

Impact of Ceasing USAID Funding in Africa: A Philosophical Framework

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ABSTRACT

This paper rigorously analyses the philosophical, ethical, and governance ramifications of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) diminishing or terminating funding to African nations. Foreign aid has significantly influenced Africa's political, economic, and humanitarian environment, with USAID serving as a pivotal tool of American development diplomacy. Nevertheless, changing geopolitical goals and donor weariness have necessitated a reassessment of assistance frameworks, therefore exposing vulnerable recipient economies to additional dangers. This study examines the moral responsibilities of donor nations, the ethical implications of conditionality, and the paradoxes of reliance via a philosophical lens. Additionally, it evaluates the governance issues faced by aid-receiving nations and the possibility of transformational or regressive results without continuous external assistance. The paper advocates for a redefined approach to foreign aid that harmonizes ethical obligation with local sovereignty, accountability, and resilience.

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Introduction

Historically, foreign aid has been essential in influencing development paths in African countries. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has played a pivotal role in these initiatives, allocating assistance according to humanitarian emergencies, economic growth prospects, and congruence with geopolitical aims (Everill & Kaplan, 2013). The decision to diminish or terminate USAID support in many African nations has ignited vigorous discourse over the political, economic, and ethical ramifications for the recipient countries. The cessation of foreign aid, often directed to countries facing conflict, starvation, and infrastructural disintegration, prompts inquiries over donor accountability and recipient fortitude. This article examines the extensive philosophical and structural ramifications of the termination of USAID assistance in Africa. It aims to comprehend the ethical principles governing foreign assistance, the performance indicators that validate its persistence or cessation, and the political consequences of alterations in donor-recipient dynamics. The paper provides a theoretical yet thorough examination of the relationship among aid, governance, and moral responsibility, rooted in philosophical, economic, and political theory. Ultimately, it contests the reductionist perspective that perceives assistance just as a humanitarian

act, highlighting its entanglement in intricate power relations and ethical quandaries.

Background and Rationale

Founded in 1961, USAID was created to foster sustainable economic and social development via foreign aid. In Africa, characterized by persistent poverty, underdevelopment, and public health issues, USAID assistance frequently shifts from developmental to charity forms. The historical efficacy of foreign aid has been inconsistent; certain infrastructure initiatives have fostered prosperity, while others have exacerbated reliance and sustained inequality. Critics contend that Western aid has traditionally functioned more to enable resource exploitation and labour migration for external advantage than to strengthen local people (Setlaba, 2011).

The growing geopolitical and demographic importance of Africa, together with the impact of colonization and neo-imperial strategies, highlights the necessity of reassessing foreign assistance structures. Malawi exemplifies a situation where USAID-funded initiatives supplanted indigenous food systems with charity programs that foster reliance, notably through the provision of corn-soy diets by international NGOs. Although formerly self-sufficient, some Malawians were forced into reliance under the pretext of humanitarianism. The introduction of supplementary U.S.-affiliated projects like AGRA and AFRICOM exacerbates

the development narrative. This situation necessitates an examination of whether assistance promotes sustainable development or conceals systemic disempowerment.

Philosophical Perspectives

Comprehending the ramifications of foreign aid requires an examination of its philosophical underpinnings. Ethical, utilitarian, and deontological frameworks offer perspectives for analyzing the motivations and outcomes of development aid. Assistance is frequently rationalized using utilitarian principles, aiming to enhance welfare by reducing suffering; nevertheless, these arguments must be weighed against deontological considerations about fairness, obligation, and autonomy (Brilmayer, 1996).

The accumulation of money and authority in the Global North, as demonstrated by the leadership of U.S. international aid, prompts inquiries over distributive fairness. To what degree do affluent nations have responsibility for rectifying the circumstances they contributed to, especially via colonialism and exploitative trade practices? Furthermore, should assistance be contingent upon factors that perpetuate reliance or obstruct the autonomy of recipient nations? According to Alexander (2018), the provision of help is not ethically neutral; it may prolong paternalism and geopolitical hegemony, even when presented as benevolence.

