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Brexit and the UK-Africa Caribbean and Pacific Aid (ACP) Relationship

Abstract

Debates about Brexit draw on powerful discursive mechanisms that have important implications for the UK–Africa, Caribbean and Pacific aid relationship. Some of these narratives can be characterized in the following ways: First, that Brexit is an opportunity to recreate a Global Britain after a period of EU membership that saw the UK neglect its former partners, particularly the Commonwealth. Second, the costs of EU membership are profligate and these funds could be better utilized by the national government. Third the Brexit 'divorce bill' is a penalty exacted by the EU for the UK's decision to leave. This article explores these claims via the EU-ACP relationship, and proposes three counter arguments. First, the discourse of 'neglect' overlooks the external relationships the UK has maintained through EU membership. Second, these relationships have provided 'value for money' for the UK. Third, these contributions represent a significant proportion of the Brexit 'divorce bill' and are on-going financial commitments that the UK was central to establishing. The article then reviews the potential impact of Brexit on UK aid, arguing that rather than reinvigorating Global Britain Brexit threatens to undermine the UK's position in global development, current levels of aid and longstanding commitments to eradicate poverty.

Policy Implications:

1. Brexit will reconfigure the position of the UK in Global Development.
2. Brexit will have implications for the EU-Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific relationship
3. Brexit could undermine current levels of UK aid, both in terms of absolute volume of funds and its geographical reach
4. Brexit could undermine the longstanding commitments to eradicate poverty

Introduction

The Brexit referendum and the subsequent negotiations have given rise to powerful discursive mechanisms that are both directly and indirectly linked to the UK's development policy and aid provision. The first of these is that due to its membership of the EU the UK has neglected its relationship with the Commonwealth (Price 2016). This discourse however neglects the longstanding relationship that the UK has maintained with the Commonwealth and other states across the Global South through its membership of the EU. The 'partnership' between the EU and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group has long been the centerpiece of the EU's development cooperation relations. Of the 53 Commonwealth states, only 11 are not part of the EU-ACP relationship. The pre-referendum discourse therefore represents a 'myth of betrayal' (Murray-Evans 2016) which underestimates the significance of the range of the EU's external relations, and the UK's role within these.

The second powerful discourse relates to the costs of UK membership, which formed a key strand in the Leave Campaign. Controversially this was calculated as a cost to the UK of £350 million per week, which it was argued, was a wasteful contribution to a profligate centralized bureaucracy that could be more effectively spent by the national government in the interest of the British public. The calculation of this sum has been contested (and subsequently denied by its one-time promoters). However, the UK's financial contribution to the EU has been a source of tension in the Brexit negotiations and a key point in the ongoing pro-Brexit debate. In contrast to this, the argument here is that the UK's contribution to the EU aid budget has represented good 'value for money' for the UK government and allowed it to leverage UK aid while affording the UK a central role in the management of global development and the alignment of development policy and practice at the global, regional and national levels. This is particularly the case in relation to the EU's key development cooperation relations with 79 states of the Global South that form the ACP group. The UK has been an important actor in this relationship, since its accession to the EU in early 1970s.

Finally, in the Brexit negotiations the question of the amount the UK could be required to pay as part of its arrangements to leave the EU has been characterized as a 'divorce bill' through which the EU has attempted to exact a harsh penalty in revenge for the UK's decision to leave. Through a focus on UK contributions to EU aid mechanisms, such as the European Development Fund

(EDF), this article will argue instead that the 'divorce bill' represents longstanding and on-going financial commitments that, in the case of aid provision at least, the UK has played a leading role in establishing.

After exploring each of these three Brexit claims in the first section of this article, the second section will review the potential impact of Brexit on UK Aid relations. It will suggest that withdrawal of the UK from the EU is likely not only to be a costly and uncertain process, but also one that threatens to undermine the UK's position in global development, current levels and sources of development funding and existing and nascent trade relations. It will explore the possible aid provision strategies the UK could adopt on departure from the EU, and suggests that continued engagement with the EU-ACP partnership would be a possible and perhaps optimal outcome.

