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The New Era of German Development Policy

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Abstract

The mechanisms related to the allocation of aid and their effectiveness has been subject of debate for the past three decades. Germany, one of the largest providers of aid to developing countries, responded by undertaking a drastic shift in its development policy towards Africa. Through the elaboration of specific initiatives for increasing private investments in Africa, among which the "G20 Compact with Africa" of 2017 is the most prominent, Germany promoted a different approach for fostering economic growth in the continent and overcome the old methods of aid allocation. This thesis analyses the main factors that led to this shift through the usage of the theories of neomercantilism and social constructivism. The results, reached through process-tracing and document analysis, indicates that social constructivism has more explanatory value. By following the stages of norm life cycle theory, stemming from social constructivism, it is argued that Germany has been successfully socialized in a new norm on development policy promoted at the international level. Therefore, after having internalized the norm at the national level, Germany undertook a different approach to development towards Africa.

Keywords: Development, Germany, Africa, Neomercantilism, Social Constructivism, Norm Life Cycle.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

AA	Auswärtiges Amt (Federal Foreign Office)
AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
AAG	Africa Advisory Group
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AfDB	African Development Bank
BDI	Federation of German Industries
BMF	Federal Ministry of Finance
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation
BMWi	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy
CwA	Compact with Africa
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEG	Deutsche Investitions-und Entwicklungsgesellschaft
DFI	Development Finance Institution
DIF	Development Investment Fund
DM	Deutsche Mark
EU	European Union
FfD	Finance for Development
G20	Group of 20
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
LDCs	Least Developed Countries

MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOF	Other Official Flows
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WBG	World Bank Group
WWII	World War II

Chapter 1. Introduction

In June 2017, the German Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Deutsche Bundesbank hosted an international conference named "G20 Africa Partnership – Investing in a Common Future" in Berlin (G20, 2017a). The event functioned as a prelude for the "2017 G20 Hamburg Summit" that had to be held a month later, under the German G20 Presidency. The partnership was built upon existing regional and international initiatives, including the "G20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialisation in Africa and LDCs" launched in 2016 during the G20 summit held in Hangzhou (China), and aimed at supporting the international development commitments towards Africa as, for instance, the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", that led to the elaboration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (G20, 2017b).

One of the main pillars of the partnership is the "Compact with Africa" (CwA) initiative which was launched within the finance track of the G20 and aimed at improving the macroeconomic, financing and business frameworks of the participating African countries (on a voluntary basis) for fostering the increase in private investments in the continent (G20, 2017b). Hence, along with the involvement of International Organizations such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the initiative promoted a different approach to undertake in development cooperation for Africa. Given its major focus in promoting a bottom-up approach based on a demand-driven cooperation, the CwA is centered around the principle of encouraging the flows of private investments to Africa through processes of "domestic reforms" to be implemented by the participating countries (Van Staden & Sidiropoulos, 2019; p. 18). In the same year of conception of the CwA, the BMZ and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) launched two other initiatives related to Africa, respectively the "Marshall Plan with Africa" and the "Pro!Africa" initiative (Kappel, 2017; p. 5). Similarly to the CwA, both initiatives intended to promote a developmental approach based on the concepts of sustainability, ownership and private investments (BMZ, 2017a; BMWi, 2017). In the aims of the Ministers and the Federal Government, this renewed approach to development cooperation vis-à-vis Africa would have challenged the main economic impediments of African states and thus fostered more effectively the process of economic growth therein, so as to bring to an end the "days of aid and donors and recipients" (BMZ, 2017a; p. 4).

Already in 2011 the Federal Government published a strategy paper related to Africa (AA, 2011), which was meant to set up the new German Africa policy, which would have been "grounded in universal values and at the same time guided by interests" (AA, 2011; p. 5). Three years later, the

Federal Government published the so-called "Africa policy guidelines"(Die Bundesregierung, 2014), designed to establish a new "comprehensive approach" to German Africa policy and which was later updated in the year 2019, thus with the document concerning the continuation of the policy guidelines for Africa (AA, 2019). During the relatively short period of time going from 2011 to 2019, several strategy papers and documents related to Africa were published by the Federal Government and its Ministries (AA, 2011; AA, 2019; Die Bundesregierung, 2014; Die Bundesregierung, 2017; BMZ, 2014; BMZ, 2016; BMZ, 2017a; BMWi, 2017) that, along with the CwA initiative, advocated a new approach to development and to German Africa policy. In these regards, it is noticeable the conception of the private sector as one of the main drivers of development, a role endorsed and promoted by all the abovementioned documents, and which took the centre stage at the international level through the implementation of the CwA initiative, the first comprehensive program between the Group of 20 and Africa (Kappel & Reisen, 2019; p. 2).

