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Citation:

Price, S (2019) The Impact of Brexit on EU Development Policy. Politics and Governance. ISSN 2183-2463 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v7i3.2149>

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Article

The Impact of Brexit on EU Development Policy

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Submitted: 3 March 2019 | Accepted: 15 July 2019 | Published: in press

Abstract

Brexit is likely to herald fundamental changes in the operation, scope and practice of EU development policy, due to the UK's key role in leading and defining the geographical and sectoral remit of policy, and through its provision of large-scale funding. Through a focus on the EU's relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, this article explores these potential impacts. It highlights the importance of the timing of Brexit in relation to the contemporaneous renegotiation of EU-ACP relations and the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework and argues that the focus on static impacts of Brexit, in terms of removing the UK from the 'EU equation', overlooks the broader dynamics of political economy in which it is situated. Through the analysis of the anticipatory adjustments and discursive dynamics in EU development policy that articulate the pursuit of material interests, the article helps understand both the dynamics of Brexit and the broader transformations in which it is located.

Keywords

Brexit; Development Aid; Development Policy; African, Caribbean and Pacific Group.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "The Impact of Brexit on EU Policies", edited by Ferdi De Ville (Ghent University, Belgium) and Gabriel Siles-Brügge (University of Warwick, UK).

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1. Introduction

This article draws on the central themes of this Special Issue to explore the impact of Brexit on EU Development Policy, with a specific focus on EU-Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) relations. Drawing on a materialist political economy approach, the core argument highlights the need to understand EU development relations within its broader context, both in terms of colonial and post-colonial structures and the expansion of the world market. It follows Rosamond's (2016, p. 869) entreaty to study the EU within, rather than isolation from, the broader dynamics of political economy in which it is situated.

Development policy provides a fruitful field in which to explore the impact of Brexit. It necessarily entails the analysis of both the internal and external dimensions of European integration/disintegration. EU development policy is an example of an area of mixed competences between the EU institutions and member states, which has experienced increasing Europeanisation whilst also being greatly influenced by the UK, in terms of funding, policy leadership, expertise and geographical orientation. A specific focus on the EU-ACP relationship provides evidence of these themes, and particularly the legacies of colonialism and pressures of ongoing neoliberal restructuring. In particular the current renegotiation of the EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement provides a useful early test of such impacts on EU development policy, as it has coincided

43 both with preparations for Brexit and internal EU budgetary negotiations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework
44 (MFF). As such it reveals the anticipatory adjustments made by key actors in preparation for the departure of the UK,
45 most notably EU Member states, EU and ACP institutional actors, and associated political and societal interests.

46 Existing literature on the impact of Brexit on EU development policy has tended to focus on static impacts, particularly in
47 relation to the funding and policy leadership gaps left by the UK's exit. In these terms static impacts refer to the assumed
48 effects on development policy and policy making of simply removing the UK from the 'EU equation' (De Ville and Siles-
49 Brügge 2019, Jensen and Snaith, 2018). This article explores this by demonstrating how the Commission and certain
50 member states are utilising the confluence of the renegotiation of the EU-ACP relationship, the Multiannual Financial
51 Framework and the removal of the UK from this area of policy making, to enhance the Commission's role in the
52 management of development policy. As the UK has historically opposed this integrative pressure, Brexit has provided
53 opportunity to reignite this agenda.

54 Whilst recognising the importance of the institutional challenges and changes provoked by Brexit, this article however
55 argues for a broader analysis which highlights the more fundamental shifts that are reflective and constitutive of
56 disintegration. It points to the anticipatory adjustments already underway in EU development policy that indicate its
57 dynamic effects, for example the changing preferences and strategies in relation to the geographical and sectoral focus
58 of development policy. Further evidence of such dynamism is the promotion of interests clearly aligned to EU self-
59 interest, defined both as the promotion of EU core policy concerns linked to development, particularly around security
60 and control of migration, and in the material interests in promoting business expansion and the development of markets
61 associated and linked to European capital. The article argues that this is represented by the discursive dynamics that
62 explicitly justify the use of development cooperation in self-interested terms. In doing so it reveals the discursive and
63 material struggles emerging as the EU seeks to reframe and promote its own interests alongside UK attempts to
64 reconfigure itself as Global Britain, and throws light on the impact of disintegration on the global role of the EU and its
65 future relations with the UK. Importantly it asserts that that the pursuit of key material and ideational interests in the
66 external relations of the EU and its member states is not new, but is reliant on and reproduces inequitable historic and
67 social conditions that structure contemporary North-South relations.

68 This argument acknowledges the intertwined relationship between ideas, discourse and their material underpinnings.
69 There is a substantial focus on discourse in materialist research approaches. For example, in Gramscian terms, ideas
70 combined with institutional forms and material capabilities, are central to hegemony and dominant social formations.
71 Marx and Engels highlighted how class rule shapes the ruling ideas of each age, and forewarned against their presentation
72 as being in the universal interest (Marx and Engels, 1974). Ideas and discourse are therefore powerful in both reproducing
73 class relations and concealing their contradictions. The policy discourses within development relationships frequently
74 contain, obscure and further particular material interests, which are presented as if they are of wider benefit. In
75 contemporary development policy, discourse serves to obscure long-running inequalities associated with the continuing
76 legacies of colonialism as well as more immediate aspects of the desires of different blocs (including national blocs) of
77 capital for particular forms of investment and trade flows. This has implications for intra-capitalist competition, for the
78 unequal relationship between capital and labour and a host of other unequal resource and power relations on the basis
79 of gender, nationality and race. Policy discourse and its critical deconstruction then, is of central importance for
80 materialist scholars who seek to answer the crucial question of 'who benefits?'