The Myth of Betrayal: EU- ACP Partnership as a Framework for UK Aid

Both in the run up to the Brexit referendum and in the subsequent discussions about of the reformulation of the UK's post-EU external relations, there has been much recourse to the rhetoric of a lost empire and the imaginings of the UK's Global power. For example, James Carver UKIP MEP for the West Midlands argues that the Commonwealth was 'forsaken' when the UK joined the EU (Carver 2016), while Boris Johnson argued UK-Commonwealth relations were 'betrayed' through the UK's accession (cited in Dominiczak 2013). Membership of the EU has been constructed as a 'betrayal' of the Commonwealth, with Brexit being presented as a moment to re-engage with the world beyond Europe and to reinvigorate the global role of the UK. This is exemplified by the UK's post – EU trade deals with the Commonwealth acquiring the informal label 'Empire 2.0.' (The Times 2017)

Both Murray–Evans (2016) and Price (2016) countered the argument that EU membership caused UK parochialism by pointing to the longstanding global relationships the UK has conducted through its membership of the EU, with Murray-Evans (2016) arguing that the narrative of the Commonwealth's betrayal was a 'myth'. What is highlighted is the accommodation of the UK's relationships with its colonies and former colonies in its accession to the then EEC in 1974. While the EU (then EEC) had made provision for the accommodation of France's and Belgium's colonies and former colonies via the Treaty of Rome, and later through the Yaoundé conventions, the accession of the UK to the then EEC necessitated a reorientation of these relationships (Nunn and Price 2004). Britain brought with it an array of ties to the Commonwealth, and in conditions of economic crisis and challenges to its competitiveness, accession to the EEC offered the UK an opportunity to both collectivise its obligations to some of these states while at the same time opening news areas of opportunity, such as Francophone Africa, which had previously been beyond its reach.

Prior to its accession, the UK had operated systems of preferential trade with its colonies and former colonies based on quota arrangements for certain commodities. Aid had been provided as grants and loans for both financial and technical assistance. After the UK's accession, the Lomé Convention replaced the existing development cooperation agreements with states in the Global South. The result was that the former colonial ties of the existing member states, particularly France and Belgium, were merged with those of the UK to form the Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific states into single negotiating bloc, the ACP Group. Trade provisions within the relationship were based on non-reciprocal preferential trade agreements, commodity stabilization mechanisms and the provision of development assistance 'with no strings attached'.

Over time, the EU-ACP relationship came under pressure to reform and liberalise, both in terms of its trade relationship and in the orientation of the aid provision, marked by the replacement of the Lomé Conventions with the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in 2000. The provision of aid had shifted from 'project' to 'programmed aid', becoming increasingly conditional on structural adjustment commitments, good governance, respect for human rights, democracy and transparency, and with a specific focus on Aid for Trade (AfT) and Private Sector Development (PSD). Non-reciprocal trade arrangements were transformed ultimately into Free Trade Arrangements between the EU and regional groupings with the ACP, known as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). As such, through a single EU development cooperation partnership and the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, the UK has been at the heart of a complex web of trade relations that link it to 79 ACP states and seven regional trade organisations across the Global South. The Brexit discourse of Commonwealth betrayal through British accession to the EU is therefore open to contestation. Moreover, as the longest standing and most comprehensive of all EU development cooperation agreements, the EU-ACP relationship has formed the cornerstone of the EU's Development Cooperation relationships since the early 1970s, and acted as a blueprint for the wide range of agreements that link the EU, and thereby the UK, to states and regions across the world.

UK Aid: Value for money though EU contributions.

A key debate that shaped the run up to the referendum was the controversial and contested claims about the costs of EU membership, with the Leave campaign focusing on sum of £350 million per week and the ways in which this could be more effectively used within the national budget. Underpinning this discourse were claims of EU profligacy and waste, with for example the UKIP MEP Jonathan Arnott characterizing the EU as a financial 'sinkhole' (Arnott quoted by Hall 2016).

A focus on UK contributions to EU development cooperation funds provides a useful lens through which to analyse some of the claims in relation to the costs of membership. The funding mechanism for EU-ACP aid is the European Development Fund (EDF), which has a special status and is managed outside of the EU budget. This is an inter-governmental fund, which Member states and other donors contribute to directly. The EDF has been described by DFID (2013) as providing 'significant support to Commonwealth countries'. The current 11th EDF runs from 2014-2020, has a commitment to the provision of €30.5 billion (as an overall envelope) and is based on the objectives of poverty eradication, sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP states into the world economy (European Commission 2013). The previous EDF, which ran from 2008-2013, provided €22 .7 billion (UK Government 2013).

