

## Trumpism, Brexit and the Emerging World Order: A Marriage of Convenience?

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### Abstract

Current western economic and political policy shows a shift towards anti-immigration and delinking from international organizations, as well as withdrawals from multilateral agreements. These are features of fascism and dependency theory. The study therefore set out to investigate a possible nexus between current western political, economic and social policy, on the one hand, and neo-fascism and dependency theory on the other. Using dependency theory as a framework for analysis, and exploring secondary data, the paper argues that western political leadership, in an attempt to remain relevant, has adopted a strategy of combining political philosophies it would not have contemplated only a few years ago. The paper finds that Britain's decision to exit the European Union, Trump's doctrine of America First, and anti-immigration stance of many western countries are all indicative of shift in western policy towards neo-fascism and dependency theory. The paper concludes that the rise of neo-fascism is a danger capable of triggering a third world war. It therefore recommends a global action to contain neo-fascism under the auspices of the United Nations and the European Union.

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### **Background to the Study**

The emergence of African, Asian and Latin American states on the global stage created a developmental nightmare for the international community. Most of them came out of colonial rule in dire need of development, and given the global dominance of capitalism, majority of them adopted the western model of development. They faithfully applied Bretton Woods Institutions and other western philosophies inspired development models, policies and programmes. However, these states went through the crucibles of such doctrines without reaping the anticipated dividends. Scholars of both mainstream and radical extractions were forced to proffer explanations for the failure of western economic models in the nascent states of Africa, Asia and Latin America. A plethora of explanatory theories surfaced, each tinted by the ideological biases of the authors behind it. Dependency Theory was one of the products of this intellectual exercise. It was authored by scholars many of whom referred to themselves, or at least their works, as Marxists. Given the steep ideological divide of the Cold War world western economic theory and practice vehemently opposed the entirety of this theory, challenging its assumptions, conclusions and policy prescriptions.

The demise of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites, North American and Western European states claimed victory in the ideological warfare between the two blocs. The victor in keeping with conventional wisdom on international conflicts, effected emasculation of the world outlook of the vanquished, and concomitantly, embarked on an aggressive propagation of its philosophical blueprint into hitherto restricted areas of the globe. Dependency Theory and other such “radical” theories were legitimate targets of the cleansing mission of mainstream economic praxis. Delinking is one of the fundamental recommendations of the theory; however circumspect examination of the actions of Donald Trump since becoming President of the United States in January 2017 point to a wholesale adoption and implementation of this cardinal policy position of the Dependency Theory. Britain opting out of the European Union also indicates an acquiescence of the theory. The rise of neo-fascism in European elections and the anti-immigration stance of most of those states show that the western world is having a romance with hitherto hated theories and political doctrines.

This paper examines the current wave of ultra economic nationalism in Europe and the United States . The study further investigates if globalization is on retreat, and whether a new wave of economic realization has dawned on the western world. Fundamentally the paper intends to locate a nexus between current western economic nationalism on the one hand, and Dependency Theory and neo-fascism on the other. Thus the paper would show that withdrawing from international organizations and treaties on grounds of gaining economic latitude is an application of Dependency Theory postulations. It would be argued further that anti-immigration stance of most western nations smacks of neo-fascism. Using secondary data, it would be shown that western political leadership now embraces previously detested political theories and ideologies in a bid to confront current political and economic challenges. Western disdain of these doctrines in the past was dictated by economic considerations.

### **Dependency Theory**

This is one of the best known theories that emerged from the developing world. It has its roots in Latin America and strong following in Africa and Asia. Basically it takes a diligent look at the evolution of the capitalism and the vertical and horizontal relationships hoisted by it across the globe. Cohn (2012) posits that “Dependency theorists in the Frank strain .....argued that the development of capitalist economies in the core required the underdevelopment of the periphery. Although LDCs were undeveloped in the past, they became underdeveloped as a result of their involvement with the core countries” (pp. 108-109). The core refers to the industrialized nations of Western Europe and North America. Japan has joined their ranks though they are new arrivals. These countries control global commerce, industry, finance capital, technology, as well as the major decisions that drive the world economy. The Less Developed Countries, LDCs, constitute the periphery or fringes of the global economy; and they depend on the former for their economic survival and drive.

This theory is unique in the sense that it holds the relationship between the core and the periphery accountable for the low level of development in the latter. As Thomas (2010) puts it, the theory is “predicated on the notion that resources flow from a “periphery” of poor and underdeveloped states to a “core” of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former” (p.225). The emphasis, as Jhingan (2011) observes, is on the fact that development of capitalism in the peripheral states constitutes the primary explanation for their underdevelopment. Thus underdevelopment would be overcome only through a radical departure from the international capitalist system through a process of delinking or a socialist reconstruction of society. Dependency theory traces the genesis of this unfair relationship to the earliest days of the contact between the West and Latin America, Africa and Asia. It has been sustained by a series of master – servant linkages. In the case of Africa it began with the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade; deepened through the institutionalization of colonial rule; and now sustained through neo-colonialism. In Asia and Latin America the process began with a plunder of natural and agricultural resources of native communities, before it entered the colonial and neo-colonial phases.