81 In order to explore these debates the article first locates the analysis of EU development policy within a political economy
82 framework, in order to properly locate the analysis of Brexit within the context of crisis and associated pressures of the
83 expansion of global markets. It then explores the relevance of the EU-ACP relationship to the study of both EU
84 development policy and more broadly the processes of EU integration, by highlighting reform of the relationship from a
85 neo-colonial to neo-liberal framework and the agency of the UK within that. In doing so it draws attention to the scalar
86 significance of the relationship, which links 107 states and over 1.5 billion people across the world through its trade and
87 aid provisions. It also highlights the importance of this particular conjuncture in which the renegotiation of the
88 relationship has coincided with both the EU's internal processes of reordering its future financial mechanisms and the
89 disintegrative forces of Brexit. By understanding the particular contemporary context in which the EU-ACP relationship is
90 located, we are better able to assess the likely impacts of the collision of these forces. In doing so the article explores
91 current debates about the impact of Brexit on development policy in terms with their preoccupation with static impacts.
92 This section focuses on both the internal funding and policy leadership gaps created through Brexit and opportunistic
93 attempts to increase the role and power of the EU institutions in response. In contrast Section 5 develops the analysis of
94 the dynamic impacts of Brexit through a focus on the anticipatory adjustments evident in the current renegotiation of
95 the EU-ACP relationship and the changing geographical and sectoral focus of EU development policy. By exploring the
96 framing of a post-Brexit EU development policy as the securing EU self-interest in the context of Brexit, the article argues
97 that the disintegrative moment of the UK's decision to leave the EU has provided an opportunity for the EU to readjust
98 its external focus and influence to the exigencies of a changing and increasingly competitive global economy.

99 **2. The Political Economy of EU Development Policy**

100 Colonialism is deep in the DNA of EU development policy. As Nicolaïdis (2015, pp. 285-296) argues European amnesia
101 allows this colonial legacy to be overlooked in the framings of current forms of development cooperation relations,
102 permitting the EU to distance itself from its past whilst also seeking to secure continuity and collective management of a
103 colonial world slipping out of the grasp of its individual member states. Development policy has been a key mechanism
104 by which the EU has maintained existing patterns of production and exchange, albeit within a broader commitment to a
105 multi-scalar neo-liberalisation. As such policy commitments to global frameworks of sustainability and poverty reduction,
106 as embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 consensus, are combined with mechanisms that
107 seek to manage processes of world market expansion and generalised competitiveness within state-society complexes
108 throughout the Global South, and simultaneously within the EU itself (Price and Nunn 2016, p. 454). This is pursued
109 internally through the broadening and deepening of its internal market, and externally through trade liberalisation and
110 development cooperation relations, exposing labour and capital both within the EU and in its partners to increased
111 competition (Price and Nunn 2016, p. 462). That this produces polarising and uneven effects is recognised by the EU and
112 so it provides specific development policy mechanisms, such as Aid for Trade, to offset the damaging effects of neo-
113 liberalisation.

114 A measure of the importance of this policy domain to the EU's attempts to position itself within a changing global
115 economy has been the ongoing attempts to increase supranational competence within the design and management of
116 EU development policy. Since the turn of the new millennium there has been a range of initiatives to embed a European
117 development policy both centrally and within the member states' own policy frameworks. The EU believes that the
118 collectivisation of development policy strengthens its global actorness and provides "added value, in terms of political

119 and financial leverage, that is larger than the sum of individual Member State actions” (European Commission and the
120 High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2016a, p.2). While Orbie and Carbone (2015)
121 point to the limited provision by way of a formal *acquis communautaire* that bind member states in this area, the 2005
122 European Consensus on Development and 2011 Agenda for Change stand out in setting common principles and practices,
123 accompanied by specific institutions and budgetary instruments through which European development policy is
124 managed. Delputte, Lannoo, Orbie, and Verschaeve (2019) state that while the EU has had an ‘outspoken commitment’
125 to both influencing its member states’ policies and fostering an enhanced European development policy, pressures for
126 increased Europeanisation have been countered by the endurance of differing member state preferences and national
127 priorities, the relatively weak institutional mechanisms that underpin the EU approach to development and sub-
128 groupings of states that share differing ideas and priorities. However rather than viewing these as competing binary
129 distinctions between the national and supranational characteristics, authors such as Smith (2016, p. 141) argue that the
130 processes of (re)nationalisations, Europeanisation and globalisation occur in complex co-existence, with the interplay of
131 structures, norms and practices at a variety of scales underpinning the shape and operation of EU development policy.
132 An empirical focus on the EU-ACP relationship provides a lens through which to both understand this complexity and the
133 potential effects Brexit will produce.

