

History: Nationalism and the Rise of Leftist Politics: Jamaica's Foreign Policy under Michael Manley and Edward Seaga (1972-1989)

By [Tina Renier](#)

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The economic situation, the domestic political ideology, the individual leader, the context, and other key factors heavily influenced the pursuit of Jamaica's foreign policy under the leadership of Michael Manley in the 1970s and in in the 1980s.

The era of the 1970s was a significant period in political history for not only Jamaica but also, the Caribbean in which there was the rise in leftist politics, a new sense of nationalism and intellectual traditions that challenged the dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy in examining Caribbean development. These unique experiences within the domestic, regional and international environments have moulded Manley's approach to foreign policy based on his strong, philosophical belief system about Third World development.

On the other hand, the era of the 1980s marked a serious shift in political ideology due to a changing international environment that was primarily focussed on trade liberalization, economic growth, foreign investments, political conservatism and promotion of pro-American values to ensure that the dominant ideology of capitalism remains tightly intact. Thus, Seaga's approach to foreign policy in Jamaica mirrored his personal biases against the leftist model for development and he forged alliances with right wing political leaders such as Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan of the United States of

America in order to place more focus on economic gains for Jamaica and the Caribbean rather than, the foreign policy goals of social justice and equity for humanity and third world states, that were pursued by Manley, in the 1970s.

The reading 'Jamaica's Foreign Policy' explores a plethora of critical insights on how foreign policy has been constructed in Jamaica in the 1970s and 1980s, the factors that have affected the shaping of domestic foreign policy, the determinants, and goals of foreign policy. In the reading 'The New Foreign Policy', Laura Neack (2008) defines foreign policy as a "policy or a program that serves a guide to behaviour intended to realize the goal an organization has set for itself" (p.9). This definition of foreign policy by academic scholars is skilfully matched with the context that helped to shape Jamaica's foreign policy in the 1970s whereby issues in the international environment also influenced issues in the domestic and regional environment.

The program that was developed for Jamaica to realize its goals of equity, social justice, economic emancipation, and a brand-new sense of nationalism was pursued by the individual leader Michael Manley and his administration in the 1970s, against the context of newly independent third world states forging a path of self-determination and the rejection of capitalist development. In addition, this context of shaping Jamaica's foreign policy also led to intellectual scholarship in the Caribbean that challenged neo-liberal growth models prescribed by Sir Arthur Lewis and Williams Demas by describing the unique structural weaknesses in the economic situation of small states using historical analysis. This argument can be further proven by Norman Girvan (2009) in his seminal essay 'Plantation Economy in the Age of Globalization' where he postulates that the "plantation school of thought asserted the specificity of the Caribbean experience despite the fact that neo-liberal economics is seen as the panacea for development" (p.1).

It must be noted that Jamaica was no exception in this unique school of thought. The economic situation influenced foreign policy and was largely characterized by the elite controlling the wealth and production, repatriation of foreign investments and thus caused the masses of Jamaica to be disenfranchised. The economic situation of Jamaica, as a third world state, proved that it was prone to exploitation of its resources in the international political economy due to small size. With reference to this argument, one can conclude that Jamaica, before Manley's rise to power, was employing a structuralist approach to its foreign policy in which "the government had no real choice and decisions have been dictated by the capitalist elite." It was the economic situation of Jamaica, the rise in radical intellectual scholarship and the quest for self-determination internationally that helped to shape Manley's personal belief system and world views. Manley's personal belief system and world views, as an individual leader, were also translated into re-defining Jamaica's domestic political ideology and foreign policy. This is most evident in fact that he used democratic socialism as the new domestic political ideology to guide the foreign policy.