Two monumental studies typify the stance of Dependency Theory. One is Galeano (1993) study on Latin America in which he shows systematically how European nations went to Latin America, plundered gold, silver, and other natural resources and carted them away to Europe where they were used for development engineering. The Europeans also instituted colonial rule in a bid to enhance the exploitation of Latin America; then at the end of colonial rule the Europeans devised neo-colonialism with a view to perpetuating sine die the process of siphoning Latin American resources to Europe. Galeano (1993) gives a succinct description of the situation “Gold, silver, sugar: the colonial economy, supplying rather than consuming, was built in terms of – and at the service of – the European markets .... The resources flowed out so that emergent European nations across the ocean could accumulate them” (p.29). What Galeano shows is a dual process of pillage: i. Latin American resources were carted away to Europe and used to develop the European continent; and ii. Latin America's development was arrested. This was the same theme that runs through the second work; that of Walter Rodney. Rodney (2009) focused on the African experience. He began

with the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and shows how this took Africa's best work force and translated them to The Americas where they were forced to work in plantations owned by Europeans. Implication? this denied Africa its labour force that would have manned the continent's development. This brutal process was followed by colonial rule, and then neo-colonialism. He goes ahead to state that African involvement in the international capitalist economy has been defined by two primary factors, and these account for the underdevelopment of the continent. "In the first place, the wealth created by African labour and from African resources was grabbed by the capitalist countries of Europe; and in the second place restrictions were placed upon African capacity to make the maximum use of its economic potential- which is what development is all about"(p.30).

Interestingly the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 was anchored on these same postulations of Dependency Theory. The Declaration states as part of the grievances against King George III of Great Britain, "For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world, For imposing taxes on us without our consent . . . . He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns and destroyed the lives of our people."The unilateral declaration of independence by the American colonies was actually fuelled by their determination to shake off the yoke of colonial exploitation and underdevelopment. It is therefore safe to argue that Americans felt the relationship between Britain and the thirteen colonies enhanced the development of Great Britain while leading to a corresponding state of underdevelopment in the colonies. In fairness to the United States this realization perhaps informed its refusal to engage in colonization in Africa. Liberia was a situation that presented itself on a platter of gold, yet the temptation was rejected.

Dependency Theory could therefore be summarized thus from the presentation made so far: the relationship between two societies could produce development in one society while leading to underdevelopment in the other. It is a dual process of irreversible siphoning of mineral, agricultural, and human resources from one society to the other, ensuring development of one society at the expense of the other. The process could be likened to a relationship between a thirsty man and a bottle full of water, if this could be called a relationship in the first place. By the time the man satisfies his thirst, the bottle would be empty. This in plain language means that the man met his need at the expense of the bottle. If only the bottle could speak, it would tell the world it was not willing to enter into this suicidal relationship. Asia, Africa and Latin America were not prepared to enter into such a relationship at any point in their existence. Unfortunately, like the bottle, their opinion was not sort, and they were not in a position to speak out principally because of the nature of the attacks they were subjected to, and the obvious fact that the strong man's views have always prevailed since the dawn of the human race. The theory recommends delinking or socialist reconstitution of the oppressed society as the panacea to underdevelopment. The next two sections of the paper would show that Trumpism and Brexit are anchored on the assumptions and policy prescriptions of Dependency Theory.

### **Trumpism**

Trumpism refers to the entire political and economic doctrine enunciated by Donald Trump, President of the United States of America. It encapsulates the campaign promises he made, as well as the policies and programmes he has vigorously pursued since his inauguration on January 20, 2017. His campaign was anchored on a premise that the United States has suffered exploitation at the hands of its international partners. These include the North Atlantic Organization, NATO; United Nations and its agencies; North America Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA; and so on. It also includes some agreements the United States entered into, such as the Iran nuclear deal, and the Paris climate pact. He repeatedly stated his determination to pull his country out of all these international commitments if he was elected as President of the US. He has worked extremely hard to justify the confidence reposed in him by the American people at the polls. He has restructured America's participation in the international arena.