134 **3. The EU-ACP Relationship**

135 The EU-ACP relationship is rooted in the colonial past of EU member states, and reflects attempts to secure continuity
136 and collective management of colonies and former colonies within the context of both the wide-ranging transitions to
137 independence across the Global South and deepening and the widening of European integration. Originally signed in
138 1975, in the wake of UK accession, the EU-ACP Partnership built on the 1957 Treaty of Rome and subsequent Yaoundé
139 Conventions (1964 – 1975) which provided for the association of the colonial and post-colonial relations of the original
140 six EEC member states. On the accession of the UK, these agreements were reformulated into the Lomé Conventions to
141 accommodate the UK’s external relations, particularly its colonies and former colonies in the Caribbean and Anglophone
142 Africa, with the ACP created as a group of states to ‘partner’ and negotiate with the EU. The UK was therefore central to
143 the creation EU-ACP partnership, and has subsequently been a key actor in the ongoing reform of that relationship.

144 The first Lomé Convention reflected broader global initiatives to address structural inequalities in the Global Economy,
145 as embodied in the United Nations New International Economic Order (NIEO). This included developmental provisions,
146 in particular non-reciprocal preferential trade agreements and commodity stabilization mechanisms. Development
147 assistance was provided through the bespoke European Development Fund (EDF) and was not linked to the forms of
148 economic and political conditionalities that would later define EU aid provision. The EDF has endured as the key EU-ACP
149 aid funding mechanism, sitting outside the European budget and funded directly by member state contributions.

150 The scale and scope of this relationship has changed over time, not least with the widening of both groups to now
151 encompass 79 ACP states, 28 EU member states and 1.5 billion people. It has undergone continued pressures to liberalise
152 culminating in the replacement of the Lomé Conventions by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) in 2000. This
153 restructuring has locked-in longstanding commitments to neo-liberal reform, based on regionalisation and the
154 restructuring of state-society relationships across the ACP. Non-reciprocal trade preferences were replaced by Free Trade
155 Agreements, known as Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), between the EU and ACP regional groupings. Aid
156 provision transformed from ‘project’ to ‘programmed aid’ and became increasingly conditional on structural adjustment

157 commitments, good governance, respect for human rights, democracy and transparency. A specific focus was placed on
158 Aid for Trade (AfT) and Private Sector Development (PSD), with the EU providing 22.5 billion in AfT between 2005 and
159 2013 (EC & HRUFASP 2016b, p. 61). This emphasis on the provision of funding to support trade reform and economic
160 restructuring evidences the EU's concern to offset the negative impacts of neo-liberalisation.

161 In spite of a rhetorical commitment to trade liberalisation as a route to poverty reduction and economic development,
162 this has had limited impact on pre-existing colonial patterns of trade. Trade diversification, industrialisation strategies
163 and private sector development has been limited (EC & HRUFASP 2016b, p. 59). The EU remains a major trading partner
164 for the ACP (accounting for 24% of their imports and 17% of their exports), and while the ACP as a block has maintained
165 a trade surplus with the EU this is due to the predominance of African mineral exports (EC & HRUFASP 2016b, p.58). ACP
166 agricultural trade remains dependent on primary commodities with little increase in processed, value added products,
167 while the ACP trade surplus fell from EUR5 billion to EUR 3 Billion between 2004 and 2014 (EC & HRUFASP 2016b, p. 59).
168 With the current Cotonou Agreement due to conclude in 2020, the EU undertook an extensive evaluation exercise which
169 revealed the limited impact that the Cotonou Agreement has had on poverty reduction, inequality and growth
170 distribution (EC & HRUFASP 2016b, p. 93). There has been limited success in the promotion of inclusive growth, in
171 increasing the level of economic participation of the poor and in tackling the root causes of conflict (EC & HRUFASP 2016b,
172 p. 120). Moreover, civil society actors, NGOs and domestic ACP businesses have coalesced in anti-EPA movements,
173 recognising the threat posed to their economies from the unrestrained access of large-scale EU enterprises to their
174 markets. While domestic resistance has limited progress on the EPA agenda, the EU has continued to press for the
175 liberalisation of ACP economies.

176 The contestations arising from the outcomes and effects of EU development policy have not dampened the commitment
177 of either the EU or the ACP to negotiate a successor to the Cotonou Agreement after its expiry in 2020. From an
178 institutional perspective, the EU regards the Cotonou Agreement as providing particular value as a single, predictable,
179 long-term, legally-binding framework with underlying values and principles and a wide-range of instruments, which is
180 ratified by all ACP countries and allows critical mass in financial resources (EC & HRUFASP 2016b, p. 132). This has driven
181 the EU's ongoing commitment to the agreement and its replacement. The post -Cotonou negotiations were begun in
182 2018, but it could not have been foreseen when the original agreement was signed in 2000, that these would be
183 conducted in the context of the UK's decision to leave the EU and in conditions of such uncertainty.