The UK has historically been a key contributor to the EDF. Its overall contribution to the 11th EDF is scheduled to be €4.5 billion euros, which amounts to approximately 15% of the total EDF and makes the UK the third largest contributor (after Germany with €6.28 billion euros, 20.6% of the total EDF, and France with €5.43 billion euros, 17.8% of the total EDF) (Ransome 2016, EU Commission 2013; DFID 2013). Annually, these contributions are significant. In 2013 UK contributions to the 10th EDF were £407m, representing 8.7% of total share of UK Multilateral ODA (DFID 2016). In 2014 its contribution was £328 million, representing 6.7% of its multilateral funding (DFID 2017), and in 2015 its contribution was £392million, amounting to 8.8% of total share of multilateral funding (DFID 2017). Importantly, due to the funding cycle, member state contributions are due in 2018 for the 2014-2020 EDF, underlining the political implications of Brexit 'divorce' settlement for the funding of ACP development.

In addition to the EDF, investment loans are provided to the ACP by the European Investment Bank (EIB). The UK is currently the biggest investor in the EIB, with 17% of EIB capital. Again there has been little overt discussion of the future of these funds post-Brexit. The funding mechanisms for the EU-ACP relations are additional to those the UK provides to the European Commission for development cooperation programmes in non-ACP areas, such as Asia and Latin America, and humanitarian aid financing. In 2014 the UK channeled £1.13 billion aid funds through the European Commission, of its total aid budget of £11.73 billion (Miller 2016, p. 148).

Within DFID there has recently been a strong focus on achieving value for money in aid provision. However, Watkins (2016) has argued that UK contributions to the EDF have represented a good investment as it extends the geographic reach of UK aid, including to areas where the UK has a limited and declining aid presence. This position was shared by the UK Government (2013) itself which stated that through the collectivization of aid provision in the EU, the 'reach and magnitude of EU financial instruments' (which includes the EDF) 'outweighs those the UK could bring to bear bilaterally'. DFID (2013) stated that the EDF 'provides a means of engagement in a number of countries that the Department for International Development does not currently operate in directly, but which are nonetheless countries with high levels of poverty'. This has allowed the UK to maximise the use of its resources, allowing it in times of austerity to focus 'scarce national resources on priorities elsewhere' (UK Government 2013).

The UK has been able to leverage EU aid to enhance DFID's objectives and its own national goals, for example poverty reduction, the 0.7% Gross National Income (GNI) aid commitment and social development policies. Its status as one of the largest EDF contributors and the role it has occupied more generally in the EU, has secured the UK's leading position in defining EU development cooperation policy and practice. DFID (2014 cited in Miller 2016) recognised this in its assessment of how the UK uses its position in the Council of the EU to influence EU development policy. Olivie and Perez (2017, p.21) also state that UK policy makers consider themselves to be 'determinant actors in allocating EU aid to LDCs, raising awareness of gender issues, and introducing transparency as well as "result-orientation" in aid management. They see the EU as a catalyst for their own aid' (Olivie and Perez 2017, p. 21).

The UK's effectiveness in securing its objectives within EU policy is evident in, for example, the inclusion of a greater focus on the impact, monitoring and evaluation of aid programmes (DFID 2013). The inclusion of social development policies coupled with trade liberalization in the Cotonou Agreement and the increasing emphasis on Aid for Trade (AfT) also bear the hallmark of UK preferences, particularly under Peter Mandelson and the New Labour Government. Andrew Sherriff, Head of European External Action Programme argued that:

> The UK has had an influence on the EU's focus and expertise on the 0.7% target for aid, the SDGs, the value for money and results agenda, differentiation in EU aid to focus more on least development countries and fragile states (ECPDM 2016).

As such DFID's 2013 Multilateral Aid Review stated that the EDF represented 'very good value for money due to its close alignment with UK development objectives and its critical role in meeting international development objectives' (DIFD 2013).

The role that the UK has played in EU development policy has allowed it to secure the coherence between national, regional and global institutions and policymaking, giving it a key role in inter-scalar alignment. The UK was at the forefront of coordinating EU development assistance in line with the Millennium Development Goals, the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals and the post - 2015 Agenda. It has been able to forge partnerships with 'like-minded' states to develop a collective approach that coordinates between national and regional levels and promotes a particular form of development, maximizing the benefits and efficiency of coordination (Watkins 2016). The UK government's own assessment of this cooperation argues that the EU is 'effective where Member states, in particular the UK, France and/or Germany, are fully aligned and driving policy' (UK Government 2013). This is particularly significant given the EU's position as the World's largest donor, providing half of all international aid (Watkins 2016; UK Government 2013).