In a 1977 television interview with an American journalist, Manley expressed his motivation behind choosing democratic socialism as a model for Jamaica's development and foreign policy. He stated, "society succeeds best when it articulates purposes." This therefore means that a successful development model of a state must incorporate harnessing the power of the masses. His motives also included building a more equal and just society for all citizens, removing historical barriers of colourism and social class and charting a path of economic self-reliance of Jamaica. This was further revealed in his foreign policy decision of establishing the International Bauxite Levy in which he not only defended the national

interest of Jamaica's resources but he also ensured that this foreign policy decision is in close alignment with the domestic political ideology of democratic socialism, his world views and the specificity of Jamaica's economic situation.

Using Margaret Hermann's 1980 Personal Characteristics model in Foreign Policy, one can argue that Manley had placed high emphasis on national honour and identity, and he believed that Jamaica should hold centre stage. He had also displayed high conceptual complexity and thrived on the foreign policy goal of co-operation. As a result, Manley, as an individual leader, helped to shape Jamaica's foreign policy in manner that it would be an outstanding small state in the global arena on topical issues such as fair trade for developing countries. This was portrayed in Jamaica's leading role in negotiations of the first Lome Agreement in 1975 and Jamaica being the chair of G-77 countries in the Non-Alignment Movement meetings. His high conceptual complexity is mirrored in the fact that he displayed deft, intellectual rigour in understanding issues in third world development and how the international environment affects developing states and their issues.

Foreign policy analyst, Robert Putnam explained that a leader must pay attention to both domestic and international environment in pursuit of foreign policy and Manley attempted to display this balance in domestic and international affairs by forging significant ties with Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba and Socialist International to achieve national interests in domestic foreign policy.

To further add to this discussion, when one uses the systems level of foreign policy analysis, one can also posit that the multi-level interactions and bi-lateral relations on regional issues were closely aligned to the domestic political ideology of democratic socialism and Manley's controversial stance towards the capitalist model of development. Also, when applying the state level of analysis, Manley interacts in a co-operative manner with other decision makers within his organization, the People's National Party (PNP) to achieve foreign policy goals of co-operation internationally while pursuing equitable social reforms for citizens domestically.

Despite his motives to build a more just and equal society for all domestically and aligning himself with left wing leaders such as Fidel Castro of Cuba through co-operation on foreign policy goals, Manley's rationality in foreign policy decision making was affected by personal biases and misperceptions. His misperceptions lie in the fact that a purely socialist model was ideally suited for Jamaica's economic situation and the Jamaican public including the opposition, Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) had a serious misperception about democratic socialism being equivalent to communist dictatorship.

These misperceptions led to a serious opposition from the United States of America, which eventually caused Jamaica's domestic political ideology to have a negative impact on its economic development. This was due to the fact that, there were institutional constraints, in which the model of development pursued in foreign policy, had proven to be unstable and had cause the country to be crippled economically. Additionally, these misperceptions in foreign policy decisions also fostered Manley's electoral loss in 1980 and the rise of Edward Seaga who promoted pro-American ideals on the capitalist model of development. Neack (2008) posits, "as environments shift, issues change" and her postulation is quite relevant to examining foreign policy in Jamaica in the 1980s under the leadership of Edward Seaga.

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Edward Seaga also allowed Jamaica to lead in international trade matters related to the Caribbean Basin Initiative and had forged alliances with right wing leaders such as Ronald Reagan of the United States and Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom and the establishment of the International Democratic Union but the shift in ideas was still quite evident. Edward Seaga's foreign policy was largely domestic with special focus on economic expansion as he personally believed that the domestic political ideology of democratic socialism ruined Jamaica's economic situation by plunging it into debt and thereby allowing the country to rely on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for monetary assistance. Edward's pursuit of foreign policy was strengthened and supported by powerful capitalist superpowers and right wing coalitions. This shows that foreign policy is indeed a nested game and the behaviour of other states, particularly superpowers, towards a developing state like Jamaica, can determine the successful or failed fate of domestic foreign policy goals. In concluding, 'Jamaica's Foreign Policy' reading reveals the role of the leader, a state's economic situation, context and other major factors that influence foreign policy decisions, actions, and implications.

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Tina Renier is a regular contributor to Global Research.

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