184 **4. Exploring the Static Impacts of Brexit**

185 Existing literature on the impact of Brexit on EU Development Policy has tended to focus on static effects by scenario
186 planning the effect of removing the UK from the "EU equation" (Jensen and Snaith, 2018). Such analyses rely on
187 understandings of EU's policy-making machinery based on its past behaviour (De Ville and Siles-Brügge, 2019) and
188 reflects the tendency of neo-functionalism and (liberal) intergovernmentalism to imagine the EU as "institutionally
189 resilient", and of institutionalist approaches to emphasise the "'stickiness' of institutional equilibria" (Rosamond 2016, p.
190 866). In this vein, Henökl (2018, p. 64) builds a new institutionalist analysis which highlights the challenges Brexit poses
191 for EU development policy, including existing legal obligations, budget shortfalls, securing business continuity, policy
192 realignment, and representation and membership of international fora. Drawing on an analysis of differentiated
193 integration and regional disintegration, possible scenarios are outlined for post-Brexit EU-UK cooperation which could
194 structure the future of EU development policy. These scenarios are either total rupture and disintegration; selective

195 involvement in some agreements; or strong UK engagement through engagement in existing relations (Henökl 2018, p.
196 65). The sequenced nature of the Brexit negotiations which requires the approval of the Withdrawal Agreement before
197 the future shape of the UK/EU relationship is agreed, means that at the time of writing this remains undefined. As such
198 this process of disintegration has an unknown destination and a variety of different policy outcomes (De Ville and Siles-
199 Brügge, 2019)

200 This indeterminacy provokes scenario planning based on the UK's central role in development policy and funding, and
201 the manner in which UK's colonial legacy, particularly its relations with the Commonwealth, have historically shaped this
202 area of EU policy and condition future interests of both the EU and UK. Brexit therefore raises questions about the EU's
203 capacity to maintain coherence after losing the UK as a coordinator and policy innovator, and the future financing and
204 shape of development cooperation. As such it brings a threat of instability in EU external relations and possibly an overall
205 reduction in the EU's significance as a global actor. However, opportunities have also been created for member states,
206 institutional and societal actors and third countries to adapt their preferences and behaviour to the absence of the UK.
207 An exploration of the specificities of the EU-ACP relationship in relation to gaps left by the removal of the UK throws some
208 light on the analysis of the static, and more dynamic, impacts of Brexit.

209 *4.1 The Funding Gap:*

210 In material terms the loss of the UK contributions to EU development funding will pose a particular challenge for the
211 remaining 27 Member States. The EDF has historically been reliant on UK funding, with it contributing €4.5 billion to the
212 current 11th EDF. This constitutes approximately 15% of the total EDF, making the UK the third largest contributor (after
213 Germany's €6.28 billion, and France's €5.43 billion) (EU Commission 2013, DFID 2013). Due to the funding cycle, member
214 states contributions to the 11th EDF were due in 2018, giving particular importance to the negotiation of the Withdrawal
215 Agreement and the associated financial 'divorce' settlement, although there was little public discussion of the importance
216 of ongoing aid commitments within this. The lack of provisions for a contributor to leave the EDF brought uncertainty,
217 however in 2017 it was confirmed the UK would remain party to the Fund and maintain its existing modalities of payments
218 until it left the EU, with the 2018 Withdrawal Agreement (articles 129 and 152) making explicit this commitment to
219 Cotonou's institutional structure and funding obligations (EU Commission 2017, UK Government 2018). This pragmatic
220 solution represents path dependency and institutional binding resultant from the joint institutions and international legal
221 basis of the Cotonou Agreement.

222 In the context of Brexit and Cotonou's legal agreement ending in 2020, the impact of the loss of UK funding is less certain,
223 particularly given the declining aid commitments of the remaining 27 EU member states. Between 2010-2015 Belgium,
224 Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain enacted
225 cuts to their aid provision. While there have been some expectations that the remaining member states would
226 compensate of the loss of UK funding, this is uncertain (Castillejo et al., 2018, p. 13). As the EDF has its own legal and
227 institutional basis, it could operate as a 'pan-European development fund' (Olivie and Perez 2017, p. 34) giving the UK
228 opportunity to continue to provide funds as a Third Party. The UK has signalled it is considering the potential for continued
229 funding of EU development instruments, in return for an appropriate yet unspecified role in decision making (European
230 Scrutiny Committee 2018). However, this is unlikely to be agreed while the negotiations for Brexit, the Multiannual
231 Financial Framework and the successor to the Cotonou Agreement are ongoing.

232 *4.ii. The Policy Leadership Gap*

233 Historically the UK has shown significant leadership in development policy making, with the Department for International
234 Development (DFID) recognised as a leading development actor. Sherriff, Head of European External Action Programme
235 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
236 for money and results agenda, differentiation in EU aid to focus more on least development countries and fragile states”
237 (Laporte et al., 2016). The UK led innovations in the Cotonou Agreement, particularly the marriage of social policies with
238 trade liberalisation. UK policy makers considered themselves ‘determinant actors’ in the allocation of EU aid to LDCs, the
239 introduction of transparency as well as “result-orientation” in aid management and in raising awareness of gender issues
240 (Olivie and Perez 2017, p. 21). Haastrup, Wright & Guerrina (2019) argued that the UK has consistently shown leadership
241 in the integration of gender perspectives in development cooperation, to a greater extent than other EU member states
242 or institutions.