Ethical Considerations in Foreign Aid

Foreign aid entails intricate ethical compromises between the expectations of donors and the requirements of recipients. Generally, assistance is allocated either bilaterally or via multilateral organizations; nonetheless, in both scenarios, it frequently entails conditions, policy mandates, institutional changes, or strategic alignment. Although characterized as partnerships, these arrangements frequently perpetuate power imbalances. Recipients must adhere to donor requirements or face the cessation of funding.

The recent decision by the U.S. government to terminate aid to nations such as Nigeria, Angola, and Zambia, each formerly getting over \$200 million yearly, presents ethical issues. While institutional programs may persist, development financing is being reallocated to "strategic partners," indicating a preference for political loyalty over humanitarian necessity. Setlaba (2011) observes that the requirement for assistance recipients to modify their governance structures to align with donor objectives presents issues around sovereignty and legitimacy. This trend indicates a transition from need-based assistance to

performance-based allocation, with significant implications for vulnerable groups.

Governance and Leadership

The efficacy of foreign aid is fundamentally linked to the governance structures of recipient countries. Robust governance frameworks characterized by openness, accountability, and inclusion can amplify the efficacy of aid and diminish long-term reliance. In contrast, feeble or corrupt institutions frequently distort the distribution of aid, leading to inefficiencies, misallocation, and the perpetuation of poverty (Setlaba, 2011).

Although USAID has progressively included governance standards in its assistance distribution procedures, these benchmarks do not consistently correspond with the socio-political reality of recipient nations. Externally imposed governance improvements may conflict with local goals or be undermined by established interests. Furthermore, the focus on quantifiable results may neglect the development of long-term capabilities. Consequently, it is imperative to cultivate governance models that are locally anchored and globally interconnected, allowing substantial involvement and contextually relevant adaptation.

Challenges in Governance Structures

Notwithstanding commendable objectives, foreign assistance operations can face structural and contextual obstacles. Philosophical and political discrepancies between donor frameworks and local realities might diminish assistance efficacy. What ethical criteria govern assistance distribution, and when do theoretical frameworks falter in actual implementation? These are essential inquiries for evaluating the cessation of USAID financing in Africa.

Ideally, aid fosters political stability, infrastructure advancement, and social welfare. Nonetheless, the intertwining of assistance with political agendas sometimes undermines this objective. Conditionalities associated with political changes may conflict with cultural norms or institutional capabilities. Furthermore, corruption on both sides of the assistance equation diminishes confidence and undermines developmental goals. In practice, assistance is frequently driven by strategic interests rather than humanitarian motives, leading to misunderstanding, inadequate execution, and, in certain instances, the aggravation of the crises it aims to mitigate.

Economic and Social Consequences

Examining the consequences of the termination of USAID financing via philosophical and political lenses offers a more profound comprehension of Africa's developmental obstacles. These frameworks rigorously analyze Africa's present developmental status, the ramifications of stagnated advancement, international development commitments, and prospective creative remedies. The "Ceasing Aid" discourse originated as a philosophical inquiry, providing an extensive examination of the consequences of terminating development assistance and reassessing the ethical obligations that necessitated it. This conceptual framework posits that the cessation of such assistance will create new contingent moral obligations that require innovative economic and political methods (Riddell, 2007).

It is imperative to shift from abstract theories to actual consequences when the likelihood of social and economic collapse becomes increasingly palpable. The global social and economic system ought to be regarded as a closely integrated network. Poverty, health, education, and infrastructure are profoundly interconnected; setbacks in one area can trigger destabilization in others (Asongu & Nwachukwu, 2015). Consequently, USAID's exit may trigger a cascade of adverse consequences that surpass earlier projections.

The disenchantment of youth and their increased susceptibility to radicalization may escalate owing to rising unemployment resulting from the cessation of USAID-funded job creation programs. Local NGOs and firms reliant on USAID funding would forfeit essential financial resources, leading to substantial job losses and institutional disintegration (Glennie, 2008). The diminishment of support for vocational training programs will diminish skill development possibilities, compromising labour market flexibility and long-term productivity. As a result, several individuals may choose informal sector employment, often marked by reduced earnings and minimal job security. Ultimately, insufficient investment in human capital may impede productivity development across several industries (Burnside & Dollar, 2000).