The UK government's 2013 report concluded that it was 'generally strongly in the UK's interests to work through the EU' as this provided both 'strength in numbers' and an avenue for the UK to operationalize its politics within the EU to give it more influence internationally (UK Government 2013). Additional benefits were the size and economic weight of the single market which provides reach in a number of areas of external action, as well as a 'commercial benefit' for the UK from EU trade agreements. Importantly the operation of development cooperation policy through the EU has allowed the UK to offset the challenges to its own competitiveness, and to that of the EU. For example in 2013 the Senior European Experts Group stated that statistics about the strength of the UK economy, such as it being seventh largest economy, 'flattered to deceive', and that by working through the EU the UK was able to maintain influence and prosperity 'in an era where the relative balance of global growth, population and power is moving away from the UK and Europe' (UK Government

2013).

The weight of evidence and opinion outlined by the UK government itself emphasizes the benefits to the UK from cooperating and collectivizing its development cooperation relations. In doing so it has maximized scarce resources (particularly in a climate of financial crisis and austerity), secured a leading role in structuring development policy and coordination at the regional, inter-regional and global level, and addressed concerns about its own competitiveness. Smith (2016) argues that through coordination with the EU, the UK has been able to 'punch above its weight', and that outside of the EU it will struggle to have the same level of global reach and influence. Moreover the relative loss to the UK will be greater than to the EU:

> The UK will not be able to sell itself to non-EU states as a "pivotal power" or a "bridge to the EU" as it has in the past, because it will no longer be able to deliver the support of other EU member states (Smith 2016).

In sum, the provision of aid *through* the EU has represented good value for money for the UK government, providing it with significant agency in the shaping of the political economies of Commonwealth states and in the wider Global South. While this has involved the UK making significant contributions to the EU aid budget, these have resulted from UK decisions about external priorities and have enabled the UK to leverage other Member States' aid budgets behind agendas that largely reflect UK authored development objectives. In short, the EU has allowed the UK to share the costs of punching above its weight in international development.

Brexit, the Divorce Bill and ongoing aid commitments

Despite the advantages afforded by the joint provision of development aid, there was little explicit discussion of this in either the preliminary debates in preparation for triggering of Article 50 nor in the early stages of the Brexit negotiations. This is surprising given the significance of outstanding aid commitments in the calculations of the Brexit 'divorce bill'. The UK has spending commitments to the 11th EDF until 2020, and importantly in the context of quantifying the costs of leaving, these spending obligations are due in 2018 (which for the UK amounts to £4.5 Billion). There are however no provisions within the EDF to deal with the exit of a contributor state, although in the case of accession the contributions of other member states can be amended by a Council decision.

Post-referendum there were some indications that the UK would meet its existing commitments to the EDF. The Department for Exiting the European Union (2017) stated in relation to commitments to structural and investment funds, which if they were in place before the Autumn statement of 2016, the UK Government would continue to fully fund, 'even when these projects continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU" (DEEU 2017). May in her 2017 Florence Speech stated that 'The UK will honour commitments we have made during the period of our membership' (2017). Moreover, given that a failure to do so would see a significant shortfall in funding (15% in the case of the EDF) May's additional statement that she did not want the UK's partners 'to fear that they will need to pay more or receive less over the remainder of the current budget plan as a result of our decision to leave' was also be an important indicator of the UK's intent (May 2017). This position was confirmed in the EU and UK Joint Statement in December 2017 (EU Commission 2017) which confirmed that the implementation of the EU budgets would continue as if the UK had remained in the Union; that the UK would remain party to the EDF and would honour its commitments made under the current and previous EDFs; and the 'existing modalities of payments' would be maintained unless otherwise agreed in the second phase of negotiations. Also that the UK's stake in the EIB will overtime be repaid.

This pragmatic response to maintaining ongoing aid commitments is perhaps unsurprising given the complexity of the provision and that the policy interventions already in action are dependent on contributions from UK Aid. In the case of the EDF in particular, UK departure before 2020 would have been difficult as contributions are 'underpinned by a binding system which includes joint institutions, and its own international legal basis, the Cotonou Agreement' (Olivie and Perez 2017, p.15).

Exploring the Impact on Future UK-ACP Aid Relations

While the question of aid commitments in the Brexit settlement has seemingly been agreed, it is clear that Brexit will have a range of potential impacts on the future of UK aid, both in the scope of its relations, the position the UK will occupy in global development cooperation mechanisms and in the amount of resources available in real terms to support development in the Global South.