243 The UK proved adept at leveraging EU development provision to achieve DFID’s own objectives and national goals, and
244 through the collectivisation of aid, operationalised its impact more extensively than it could have done through bilateral
245 mechanisms (UK Government, 2013). DFID’s Multilateral Review (MAR) ranked the EDF 11 out of 43 multilateral
246 organisations for ‘good value for money’. This analysis rested on its close alignment with DFID policy, its critical role in
247 meeting international development objectives, and its capacity to extend the reach of UK aid to areas where the UK had
248 a limited and declining aid presence, or where DFID did not operate (DFID 2013, Watkins 2016). Furthermore the UK
249 played a strong coordinating role in the alignment of national, regional and global policy. The UK was at the forefront of
250 coordinating EU policy with the MDGs, the SDGs and the post-2015 Agenda, forging partnerships with ‘like-minded’ states
251 (e.g. Nordic States, Ireland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg) to develop a collective approach that promoted a particular
252 form of development and emphasising the benefits and efficiency of collective action (Watkins, 2016). Through such
253 coalitions it played a leading role in the 2005 EU consensus on Development and built momentum for the legal basis for
254 development policy in the Lisbon Treaty (Castillejo, et al., 2018, p.13), whilst also promoting own priorities at a global
255 level. This underpins the findings of the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (2015) that DFID has significant influence
256 in the multilateral system

257 In the facilitation and coordination of consensus across various groupings, the UK acted as a pivotal outlier. Carbone
258 (2012, p. 5) notes that achieving consensus between members states was difficult due to competing preferences. France
259 and Belgium for example prioritised their former colonies while others (e.g. Italy, Greece and Central Europe) focussed
260 on their immediate neighbours. While the UK played key roles within and between different EU coalitions, there have
261 been questions about the extent to which it has maintained its centrality. There is evidence that the UK has become more
262 of an ‘outlier’ across time. Sheriff stated that ‘EU development policy was in a state of evolution even before Brexit,
263 moving to be more aligned with EU self-interest and the SDGs” (Laporte, Sherriff, Hauck, and Bilal, 2016). While others
264 argue that there is a ‘strategic deficit’ in political leadership in development policy, they point to new coalitions and
265 interests forming in response to the loss of the UK as a powerful development policy actor (Castillejo, et al., 2018, p. 13).
266 Therefore rather than static responses to the policy leadership gap, this might be an early indication of more dynamic
267 effects emerging.

268 *4.iii. EDF Reform and Increased ‘Europeanisation’*

269 Reform of the EDF provides a key test of the static impacts of Brexit. Historically the UK was opposed to Commission
270 proposals to incorporate the EDF into the EU budget, fearing an increase of the Commission’s role and the loss of national

271 control. In contrast the Commission has been keen to establish itself as a ‘front runner’ in the SDGs and has sought to
272 reposition itself by advocating for strong coordination mechanisms to monitor EU and Member states activities and the
273 development of a ‘whole of government’ approach (European Commission 2019, p. 4,55). This gives weight to
274 institutionalist accounts of Brexit being a critical juncture that gives rise to radical institutional change.

275 Commission attempts to augment its role in this moment of flux been met by a lack of consensus and opposition by some
276 member states (Castillejo, et al., 2018, p. 10). While there is support for reforming the status quo, there is division over
277 the shape that change should take (Castillejo et al., 2018, p. 10). As with the UK, France, Poland and Hungary have
278 opposed to budgetisation, while Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and Finland, have been supportive,
279 regarding this as a move to harmonised and coherent external action (Castillejo, et al., 2018, p. 6-10). A further section
280 of members states, broadly described as ‘more Eurosceptic’, want an overall reduction of the MFF, a reprioritisation of
281 spending, and a focus on adding value (Castillejo, et al., 2018, p. 6).

282 In the context of the removal of the UK from the ‘EU equation’ the Commission has reinvigorated its proposals to
283 budgetise the EDF and radically reform aid mechanisms as part of the 2021-2027 MFF. Alongside bringing the EDF firmly
284 under the control of EU institutions, it has proposed an increase of 30% in its external action budget to €123 billion
285 (European Commission, 2018b). The Commission argues that budgetisation will provide protection from the
286 vulnerabilities of member states declining aid commitments and provide more coherence, greater transparency,
287 democratic scrutiny and flexibility (European Commission, 2018b). The new proposals are based on the Neighbourhood,
288 Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), merging a number of EU financing mechanisms onto a
289 geographic pillar (with a focus on the neighbourhood and Sub-Saharan Africa), a thematic pillar and a rapid response
290 pillar. In addition the proposals include an Investment Framework for External Action, with an increased ‘fire-power’ of
291 up to €60 billion to help raise and leverage additional private sector financial resources (European Commission, 2018b).
292 The Commission’s decision to utilise the confluence of Brexit, the renegotiation of the Cotonou Agreement and the MFF
293 to bring forward this reform demonstrates a degree of opportunism. Lightfoot, Mawdsley, and Svent-Ivanyi (2017) note
294 that the Commission has long been ‘carving itself a role as coordinator of member state activities’, and has signalled its
295 intentions to increase its capacity in this field. The opposition of the UK and other EU Member states has been matched
296 the ACP who are concerned this could herald a diminution of its aid allocation. The ACP negotiating mandate for the post-
297 2020 relationship therefore makes explicit its firm preference for maintaining the EDF outside of the budget coupled with
298 an emphasis on budget support (ACP 2018, p. 25). While the coalition of opposition led to the failure of the Commission’s
299 previous attempts to budgetise the EDF, for example in 2003 in advance of the 10th EDF (European Commission, 2003),
300 in the context of Brexit, it has renewed its proposals.

