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USAID in Russia—wasted decades and billions



Russia is not a friend of America, nor has Russia even sincerely wanted to be one.

Contemporary Russia, similar to 1987 Russia, is filled with more or less the same imperial sentiment. The difference is only in the strength and self-confidence that Russia has.

Russia has never been a fan of America, not even back in those days, during the very early 1990s, when America sent it food aid. Russia pretended to be humble and obedient due to its weakness in hopes of challenging America one day.

Therefore, USAID operated in Russia for decades behind the enemy's lines.

From a Russian perspective, the USAID represented an enemy that required deceit and exploitation.

According to the **information** USAID has shared on its website, this organisation is apparently proud of its achievements in Russia. This is a dramatic self-deception by the USAID.

Not much that the USAID has accomplished in Russia is beneficial to America.

List of missed targets

Let us look at just some of USAID's achievements in Russia over the past 37 years, based on the public database of this organisation, whose work was recently **suspended** by President Donald Trump:

-USAID supports civil society organisations, whose number and influence have grown from 40 registered in 1987 to approximately 300,000 today (2017–2020).

-Since 1992, USAID has supported the development of professional relationships between Russian and American journalists, publishers, electronic media managers, designers, content developers, advertising specialists, and new media practitioners.

-USAID-funded Rule of Law implementers helped draft the Russian Constitution, Part I of the Russian Civil Code, and the Russian Tax Code.

-Since 2001, the government of Russia and the World Bank have collaborated to implement two multi-billion-dollar judicial reform programmes. Russia increased its court administration budget thirty-three times between 2001 and 2010. The number of judges and their salaries were increased as well.

-Over 5,000 Russian and U.S. judicial officials have taken part in exchanges and events resulting in strong partnerships between Russian judicial bodies and U.S. counterparts.

-The U.S. Russia Investment Fund (TUSRIF), founded with a 1995 grant of \$329 million from the US government, promoted the development of a free market economy in Russia by providing investment capital to well-conceived, potentially high-growth entrepreneurial companies. TUSRIF generated in excess of \$350 million in investment proceeds and attracted \$1.2 billion in outside equity, debt, and co-investments.

Non-existent effects

The suspension of USAID's activities underscores the need to examine the agency's activities, particularly the financial investments it has made in Russia over the decades, from an impact perspective.

Where are those thousands of Russian journalists who were interacting with American counterparts, who were taking part in exchange programmes, and thus were supposed to be impacted and influenced by America?

They do not exist in today's Russia. Even Margarita Simonyan, the head of RT, Russia's main propaganda media, was an **exchange** student in America.

Each alleged achievement of USAID in Russia is essentially a missed opportunity. Can

somebody identify a sufficient number of Russian businessmen among those who, in the early days of the Russian free market economy, were assisted by USAID and who then, assumingly, were supposed to support democratisation and civil society in Russia?



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These pro-American Russian businessmen do not exist in Russia. The vast majority of them blended into the Russian corrupt realities and have not added American values to the Russian way of life. On the contrary, most of them turned into the Kremlin emissaries, helping the Kremlin achieve its goals in America.

Or has anybody seen sufficient objection from the Russian judicial community to the amendments made to the Russian constitution, which Vladimir Putin facilitated in 2020? Again, that is another failure that the USAID apparently does not want to acknowledge.

An opportunity that will not be repeated

The USAID had a perfect opportunity to make Russia decent, possibly for the first time in Russian history, yet the USAID was not even able to identify this opportunity. Some unique opportunities do not come twice.

The USAID was in Russia for a very long time prior to the rise of Vladimir Putin. It had substantial budgets and capabilities, and yet the USAID failed to erect a pro-American

upper class and civil society in Russia. The USAID failed to turn Russia into an ally of America.

The fact that Russia would go off the rails as soon as it became strong enough was evident even thirty years ago. Those anti-American sentiments were already visible and detectable in Russia back in the late 1980s, although they were still in a hibernation format.

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Looking back, the USAID should have been involved in real soft power in the cultivation and penetration of all levels of Russian society. Instead, USAID was giving money to the Russians and telling them things about liberal values the Russians knew nothing about.

Moreover, it appears that Russian intelligence planted some of the Russians with whom USAID was working.

The USAID was not only incompetent in advancing American interests in Russia, but clearly it has not even attempted to help the United States prevent Russian imperial and anti-American deviation.

The USAID could have significantly impacted Russia by consistently "Americanising" the Russian upper and ruling classes when Russia was more vulnerable in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.

Now, after wasting three decades since the collapse of the USSR and the continuation of the previous seven decades of communism in Russia, the United States will need to spend a lot more on neutralising the Russian problem so that the US can concentrate on Communist China.