Some have predicted that Brexit could bring a decrease in UK aid provision. This has been reinforced by a campaign within the Conservative Party and parts of the UK media to reduce UK aid spending, witnessed by the delivery of a Daily Express petition to Theresa May by Conservative MP Rees-Mogg in February 2017. Anti-aid sentiment has been compounded by the revelations about Oxfam and other development NGOs. In response however May has reaffirmed the UK Government's commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on aid (The Guardian 2017, 2018). Yet at a macro-economic level there is the possibility of the further devaluation of the pound, which would negatively impact the value of UK aid monies. Moreover, in absolute terms, the amount of aid provided would also be affected by a fall in GNI, whether or not this is a direct result of Brexit, while any negative effect of Brexit on the UK economy could bring further pressure to reallocate resources to domestic spending. Should the UK choose to renege on its aid spending commitments, it would not be alone. Olivie and Perez (2017, p.20) cite cuts in twelve DAC and EU Member states donors, including Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain between 2010-15. However, any move from the 0.7% of GNI commitment would require modification of its legally binding commitment, and would mean a political revision of the UK's global role.

Alternatively, should the UK continue to maintain its 0.7% commitment, Brexit will mean that Britain will have a greater proportion of its existing aid budget under its own control. There are a number of choices about how to proceed in the post Brexit environment. The UK could concentrate aid provision on existing bilateral ties (including individual ACP Commonwealth states), or broaden its range of bilateral partners. It could divert funds to other multilateral partnerships, including perhaps to collective Commonwealth funds, or decide to maintain its development cooperation with the EU and its contributions to the existing funding mechanisms, such as to the ACP. Alternatively, it might pursue some combination of these options.

Olivie and Perez (2017) have characterized each of these options as either a Nationalist, or Realist or Cosmopolitan response, with each have differing outcomes and impacts. These characterisations reflect how similar concepts have been used to categorise the EU's policy preferences and paradigm shifts, for example in Farrell (2005). These categorisations are extended in a typology of critical approaches (realist, constructivist, neo-Gramscian and uneven and combined Development perspectives) in Price and Nunn (2017), which in turn develops an analysis of the EU-ACP relationship in relation to the material interests and processes that secure market expansion and generalized competitiveness, whilst locking in ongoing relationships of inequality.

According to Olivie and Perez (2017), the nationalist response would see the UK becoming more inward looking and focused on domestic issues, cutting the aid budget (perhaps by as much as 30%) and re-assigning the remaining aid formerly channeled through the EU to bilateral programmes. The realist approach would see the UK pursuing a strong individual global role as a way of pursuing its own interests, maintaining current aid provision but without EU/UK aid collaboration. Lastly the cosmopolitan approach would see the UK maintaining its aid budgets and pursuing a globalist pattern of allocation through multilateral institutions with the possibility of collaboration and coordination with the EU. A more critical reading, however, would locate each of these options within an understanding of the material forces underpinning the expansion of global markets and competitiveness, and the role of the UK state within these.

While discursively the 'realist' bilateral turn is perhaps the option that accords most with the rhetoric of Brexit, materialist readings would emphasise the significance placed on securing the benefits for UK business within these strategies. For example, before her appointment Patel, the former Secretary of State for International Development, argued that DFID ought to be replaced by a Department for International Trade and Development 'to enable the UK to focus on enhancing trade with the developing world and seek out new investment opportunities in the global race" (Patel quoted in Tapsfield 2016). Alongside the positioning of development policy within strategies to address global competitiveness, the provision of aid has been increasingly linked to 'British capital operating overseas' and international trade, while some of the management of aid has moved to departments other than DFID (such as Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) (Olivie and Perez 2017, p. 20). There is now an explicit policy discourse focused on UK aid providing support for UK business interests and the operation of soft power, with a shift away from social development and poverty reduction *per se* towards an explicit focus on value for money, efficiency and 'narratives, policies, and institutions that elevate economic growth as the engine of development' (Lightfoot et al 2017).

Should there be a post-Brexit shift towards partnerships focused on existing bilateral recipients this would very much narrow the current reach of the UK's global presence. Following DFIDs Bilateral Aid Review there has been a significant reduction in numbers of UK bilateral aid recipients from 78 in 2010/11 to 28 in 2012, with Pakistan, Ethiopia and Nigeria targeted as key recipients of UK bilateral aid in 2014/15 (UKAN 2016). This has allowed the UK to focus its bilateral efforts on 'strategic partners', rather than a wide-ranging global approach to poverty reduction. Whereas previously this narrowing of bilateral focus was complemented by a continued commitment to multilateral obligations, thereby ensuring the continued significance of UK influence and role, this could be lost through Brexit (Price 2016).