301 Importantly the integration of the EDF into the budget would make it difficult for the UK to continue to participate in EU
302 external relations. The principle of third-party participation in EU development mechanisms is already established
303 through the financial innovations that allow non-member state to channel their ODA *via* the EU. The option of maintaining
304 UK EDF funding is broadly in line with ACP preferences to open the post-Cotonou relationship to third parties. Indeed
305 certain members states’ opposition to budgetisation reflects their desire to facilitate the continuation of the UK’s
306 contribution (Castillejo et al., 2018, p. 10). The possibility of ongoing UK contributions to the EDF would limit the impact
307 of Brexit on this area of development policy. However this prospect appears unlikely, not least due to the reduced

308 leadership capacity the UK would inevitably have as an ‘outside’ contributor, notwithstanding its demands to continue
309 to shape policy in return for its participation.

310 In light of the indeterminacy of the disintegrative processes, there has been a tendency to focus on scenario planning
311 responses to the gaps left by the UK. Institutionalist and liberal intergovernmentalist accounts provide analyses of the
312 extent to which the remaining EU states and institutions ‘fill the gap’ left by the UK in funding, policy leadership and
313 policy orientation and/ or reshape EU development policy. Within this, the analysis of whether Brexit represents the kind
314 of critical juncture that will induce radical change is key. However, it is perhaps more fruitful to understand this
315 disintegration within a broader set of transformations associated with the expansion of the World Market and its inherent
316 tendency to crisis. Here the analysis of the anticipatory adjustments and discursive framings evident in the EU-ACP
317 relationship provide an alternate lens through which to assess the dynamic effects of Brexit.

318 **5. Anticipatory Adjustments and the Discursive Dynamics in the EU-ACP Relationship**

319 The focus on the anticipatory adjustments in advance of Brexit speaks to Rosamond’s (2016, p. 868) analysis of
320 disintegration as an indeterminate, messy and drawn out process mediated by the EU’s multi-institutional game. This
321 uncertainty points to the way in which the effects of Brexit on EU development policy will depend on the adjustments
322 made by both societal and institutional actors (De Ville and Siles-Brügge, 2019) In terms of the EU-ACP relationship these
323 anticipatory adjustments are increasingly apparent in the EU’s sectoral and geographic orientation and discursive
324 dynamics.

325 *5. i: Reorientation of Geographical and Sectoral Focus*

326 Given the manner in which UK colonial relations have shaped EU external relations, Brexit could herald a redirection of
327 the geographical focus of development policy, posing a particular threat for Commonwealth ACP states. Non-LDC states,
328 such as those in the Caribbean, might experience a reduction in aid due to close links to the UK and the EU preference
329 for a differentiated approach. Laporte (Laporte et al., 2016) suggested ‘it might be difficult for the English-speaking
330 Caribbean to find new allies in Europe that will defend their case in Brussels’. Furthermore, the absence of the UK from
331 the MFF negotiations could mean a greater focus by the EU on middle income countries (Castillejo et al., 2018). Olivie
332 and Perez (2017) suggest that these potential impacts would be compounded by a changing sectoral focus away from
333 social development to infrastructural development and trade facilitation.

334 Early evidence of a changing geographical focus was clear in the EU’s proposal to replace the Cotonou Agreement with
335 three distinct, differentiated regional partnerships within a common umbrella agreement. This would maintain the
336 existing *acquis* without incurring significant financial costs (EC & HRUFASP 2016a, p. 3). These strengthened yet flexible
337 regional partnerships (EU-Africa, EU- Caribbean and EU-Pacific) rely on an increased management role for associated
338 regional organisations, and have a specific set of regional themes. For Africa, this includes a focus on migration and
339 ‘mobility management’, reflecting the EU’s growing concerns about immigration, security and the pressures facing the
340 Southern EU member states. For the Caribbean, which was the first region to conclude an EPA through the CARIFORUM-
341 EU partnership, the specific focus is sustainability, climate change and natural disasters. The EU’s relations with the
342 Pacific share a similar set of priorities, highlighting the dependence of the region on maritime security and ocean
343 governance. The Pacific Islands Forum has been identified as a key organisation in the future management of EU-Pacific
344 relations, although without the basis of a region-wide EPA which has proved difficult to conclude and currently only
345 includes Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

346 While the EU's preference for a more regionalised approach is longstanding, as evidenced in the EPA frameworks, this
347 has been greatly strengthened through the Post-Cotonou proposals and the pursuit of the Continent to Continent (C2C)
348 agreement to cement EU-African Union relations. The EU's proposals chime with those of the African Union (AU) and its
349 desire to ensure African Unity and augment EU-AU relations (African Union, 2018). This consensus produced the New
350 Africa Europe Alliance and is reinforced by the EU's support for African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA), which
351 includes increases in financial support from EUR 7 million (2014-2017) to EUR 50 Million (2018-2020). The long-term aim
352 is to build a continent-to-continent EU-ACFTA Agreement (European Commission, 2018a). The confluence of the
353 preparations for the Post-Cotonou negotiations and for Brexit have therefore provided a unique opportunity for the EU
354 to secure and deepen its regionalised approach to development, and particularly its relations with Africa as a bloc. Its
355 ongoing commitment to principles of poverty reduction however is less certain.