The Paris climate pact was reached by 195 countries, including the US, in December, 2015. The cardinal objective was the reduction of green house gases with a view to reducing global warming and its catastrophic consequences on the human race. Climate scientists have argued consistently that the most industrially advanced countries account for an overwhelming proportion of green house gases. Trump disagrees with those scientists; as long as he was concerned, the position of the scientists is fundamentally faulty. For him the so called effects of industrialization were grossly overestimated. On the contributions side, he felt the US was given an unduly heavy burden. Trump was quoted by Chemnick (2018) as saying “Under the agreement, China would be able to increase these emissions by a staggering number of years – 13.... They can do whatever they want for 13 years.” Chemnick continues his quote of Trump; “India makes its participation contingent on receiving billions and billions and billions of dollars in foreign aid from developed countries.” As in Brexit, Trump decision to exit the Paris climate pact is based essentially on postulations of the Dependency model. He saw in the pact fetters to American development. He saw further that China and India, amongst others, gained at the expense of the United States. Hence he withdrew his country from the pact, not minding the global outcry that greeted his action. The same arguments account for his exit from other international arrangements. Advancing his disagreement with the scientists on the domestic front, he has systematically rolled back legislations that hindered crude oil exploration and coal mining. He argued that those restrictions merely reduced American competitiveness in international economic relations. He has in the process made the United States a net exporter of crude oil.

Twelve countries entered into the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP, under the Obama administration. TPP, according to Chance and Kajimoto (2018) “ was designed to cut trade barriers in some of the fastest –growing economies of the Asia – Pacific region and to counter China's rising economic and diplomatic clout. Trump, who opposed multilateral trade pacts in his election campaign in 2016 and criticized the TPP as a “horrible deal”, pulled the U.S. out of the pact in early 2017. He argued bilateral deals offered better terms for U.S. businesses and workers, and signaled an intention to raise trade barriers .” Trump's position here falls in line with his America First Doctrine enunciated on the day of his inauguration on January 20,

2017. Thinking about rejoining is premised on the idea that the US would extract significant concessions from the other 11 member states. Once this is achieved, he will no longer see multilateral trade deals as bad. He unilaterally pulled America out of the Iran nuclear deal on the same grounds. On becoming President, he threatened to reconsider America's position in NATO, and only changed his mind when European member states increased their contributions to the security organization.

In the same way he is renegotiating the North America Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA; an economic bloc that includes the United States, Canada and Mexico. Trump made what has now become his conventional argument – those who negotiated the NAFTA Treaty on the side of the United States did not adequately protect America's interests. Therefore it has to be renegotiated in such a manner that America would be first. America has to be at the head of the table at every economic fora. North America Free Trade Agreement came into effect on January 1, 1994. US President George H. W Bush, a Republican, Canadian Premier Brian Mulroney, and President Carlos Salinas of Mexico, had earlier signed the agreement on December 17, 1992. The three North American neighbors entered into the pact in order to ease movement of businesses across their common borders. Mr. Trump once referred to the pact as the worst deal in American history. Some American companies have relocated to Mexico to take advantage of cheap labor costs there, closing shop in America in the process. The designers of the pact understood this implication well ahead of time. They anticipated that America would suffer such job losses, but gains elsewhere would adequately compensate for those losses. Several reviews on NAFTA since its inception have produced mixed results. While some hold the Agreement liable for loss of American jobs to Mexico, others conclude that America has benefitted remarkably. Yet in spite of the inconclusiveness of the reviews Trump wants a total renegotiation of the deal to the net advantage of the America. It remains to be seen how long the rest of the world would continue to accommodate America's diplomatic and economic rascality under Trumpism. America has thus far exploited its military and economic might to intimidate other nations into doing her biddings, even at personal injuries to their economic well being.

### **Brexit: Britain's Exit from the European Union**

The United Kingdom is one of the leading countries in the world, responsible for the colonization of many polities, including United States, Canada, Australia, India, and New Zealand. It was the colonial master in many African countries, among them: Federal Republic of Nigeria; The Gambia; Sierra Leone, Tanzania; Uganda; Kenya; Zimbabwe; and South Africa. An essential component of the relationship between Britain and her former colonies is the existence of the Commonwealth of Nations; a union of mother Britain and these else while colonies. This union has helped Britain to retain its economic, military, cultural and political dominance in faraway places. In addition it is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, with the attendant prestige, power and honor. As a colonial power she plundered many seas and lands and took the trophies home to aid the industrialization of the motherland. Yet she has always been skeptical when it comes to membership of the European Union. She was not a pioneer member of the European Steel Union, the progenitor of the European Union. She was also never a member of the monetary union. In 2016 she took

Euro-skepticism to new heights when Britain voted to leave the European Union. Brexiters gave several reasons for their decision.