Brexit might therefore prompt an expansion of UK bilateral partnerships, in order to maintain its position in global development and compensate for the loss of influence via the EU (Lightfoot et al 2017). Currently the EU has 139 delegations around the world, often in places without UK Embassies or DFID offices, as well as 17 ongoing Common Security and Development Policy civilian and military missions including 10 in Africa (La Porte et al 2013). Attempts by the UK to expand its range of bilateral partners would require a significant investment, increase in administrative capacity and a long process of bureaucratic reform (Price 2016, p. 505).

The UK could face pressures to expand its bilateral aid relations with individual Commonwealth states. In the post-Brexit environment, the loss of UK influence on the EU's aid budget might mean that certain areas of the ACP Commonwealth that are currently provided for *via* the EU-ACP relationship could fare badly in the allocation of EU development finance, particularly non-LDC Commonwealth states. As Laporte suggests 'it might be particularly difficult for the English-speaking Caribbean to find new allies in Europe that will defend their case in Brussels' (Laporte in ECDPM 2016). Should the post-Brexit EU decide to refocus its development cooperation relations, Lightfoot *et al.* (2017) argue that the UK might be pressured into increasing funding to certain states to compensate for their loss. However, this move might mean that UK aid provision becomes more tightly focused on middle income states, rather than LDCs. While this runs counter to previous commitments to poverty reduction, it would cohere more clearly with the UK's stated desire to ensure that aid serves the interests of UK capital and supports trade and investment opportunities (Chakrabortty 2016). As this would accompany the changing sectoral focus, from social development, poverty reduction and humanitarian aid, towards economic infrastructural development (Olivie and Perez 2017, p. 20), Brexit could pose a significant threat to smaller, less developed ACP states and the poorest sections of the population of the Global South more generally.

It seems clear that Brexit will create variegated pressures on different states within the ACP Group, dependent on their level of development and historic links with the UK. This could threaten the existence of the ACP group itself, which might seem an increasingly redundant organisation particularly in light of the creation of regionally based EPAs. On the whole ACP states, and particularly the ACP Secretariat, are committed to maintaining the integrity of the Group and their collective unity. It should however also be noted that for some ACP states the loss of the UK from the EU partnership and in particular from the negotiations on trade, is an opportunity to leverage their position in relation to EU (see Langan 2016).

In contrast to a 'bilateralist' turn, the UK might seek to maintain or expand its multilateral commitments, either by focusing on non-EU partner organisations or by continuing to work with the EU, in what Olivie and Perez (2017) describes as a 'cosmopolitan' position. However, this equation between multilateralism and cosmopolitanism is open to critique, not least given the prior discussion of the operation of UK power and agency in shaping EU policy and frameworks in accordance with its own preferences. Rather than the pursuit of an ethical dimension to its foreign policy though collective action, the UK has been able to address particular moments in its own position in the global economy through specific multilateral initiatives, as exemplified by the accession of the UK to the EU in the context of the crisis of competitiveness of the early 1970s. In the current context, it is showing considerable interest in new multilateral forums such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) whose 'rising power' membership has incentivized the UK to join as an opportunity to assert its influence. Participation in such fora enables 'UK leaders, diplomats and civil servants to project direct and indirect influence over international norms, debates and policy statements in emerging forums' (Lightfoot *et al*. 2017). This runs alongside the long running UK commitments to a range of multilateral development institutions, with its contributions to the World Bank being among the most significant in terms of volume of funding. Maintaining the 0.7% GNI aid commitment post-Brexit might mean that the UK increases its contribution to the World Bank although this relationship too has come under pressure to demonstrate 'value for money' and efficiency.

Alternatively, in order to maintain existing provision and ease its departure from the EU, the UK might choose to keep its multilateral commitments through continued participation in EU development mechanisms. In particular, it might chose to continue to fund the EDF as a third party (and/ or coordinate with the EU's broader aid provision). As the EDF has its own legal and institutional basis it could 'be preserved as a pan-European development fund' (Olivie and Perez 2017, p. 34). This would 'keep the doors open' to the UK, and almost in effect leave the EU-ACP relationship unchanged with 'business as usual' maintained by the UK staying as a signatory partner to Cotonou. The participation of a non-member state in EU development policy and mechanisms is possible and has been facilitated by recent innovations, particularly delegated cooperation and trust funds, which allow non-member states such as Norway and Switzerland, to channel their ODA *via* the EU. These funding innovations allow Member states and non-Member States to contribute on either country or thematic initiatives, and jointly fund programmes in partner countries. The option of continuing its multilateral commitments *via* the EU would provide a way for the UK to preserve its global influence and maintain its voice in EU external relations in some form.