356 Other dynamic effects of Brexit might become evident through strengthened ACP negotiating power. While the collective
357 ACP has remained committed to maintaining the integrity of the Group, Brexit presents an opportunity for individual
358 states, regions and groups to leverage their position in relation to the EU (Langan, 2016). With the UK potentially offering
359 an alternative set of trade relationships, ACP states could exact concessions from both sides in order to secure their
360 interests. As such, Brexit could create dynamism in the behaviour of third countries, as they seize the opportunity to
361 maximise their positions and gain concessions from the EU. This could signal a rebalancing of the historically asymmetrical
362 EU-ACP relations and limit the EU's power to push its own interests, either geographically or sectorally. The disintegrative
363 momentum therefore could provide opportunity for the ACP to bring a more developmental focus to the relationship
364 and offset the socio-economic pressures wrought through rapid trade liberalisation and associated neo-liberal
365 restructuring.

366 This potential shift towards more equitable relations has however been countered by the Commission's explicit desire to
367 pursue of its own preferences and self-interest within the new relationship. "The general objective is to shape relations
368 with the ACP countries after 2020 as to best achieve the EU's interests" (EC & HRUFASP 2016a, p. 2). Furthermore the
369 EU's regionalised approach could facilitate the expansion of the EU's external relations. The regional pillar approach
370 provides the opportunity to extend the relationship beyond the existing ACP members, for example to include North
371 African states, other non-ACP LDCs and small island developing states (EC & HRUFASP 2016a, p. 3). Therefore the post-
372 Cotonou agreement presents an opportunity to expand the global reach of the EU through and beyond existing
373 frameworks, and in doing so poses a particular challenge to the global influence of the UK post-Brexit.

374 In the context of the EU's intentions to deepen and widen its links to Africa, the UK government has also been signalling
375 its desire to its secure position on the continent. North Africa in particular is an emerging arena of competition. In pursuit
376 of its post-Brexit Global Britain agenda, the UK is rapidly expanding its presence throughout the continent. Former French
377 colonies, such as the rapidly growing frontier markets of Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, have been identified as areas of
378 interest, while new UK embassies have been established in Niger and Chad. However, while these competing positions
379 indicate attempts to secure advantage in potentially lucrative emerging markets and zones of influence, both the UK and
380 EU share common commitments to securing processes of world market expansion and embedding neoliberal reform
381 (Price and Nunn 2016, p. 454). Moreover, the adoption and promotion of collectivised investment facilities at the heart
382 of both EU and UK development funding provides opportunities for collaboration. The UK stated that cooperation based
383 on the collective management of investments could be possible if the EU matched the UK's agenda (Mordaunt 2018).

384 The extent to which this would depend on the City of London’s expertise, and the willingness of both the UK and EU to
385 fund collective investments could determine the future shape of their cooperation.

386 Both DFID and the Commission have enthusiastically supported and promoted collaborative financial Innovations such
387 as aid blending, which combine funding from various public and private channels to generate further investment and
388 leverage large-scale finance (EC & HRUFASP 2016b, p. 111). EU aid blending mechanisms such as delegated cooperation
389 and trust funds, allow the participation of non-member states, for example Norway and Switzerland, and offer
390 possibilities for future collaboration with a Post-Brexit UK. Member states and non-member states currently contribute
391 to facilities either directly or through investment organisations. For example, PIDG, a key EU trust fund investor, is funded
392 by UK aid in combination with the Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, Sweden, Germany and the International Finance
393 Corporation (PIDG 2019). While blended aid mechanisms have expanded rapidly over the last decade, there has been a
394 corresponding decline in budgetary support (EC & HRUFASP 2016c, p. 80-84). This shifting emphasis is in spite of the
395 Commission’s evaluation which found that budget support had been most effective in reducing extreme poverty (EC &
396 HRUFASP 2016b, p. 93).

397 The current EDF incorporates 2 types of Trust Fund: The Emergency and Post Emergency Trust Fund and the Thematic
398 Trust Funds. The Commission re-emphasised its support for such mechanisms in the recent New European Consensus of
399 Development. Examples include the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust fund, The Caribbean Investment Facility, The
400 Investment Facility for the Pacific, the Africa Investment Facility and the European Fund for Sustainable Development
401 which provides investment guarantees from the EU budget to lower the risks of the expansion of investment (EC &
402 HRUFASP 2016b, p. 111). These are augmented by policy innovations such as the 2018 Africa-European Alliance for
403 Sustainable Investment and Jobs which aimed to de-risk investment and mobilise private sector financing in Africa
404 (European Commission 2019, p. 49).