Impacts on Development Indicators

Policymakers in developing nations must evaluate the impact of development aid on economic performance for effective resource allocation. Econometric methods are often utilized in cross-country research to examine the causal link between aid and growth. Nonetheless, empirical evidence continues to be conflicting (Easterly, 2003). Notwithstanding these

discrepancies, compelling evidence substantiates the assertion that foreign aid is essential for fostering equitable growth, particularly in Africa.

Over one billion individuals persist in extreme poverty, with over 239 million located in Africa. Secondly, although worldwide poverty is typically decreasing, poverty rates in Africa remain unchanged. Third, around 45% of Sub-Saharan African countries did not achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of poverty alleviation (Asongu & Nnanna, 2018). These statistics indicate that external assistance is essential for mitigating poverty and advancing fairness.

Between 2000 and 2013, donor contributions to health and population initiatives were around \$16.5 billion (OECD, 2015). From 2008 to 2013, significant financial resources were allocated to several African countries. However, disproportionate assistance distribution has resulted in unequal territorial development and adverse effects on regional cohesion (Asongu & Nwachukwu, 2017). Policymakers can utilize variations in aid timing and structure to promote development programs customized to their national settings.

Geopolitical Implications

Since the 1960s, foreign aid has served as a strategic instrument through which the United States and other Western democracies have sought to build alliances, expand economic influence, and secure diplomatic footholds globally (Lancaster, 2008). USAID, in particular, has been pivotal in promoting U.S. interests across Africa by fostering soft power through development assistance. This mirrors the colonial-era strategies used by European powers to expand influence across the continent (Adebayo *et al.*, 2019).

A sudden termination of such aid poses significant geopolitical risks. Africa's strategic resources, including minerals, labor, and geographic positioning, have historically drawn global powers into competition. In the absence of American influence, nations like China and Russia may fill the vacuum, recalibrating alliances and potentially undermining Western liberal democratic ideals. For instance, countries such as Botswana might pivot away from traditional Western partners toward strategic partnerships with China, lured by promises of infrastructure investment and debt financing (Brautigam, 2009).

China's growing presence in Africa, through military bases, financial investments, and Belt and Road Initiatives, has transformed its geopolitical footprint. If left unchecked, African nations like Nigeria could emerge as full-fledged

Chinese allies, relying heavily on Beijing for economic sustenance and political protection. This shift may result in weakened governance accountability, human rights regressions, and exploitative debt dependencies often termed “debt diplomacy” (Sun, 2014). It is therefore imperative for Western policymakers to avoid short-sighted decisions that could jeopardize decades of diplomatic and developmental engagement in the region.

Shifts in International Relations

The United States' decision to suspend foreign aid to African nations may produce substantial and intricate consequences for international relations on the continent. This trend may alter the impact of diverse state and non-state players, upset current alliances, and redefine the strategic alternatives accessible to African states. This topic is on the impact of foreign aid on the foreign policy decisions and international alignments of African governments (Moyo, 2009; Brown, 2013).

This article utilizes two analytical methodologies. Initially, it uses game theory ideas to assess how the termination of aid alters the reward structures influencing foreign policy decisions of African governments. Foreign aid frequently functions as a strategic asset that impacts bilateral and multilateral relations; in its absence, nations may reevaluate their alliances and geopolitical inclinations (Bräutigam, 2000). Secondly, via stochastic modelling of state preferences and dynamic interactions, the paper demonstrates how the cessation of aid alters the probability and incentives influencing foreign policy orientations.

The strategic adjustment after the end of U.S. aid may prompt realignments with developing powers, especially China and Russia, whose aid and development frameworks are less conditional (Mawdsley, 2012). These changes are not only transactional; they affect wider trends in international conduct, alliance development, and geopolitical rivalry in Africa. The study offers a sophisticated theoretical and empirical analysis of how the cessation of U.S. aid may fundamentally transform the international landscape in Africa, surpassing conventional critiques by presenting a conceptual framework for comprehending changing foreign policy behaviors (Naïm, 2007).

