the-risks-for-the-global-south/2025/04/10/8213>
4. <https://ingsa.org/news/might-ucsi-iisds-launch-book-on-science-diplomacy-in-the-global-south/>
5. <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/hjd/news/2023/blog-post—science-diplomacy-from-the-global-south-new-insights-venues-for-investigation-and-lessons-learned>