405 Aid blending has become a key mechanism for the EU to deliver its interest driven development policy. While there has
406 been the strong promotion and proliferation of these public/private finance innovations, Castillejo et al., (2018) argue
407 that there has been a lack of associated mechanisms for reporting and scrutiny. Langan (2018, p. 76) has argued that
408 these mechanisms represent the forms of ‘revolving credit’ highlighted in neo-colonialist critiques, in which aid is
409 channelled into initiatives that offer opportunities for returns on capital for donor states and allied business interest,
410 often producing negative consequences for labour and the environment and little by way of poverty reduction.

411 *4.ii. The Discursive Dynamics of Brexit*

412 Long-running neo-colonial and dependency critiques have emphasised the material underpinnings of development
413 policy. In its most recent incarnation however the framing of aid as an investment tool marks a novel discursive turn in
414 which the donor self-interest motive is explicitly promoted and justified. This discourse, rooted in deep material interests,
415 is represented in EU and UK development policy, in struggles to establish presence in areas that were commonly shared
416 prior to Brexit, and in the assurances provided to domestic constituencies of the value of development cooperation.

417 The ‘globalist discourse’ (Smith, 2019) of a resurgent Global Britain relies on the reformulation of development policy
418 that closely aligns with the interests of the British state and business, as represented in the ‘Value for Money’ mantra.
419 This draws heavily on a discursive reinvigoration of the Commonwealth that conjures the notions of Empire and
420 colonialism. Importantly this is framed within a ‘Myth of Betrayal’ (Murray Evans, 2016) that ignores the relationships
421 the UK maintained with the Commonwealth through EU membership.

422 The UK's willingness to express its desire to secure material interests through the discourse of Value for Money in
423 development policy has been matched by the EU. Within the context of enduring effects of global financial crisis and the
424 subsequent sovereign debt crisis in Europe, large-scale migratory pressures, challenges of rising populism and pressures
425 on multilateralism, EU development policy has been shaped by the need to assure domestic constituencies that economic
426 stability, migration and security threats are being addressed. The discursive framing of development cooperation
427 emphasises its potential to deliver returns to Europe and secure the interests of its own citizens and businesses, over the
428 normative commitment to poverty reduction or indeed any sense of post-colonial retributive justice. This framing is
429 increasingly necessary in order to garner member state consensus over the future of EU development policy, particularly
430 where domestic constituencies question policy and funding rationales. Castillejo et al., (2018, p. 6) state that in spite of
431 elements of discord between member states and EU institutions, there is support for the promotion of EU interests,
432 particularly when tied to the sustainable provision of global public goods. Within this, concepts such as 'sustainable
433 development' and 'poverty reduction' act as important legitimating discourses. However while Brexit produces differing
434 geo-economic imaginaries depending on the way in which ideas are articulated, the EU's commitment to ongoing
435 neoliberalisation is likely to be undisturbed by the Brexit (Adler-Nissen, Galpin and Rosamond 2016, p. 585-586),
436 notwithstanding the driving role the UK has played within the policies and narratives that have structured its
437 development policy.

438 **Conclusion**

439 Brexit has fundamental implications for the EU's development policies. The loss of the UK will create gaps in funding and
440 policy leadership, and could bring changes to the geographic and sectoral focus of existing relations. Anticipatory
441 adjustments by leading member states, EU institutions and partners have demonstrated the extent to which the
442 confluence of Brexit, the Multi-annual Financial Framework and the EU-ACP negotiations have provided opportunities
443 for change. They also point to the challenges the EU faces in addressing its strategic deficit in policy making and in funding
444 future development cooperation.

445 While existing analyses offer insight into the institutional impacts of Brexit in terms of filling the gaps left by the UK, they
446 tend to overlook the broader and more fundamental shifts which are both reflective and constitutive of disintegration.
447 The relevance of a materialist political economy approach helps locate the impacts of Brexit within the context of crises
448 and the pressures of the expansion of global markets. By pointing to the anticipatory adjustments being made in terms
449 of a changing geographic and sectoral focus and the discursive turn in policy making towards self-interest and securing
450 material interests, we are better able to understand both the impact of that Brexit will have on development cooperation
451 and the EU-ACP relationship. Moreover it throws light on the impact of disintegration on the global role of the EU and its
452 future relations with the UK. While there is a commonality in their commitment to neo-liberalisation and the expansion
453 of global markets and private investment, the extent to which their own interests are articulated as national, regional or
454 global will determine the future of their relationship. Importantly, Nicolaïdis (2015) reminds us that the pursuit of self-
455 interest and key material and ideational interests in the external relations of the EU and its member states is not novel,
456 but relies on a collective amnesia about the historic and social conditions that fashion contemporary North-South
457 relations and the asymmetries that underpin them. The extent to which Brexit will resolve these remains uncertain.

458 **Acknowledgments**

459 I would thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors of this special issue for their helpful comments and feedback.
460 Any errors or omissions are of course my own.

461 **Conflict of Interests**

462 The author declares no conflict of interests.

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