Historical and Comparative Analysis

For more than fifty years, USAID has been instrumental in influencing African development via programs in governance, education, health, and economic support.

USAID has faced criticism inside U.S. bureaucratic circles, frequently regarded as a soft power tool inferior to defense and diplomatic goals (Lancaster, 2008). This part utilizes a philosophical and comparative examination of historical cases in which foreign governments substantially restricted or misdirected development aid, resulting in unforeseen socio-political and economic repercussions.

Historically, decreases in aid, whether stemming from donor weariness, economic crises, or changes in political objectives, have resulted in detrimental results such as heightened poverty, social unrest, weaker institutions, and greater insecurity (Hendrickson, 2011). This is apparent in instances such as Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, Latin American nations during the 1980s structural adjustment period, and South Africa in the post-Apartheid reconstruction phase (van de Walle, 2001). These examples illustrate the intricate relationship between external money and the stability of domestic policies.

This section contends that the consequences of assistance reductions are beyond immediate economic detriments. They frequently subvert governance frameworks and sustainable development pathways. The withdrawal of USAID from Peru in the 1990s resulted in the disintegration of health outreach initiatives and a decline in institutional capacity (Tarp, 2006). This study emphasizes the imperative of evidence-based policy planning to alleviate comparable repercussions in Africa in the event of USAID money withdrawal.

Lessons from Past Aid Reductions

An examination of past assistance cutbacks provides crucial insights for predicting and alleviating the effects of forthcoming cuts. The sudden cessation of development aid, shown by the withdrawal of funds from initiatives like UNAIDS or the Zidssa project, has historically resulted in significant disruptions across several sectors, particularly in health and education (Tarp, 2006; Easterly, 2006). The effects were not universally adverse but were influenced by the recipient country's resilience, institutional quality, and policy reaction mechanisms.

A key lesson is that donor choices to diminish or reallocate money without sufficient transitional planning frequently intensify socio-economic vulnerabilities. In several sub-Saharan African nations, decreases in aid have led to diminished NGO capacity, a decline in public trust, and decreased access to vital services (Bräutigam & Knack, 2004). Furthermore, although short-term effects differed, long-term performance metrics frequently indicated stasis or

decline, particularly when donor withdrawal precipitated political or economic turmoil.

Adaptive techniques and contingency planning are crucial to tackle these difficulties. Policy adaptability, recipient-donor communication, and varied financing sources help alleviate the most severe consequences of sudden aid termination (Naím, 2007). The U.S. government and entities such as SACAI should pursue diplomatic initiatives to explore alternative support sources and promote the enhancement of domestic policy capacity and financial autonomy among African nations in sectors significantly dependent on foreign aid.

Sustainability and Local Capacity Building

The sustainability of global health and development projects in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is a significant worry amid the expected withdrawal of funding. Although these initiatives have attained significant success in tackling hunger, educational inequities, and inadequate access to clean water, their sustainability is jeopardized when financial backing is abruptly retracted. The difficulty resides not in the duplication of these initiatives, but in the structural deficiencies, including underdeveloped infrastructure, insufficient human capital, and frail institutional frameworks, that leave several LMICs incapable of independently sustaining such interventions (Neel *et al.*, 2024).

Historically, assistance transfers that neglect underlying deficits have resulted in setbacks in developmental progress. When the provision of critical services such as vaccinations, clean water, or primary education deteriorates owing to abrupt budget deficits, the necessity for emergency humanitarian interventions escalates significantly, frequently leading to a resurgence of extreme poverty and instability (OECD, 2020). This cycle not only erodes previous advancements but also places further strain on international assistance mechanisms and diminishes public confidence in developmental collaborations.

To avert such regression, local capacity building must be integrated as a fundamental component in both current and prospective aid initiatives. Enhancing the technical, administrative, and organizational competencies of local institutions, particularly community-based organizations and civil society networks, is essential for fostering resilience against financial instability. Investing in local monitoring mechanisms, leadership development, and program ownership can establish a more resilient basis for sustainable outcomes (Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010).