Friedman (2016) explains that those who opposed EU claimed that the union failed to address economic problems that started in 2008 in the wake of the global financial crisis. He shows further that the economic gap between EU members was growing: unemployment in Southern Europe was 20% while Germany had an unemployment rate of 4.2%. Brexiters felt Europe was experiencing an economic stagnation, and it was possible to leave the union without suffering any economic injuries. Friedman states further that sovereignty was a major consideration for Brexiters. People in the western world now think and act in terms of their nations and so have distrust for multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the Bretton Wood financial arrangements, and even the European Union. Among other grievances they hold that these organizations erode national sovereignty, thereby subordinating national interest to that of collective interest. This position of Friedman is supported by the rise of right wing political parties and neo-fascists in several parts of Europe in recent years. European nations have a distaste for migrants fleeing political persecution and ethnic cleansing at home. They fear that these stranger elements would create socio-economic and political crises in their host countries. Admission of migrants into Europe was one of the immediate causes of the Brexit vote.

Riley-Smith (2018) recasting the debate before the Brexit notes the centrality of immigration. He recalls that the Leave Group argued that “Britain can never control immigration until it leaves the European Union, because freedom of movement gives other EU citizens an automatic right to live here.” They therefore voted to leave the EU in order to control entry and exit from the United Kingdom. They were also unhappy with the fact that Britons who commit crimes in Europe could be sent abroad to face justice. On trade Riley-Smith recalls that the Leave campaigners contended that Britain's membership of the EU restricted her from engaging in independent trade with non-EU nations. They bemoaned Britain's inability to enter into trade deals with emerging markets such as China and India. Such handicaps would disappear once Britain left the European Union, hence the Leave Vote.

The concerns that prompted Britain to vote to delink from the EU are the same concerns that constitute the foundations of Dependency Theory. They are also in line with neo-fascist thought. Most developing nations lack the freedom to act independently of their former colonial masters in the international community. Former British colonies are encouraged to interact with other Commonwealth nations. Former French West African states are tied inextricably to the apron strings of France. Latin American nations live under the shadow of the United States and, to some extent, Canada. For remaining subservient to the metro pole, they are rewarded with handouts in terms of receipt of obsolete technology, occasional financial bailouts, and other such intangible benefits. In voting to leave the EU, Britain bought into the primary argument of Dependency Theory and neo-fascism that certain interactions between nations constitute fetters to development. Thus their stance that membership of the EU denied them control over trade, immigration and sovereignty

### **The Rise of Neo – Fascism in Europe**

Fascism was a political ideology that tormented Europe in the last century. It was largely responsible for World War II and the global devastations that followed that war. The World worked hard to kill this political movement so that mankind would be rid of its danger once and for all. Unfortunately the world is witnessing renaissance of this philosophy. McLean and McMillan (2003) give five features of fascism:

1. Extreme nationalism, the belief that there is a clearly defined nation which has its own distinctive characteristics, culture, and interests, and which is superior to others
2. An assertion of national decline-that at some point in the mythical past the nation was great, with harmonious social and political relationships, and dominant over others, and that subsequently it has disintegrated, became internally fractious and divided, and subordinate to lesser nations.
3. This process of national decline is often linked to a diminution of the racial purity of the nation...
4. The blame for national decline and/or racial miscegenation is laid at the door of a conspiracy on the part of other nations/races seen as competing in a desperate struggle for dominance.
5. In that struggle, both capitalism and its political form, liberal democracy, are seen as mere divisive devices designed to fragment the nation and subordinate it further in the world order.....(p.193)

The above clearly shows the deadly mission of fascist ideology. It is note worthy that Dependency Theory has no fascist connotations and there is no attempt to link the two even in the remotest way. Trump and Eurosceptic Britons have adopted a combination of ideologies in a bid to achieve their objectives. The rise of neo-fascism across the western world has translated into electoral victories for far right parties in Europe, and anti-immigration policies in the US. BBC News online of September 10, 2018, notes that there has been neo-fascist gains across Europe, stating that “some have taken office, others have become the main opposition voice, and even those yet to gain a political foothold have forced centrists leaders to adapt.” Among other things the BBC piece explains that the gains are in part due ...the wave of discontent also taps into long-standing fears about globalization and a dilution of national identity.” No European state is immuned from the neo-fascist threat. Most European nations now openly favor anti-immigration policies. The situation is the same in Trump's America where the presidency is determined to, among other measures, build a wall on the border with Mexico.

### **Conclusion: Economic Determinism**

This study set out to show a nexus between current western political and economic policy and Dependency Theory. It further shows a link between current western foreign policy and neo-fascism. The paper essentially argued that western political leadership, in a desperate attempt to remain relevant, has adopted a combination of political doctrines that the west previously disdained. The data show that western political philosophy is pragmatic and is ready to shift in the direction of economic interests. This clearly translates into economic determinism.



Current western economic policy shows a cacophony of political doctrines many of which would not have been mentioned only a few years ago.

The rise of neo-fascism in the west is however a very dangerous trend that, if not urgently contained, could lead to a global catastrophe the like of which the world has never seen. The United Nations and the European Union should see this development as prelude to World War III and rally global resources to nip it in the bud.

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