UK continued participation in the EU-ACP relationship reflects what Smith (2016) describes as a strategic post-Brexit partnership. This is an alternative to the other options facing the UK, that of acting in full cooperation with the EU by aligning itself to EU positions in order to maximise its impact (but limiting its autonomy), or acting in competition to it. In a strategic partnership, the EU will expect the UK to act as a partner not rival. This perhaps sheds some light on May's very explicit focus on partnership in her 'Florence speech' in September 2017. She stated that the UK wanted to 'work hand in hand with the European Union' (May 2017), and highlighted key concerns in relation to migration and terrorism which are increasingly at the forefront of EU development policy.

The timing of Brexit presents some challenges and opportunities in relation to the exploring this option. Brexit negotiations are running parallel to the renegotiation of the EU-ACP relationship and the formation of the 'post-Cotonou 2020 framework'. This might provide an opportunity to develop mechanisms that allow the UK to continue to contribute to EU funding instruments, such as the transformation of the EDF into a 'flexible structure of regional or thematic-based funds' (Olivie and Perez 2017, p. 21). As such the UK would maintain its longstanding commitment to programmes that currently are funded by the EDF. For example it has been a longstanding supporter of the African Union-led Peace Support Operation in Somalia (AMISOM) which is funded through the EDF via the African Peace Facility (APF). If the UK did not continue to support the EDF the African Union would need to organise additional or alternative support to fund the mission in Somalia (Volker Hauck, Head of Conflict, Security and Resilience Programme cited in ECDPM 2016). Mechanisms that continue UK engagement with the EU-ACP would therefore likely be welcomed by the ACP Group, which has stated its desire to engage as a group with new partners beyond the EU.

The UK's continued participation in the EU-ACP relationship could however be problematic. Whether the UK will still be able to shape EU-ACP relations to the same degree as a 'third party' seems questionable, which could diminish the attractiveness of the option. In addition, the UK has historically been against the joint programming of aid, and the coordinating role it would give to the European Commission (Olivie and Perez 2017, p.34). Lightfoot *et al.* (2017) note that the Commission has been 'carving itself a role as coordinator of member state activities', and has signaled that it intends to increase its role in this field. Given that that UK has tried to avoid the influence of EU institutions on Member State's aid provision, this could hinder future cooperation between the UK and the EU.

The benefits of continued partnership with the UK could be an attractive option for the EU. Without existing states agreeing to plug the funding gap left by the UK's departure, the EU faces a real decrease in the volume of its aid and its position as a global leader in aid provision. Olivie and Perez (2017) predict Brexit would mean the EU losing between 10% and 13% of its world aid share. The EU would need to fill the gap left by the UK in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and either increase the funding commitments for the remaining 27 states or change the remit of its development cooperation. While certain member states might feel that this is a moment to replace UK leadership and fill the void in aid contributions, this would counter the trend of decreasing aid contributions as a proportion of GNI by a significant number of EU member states. The difficulties and costs associated with the pursuit of a global role without the UK therefore could drive a preference for a coordinated post-Brexit aid arrangement. Olivie and Perez (2017, p. 37) state that it is in the EU's best interest to coordinate with the UK and 'lever the highest amount of UK funding possible for EU Instruments". However, there are some that see Brexit as a 'cathartic moment' for the EU, forcing it to redefine itself and push ahead with integration. Undoubtedly without the UK the shape of EU development policy will be different, and as Sherriff, Head of the European Extremal Action Programme states "EU development policy was in a state of evolution even before Brexit, moving to be aligned more with EU self-interest and the SDGs" (ECPDM 2016). Brexit therefore might offer opportunity for the EU 27 to redefine itself apart from UK interests and preferences.

Aid for Trade and the Impact of Brexit.