Sustainability planning must be prioritized globally, engaging recipient countries, foreign funders, multilateral institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Coordinated transition plans, encompassing incremental resource reallocation, knowledge transfer, and policy alignment, are crucial for closing the gap between external assistance and independent program operation. In the absence of such safeguards, the likelihood of future aid crises mirroring previous failures is highly elevated.

Historical evidence indicates that the void left by the abrupt suspension of aid is frequently occupied not by economic self-sufficiency but by increased war, disease proliferation, or regional instability, consequences that threaten both local and international peace and stability (Easterly, 2006). Consequently, constructing sustainable systems must transcend emergency response frameworks and emphasize the empowerment of communities via equitable partnerships and enduring institutional development.

Building Resilience in Local Communities

The Value Problematique Solution Implementation (VPS-I) policy framework provides a comprehensive perspective for analyzing the interaction among the philosophical, political, and practical dimensions of global development. This paradigm enables researchers and policymakers to analyze overarching policy objectives and examine their subsequent effects on local community resilience (Howlett, 2009). The VPS-I framework elucidates the disparity between verbal pledges and actual conditions regarding the present trajectory of foreign assistance flows, particularly in light of U.S. disengagement.

For example, although the European Union's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) consistently advocates for local ownership, participation, and institutional strengthening, it has failed to delineate a concrete or financially sustainable strategy to address the development gap resulting from U.S. withdrawal. This absence renders fragile nations trapped between ideological endorsement for local empowerment and the actual lack of essential financial support (Branham, 2019).

In the absence of a definitive compensation strategy, several African nations may encounter two challenges: the depletion of essential resources and the sudden obligation to uphold inadequately financed initiatives. These trends threaten to intensify inequality, aggravate inter-communal conflicts, and undermine the efficacy of local governing systems. The inability to cultivate resilience may let unscrupulous or politically motivated individuals exploit the aid void with opportunistic intentions (Mawdsley, 2012).

The sustainability of local communities relies on both internal capabilities and reliable, ethical external collaborations. Initiatives that emphasize systems thinking, inclusive governance, and adaptive planning, like those advocated by the African Capacity Building Foundation, are more resilient to external shocks (ADB, 2017). International entities must transcend short-term performance measurements and invest in enduring social contracts that emphasize responsibility, human capital, and grassroots creativity.

Ultimately, resilience is not only a technological result but a political and ethical need. Neglecting to prioritize local capacity development following significant assistance departure is likely to result in humanitarian losses that could have been averted via foresight, coordination, and strategic investment in local institutions.

Discussion

The United States' decision to cease USAID financing in Africa entails significant ethical, moral, economic, and geopolitical ramifications that need thorough, multifaceted examination. Utilizing several philosophical and international relations viewpoints clarifies the intricacy of this policy transition.

Utilitarianism offers a consequentialist paradigm for assessing the cessation of help. From this perspective, the immediate effect is expected to cause significant adversity, especially in essential areas such as healthcare, education, and food security. Proponents contend that these immediate costs may catalyze long-term advantages by promoting economic self-sufficiency and diminishing reliance on foreign assistance (Ruamps, 2023). The intrinsic conflict exists between the immediate needs of at-risk people and the ambitious objective of sustainable development.

From a deontological perspective, a wealthier nation has an intrinsic moral obligation to assist less developed countries, regardless of the results. Reducing aid would be perceived as a failure to meet this ethical commitment, contravening notions of justice and global solidarity (Fagbemi *et al.*, 2024). This role emphasizes the inherent worth of aid and the obligations of affluent nations beyond practical concerns.

The realist perspective in international relations emphasizes national interests and power dynamics above ethical considerations. The U.S. exit is viewed as a strategic realignment, reallocating resources domestically or towards evolving geopolitical allies, rather than a moral failing. This realpolitik perspective recognizes assistance as an instrument

of foreign policy influenced by fluctuating national priorities (Nyarko, 2023).

Governance and Leadership: The role of African states will be pivotal in determining results following the cessation of funding. Certain nations may capitalize on the chance to enhance domestic investment, enact reforms, and achieve policy independence. In contrast, countries significantly dependent on foreign assistance face the dangers of political instability, diminished social services, and civil unrest. The decrease in foreign aid may promote transparency and anti-corruption measures in certain situations while intensifying governance issues in others, contingent upon institutional strength (Bräutigam & Knack, 2004).

The economic and social ramifications of the budget reduction are immediate and extensive. USAID-supported programs deliver vital services like maternity healthcare, HIV/AIDS treatment, malaria management, and educational activities. The sudden pull-out threatens to exacerbate health issues and increase death rates, especially in rural and marginalized areas. Infrastructure initiatives essential for economic development, like electricity and transportation, may also be impeded, hindering progress. African states may resort to domestic income mobilization, augment public-private partnerships, or pursue alternative foreign investment, particularly from China and the European Union (Gwandure & Mayekiso, 2013).

The geopolitical implications are similarly substantial. The withdrawal generates a strategic void that may be used by rising global powers. The Belt and Road Initiative of China and the growing power of Russia provide feasible choices for African nations in search of economic partners. Moreover, regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union may seek to bridge the support void, altering diplomatic affiliations and diminishing reliance on Western aid. This diversification may transform the continent's geopolitical environment, with heightened involvement from non-Western states (Chin & Bartos, 2024).

Historical and Comparative Analysis provides enlightening parallels. The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s, mandated by the World Bank and IMF, entailed significant cutbacks in aid and fiscal austerity, resulting in varied outcomes, economic advancement in certain nations but extensive misery in others (Heidhues & Obare, 2011). The post-Soviet transition of Eastern European governments from assistance reliance to market economies exemplifies the unevenness of structural transitions, as some nations achieve stability while others contend with significant volatility (Wedel, 2000). These historical instances highlight the dangers of inadequately managed assistance cessation and the necessity for customized, context-specific approaches.

Sustainability and Local Capacity Building are essential foundations for the future. The termination of aid may motivate African nations to cultivate robust economic frameworks focused on industrialization, intra-African commerce, and enhanced tax systems. Regional collaboration via frameworks like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) may diminish reliance on foreign aid by broadening domestic markets and fostering investment. Emphasizing local resource mobilization, promoting private sector expansion via public-private partnerships, and investing in critical areas such as technology, agriculture, and renewable energy constitute pragmatic strategies for sustainable development and reduced dependence on aid.

In summary, the U.S. decision to terminate USAID financing in Africa embodies a multifaceted paradigm of dangers and opportunities. Although immediate problems concerning governance, social welfare, and economic stability are apparent, the opportunity for African nations to capitalize on this transition towards enhanced independence and sustainable progress remains feasible. Successful management of this shift requires intentional policy formulation, enhanced governance structures, and strong international collaboration. By prioritizing economic diversification and enhancing institutional capacity, African states may alleviate negative effects and pursue a path toward self-sustaining prosperity.

Conclusion

The termination of USAID financing in Africa signifies a pivotal moment with extensive implications across ethical, economic, political, and social spheres. This decision contests conventional frameworks of international development assistance and necessitates a re-evaluation of tactics for sustainable growth and collaboration by both African governments and the global community.

The immediate consequences of funding withdrawal are expected to intensify vulnerabilities, particularly in healthcare, education, and infrastructure; however, this scenario also offers African nations a chance to expedite initiatives aimed at economic self-sufficiency, governance reform, and regional integration. The way forward requires a dual emphasis: alleviating immediate humanitarian effects while establishing the groundwork for enduring resilience and self-sufficiency.

Successful navigation of this intricate transformation needs solid policy frameworks and enhanced institutional capacities. African governments must augment domestic income mobilization, strengthen transparency and

accountability, and promote inclusive economic growth through innovation and intra-continental collaboration. International partners, notably developing powers like China and Russia, as well as regional organizations like the African Union and European Union, play crucial roles in fostering a coordinated, sustainable development strategy that honors African agencies and goals.

The cessation of USAID financing is not just a difficulty but also a possible motivator for dramatic change. African nations may diminish assistance reliance, enhance local capabilities, and follow a self-determined and resilient development path through strategic adaptation and partnership amidst global uncertainty.

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