In exploring the impact of Brexit on the UK aid relationship, it is important to recognise that this cannot be disaggregated from the UK's future trade relationships with the Global South, not least due to the ongoing focus on Aid for Trade (AfT) and private sector development. It is accepted that Brexit will involve a fundamental reordering of UK trade relations. The UK accounts for 12.9% of the EU-28's exports and 15.2% of the bloc's imports to/from non-member countries – which positions the UK as the second biggest EU trade partner after Germany (Laporte et al 2016). 'The UK's total trade with the 80 plus developing countries that receive trade preferences from the EU was approximately £19 billion in exports and £27 billion in imports in 2015' (DEEU 2017). Without the conclusion of new agreements to replace the existing trade agreements, these countries will no longer have preferential access to the UK market, currently provided by EU free trade agreements, economic partnership agreements (EPAs) or the EU general system of preferences (GSP), including the duty-free quota-free market access under the Everything-But-Arms (EBA) initiative. While recently Liam Fox, UK Secretary of State for International Trade, has admitted that there cannot be a 'cut and paste' approach to post-Brexit trade agreement, he has announced that the UK is committed to maintaining the EBA (BBC 2017), a move which the ODI (2017:6) argues will help the poorest countries for which the UK remains an important export destination.

The UK has been clear about its desire to push forward with the conclusion of free trade agreements with partners across the world.

> By leaving the EU we will have the opportunity to strike free trade agreements with countries around the world. We will be champions of free trade driving forward liberalisation bilaterally, as well as in wider groupings, and we will continue to support the international rules based system (DEEU 2017).

The White paper outlines the UK's intention to begin discussions with EU current trade partners 'so as to deliver maximum continuity and certainty for businesses once we leave, as well as to ensure continued preferential arrangements for developing countries' (DEEU 2017).

However, the UK might adopt a more selective approach to the conclusion of FTAs than the EU has, due to the historic structures of trade and a desire to avoid the more contentious areas of negotiations. This casts a particular light on the increased UK interest in the development of Intra-Commonwealth trade, which in 2014 was valued at $700 billion (DEEU 2017). In March 2017, the UK hosted an inaugural Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting, which agreed proposals for the development of the structures to support intra Commonwealth trade. It also included an ambitious "Agenda for Growth' to increase intra-Commonwealth Trade to $1trillion by 2020 and to 'identify new opportunities to leverage the 'Commonwealth Factor'; the shared values, language, legal framework and regulatory systems that makes trade costs 19 per cent lower between Commonwealth countries' (Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council 2017). Liam Fox (cited in Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council 2017) stated that the Commonwealth "has the opportunity to lead the defence of free trade, working together to shape new policies and approaches, showing the world a route to prosperity that lies through partnership, not protectionism."

Within the raft of commitments there was little explicit mention of the role of aid apart from broad commitments to support trade facilitation, an enabling business environment, infrastructural development and the Commonwealth Small State Trade Finance Facility (Commonwealth 2017). However, recent analysis by the ODI suggests that AfT brings 'indirect benefit to providers of aid' by stimulating bilateral exports, which more than offset the initial costs (Mendex-Parra et al 2017, p.6).

> Careful econometric analysis for the UK suggests that every pound of UK aid leads to 22 pence increase in UK exports. Given that the UK provided around £5.1 billion of bilateral aid, this has led to an increase in UK exports by almost £1.1 billion (Ibid).

In this context, the possibilities of increased aid provision to the particular states in the Global South appears probable, particularly in light of DFID's expressed focus on "value for money' and supporting UK interests.

Conclusion

The debate surrounding the Brexit referendum, the subsequent UK-EU negotiations and particularly the quantification of the 'divorce bill' have significant implications for UK aid. Through a focus on aid, this article has highlighted how membership of the EU has provided the UK with a powerful role in global and regional development cooperation frameworks and that participation in EU aid provision has proved to be both effective in the projection of UK interests and has represented 'value for money'. In light of this, the discussion of the Brexit divorce bill has paid little attention to the issue of aid and obscures the funding commitments that the UK has itself made to its development partners. While the indications seem to point to the UK meeting those indications in the immediate term, in the longer term there are a number of possibilities and uncertainties in relation to the impact of Brexit on the future of UK aid relationships. This has not been given much formal clarification in either the debates surrounding the Brexit referendum nor in the Brexit negotiations. What is certain however is that the outcomes of Brexit will determine the structure of the UK's relationship with the Global South as a whole, and the ACP and Commonwealth in particular. While the option of 'business as usual' and the UK's continued participation in the EU development cooperation relations is a possibility, it is not a certainty. Should Brexit mean Brexit for the UK in EU development aid provision, this could mean a significant increase in the possible levels of UK aid that are directly under its own control. However, this would be dependent on the UK maintaining its commitment to its current levels of aid. While this increased national control might suit the present UK government's political stance and its desire to support UK business interests through its aid policy, this might come at the cost of its global influence, reach and role.

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