This may be considered as a remarkable shift from the past conception of aid and development cooperation. Indeed, following the positive results of the Marshall Plan in the restoration of European economies after the WWII, a new assumption by which LDCs, and especially African countries, needed foreign aid for fostering economic growth started to diffuse (Moyo, 2009). This was based on considerations of African states as lacking the capital and technological know-how necessary to stimulate economic development, so that many countries became large recipients of foreign funding provided by Western donors (Morgenthau, 1962; Moyo, 2009). Along with humanitarian aid provided by private foundations and aid related to military assistance, foreign aid took the form of transfers of money and services from one government to another, a practice sometimes referred as "bribing" given its alleged political nature (Morgenthau, 1962; p. 302). The provision of aid was mainly not connected to specific development targets or conditions that had to be attained for receiving the funds, hence they were not always directed towards the pursue of a change in the status quo of developing countries for political reasons (ibid.). In order to distinguish military aid and other forms of aid with commercial purposes from aid directed towards economic development objectives, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) coined the term Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 1969 (Janus et.al, 2015). For being qualified as ODA, aid had to be provided by governments or their executive agencies and had to be concessional, other than being administered for promoting economic welfare and development (OECD, 2020). In this respect, donors were often providing aid through public institutions and bilateral agencies, and other funds to developing countries were loaned by financial institutions such as the World Bank, with funds raised on the financial markets or through individual donor government contribution (Eneh, 2009; p. 104). Nonetheless, aid were also provided by donor countries pursuing explicit economic interests in the recipient countries, so that they were functioning as levers for increasing trade gains and investment opportunities (Frank & Baird, 1975; p. 149).

In this respect, Germany differ quite considerably from its Western counterparts: before the 1990s, for instance, Africa had only a limited importance in German's economic considerations, so that the pursue of economic interests was limited (Hofmeier, 1986; Mair, 2006, Schieder et al, 2011). After a period of economic recovery from the WWII, political party foundations (*Stiftungen*) such as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation started to carry out international development projects through the usage of "generous public subsidies" (Pinto-Duschinsky, 1991; p. 33). Hence, during the 1960s and the 1970s, public funds for the implementation of overseas projects increased, also thanks to the establishment of the BMZ in 1961 (ibid.). Public funds started also to be used for political purposes, even if they were not directed towards the pursue of mere economic benefits as in the cases of other Western countries, and they witnessed a large increase up until the 1990s (McKinslay, 1978). Hence, after a phase characterized by many economic and political efforts in the continent, Germany became one of the largest bilateral donors to Africa throughout the 1990s (Engel & Kappel, 2006, p. 1). In the next decades, the trend continued and, as of today, Germany remains one of the largest providers of ODA to Africa (OECD, 2019). Nonetheless, the effectiveness of traditional aid based on "donors and recipients" relationships started to be questioned internationally at the end of the 20th century. Although Germany can still be considered as one of the largest donors worldwide, in recent years the Federal Government undertook a shift in its conception of development policy towards an increased role for the private sector, as demonstrated by the latest initiatives in Africa. Therefore, by considering the new phase of German Africa policy after the 2011, and mainly by considering the shift occurred in German development policy towards an increased role for the private sector as manifested by the initiatives for Africa of 2017, this research aims at providing an answer to the following research question:

What can explain the shift in German development policy in the African continent, from public development aid to the increased role of the private sector after the first decade of the 21st century?

Overall, the literature on development policies is rich: indeed, several scholars directed their attentions to the connection between development aid and economic growth. Some of them, such as Dollar and Pritchett (1998), Frank and Baird (1975), Hermes and Lensink (2001) and Moyo (2009) focused on the alleged effectiveness of traditional approaches to development cooperation and development aid, thus by claiming the importance of differentiating the methods of intervention for fostering an actual economic growth in developing countries. Others, such as Alesina & Dollar (2000), sought to analyse the patterns of allocation of aid through multiple regressions, thus by evidencing the strong influence of "colonial past" and "voting patterns" at the UN as the main factors for determining the "selection" of recipient countries (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; p. 55). Previously, McKinlay (1979), elaborated a foreign policy model aimed at describing the bilateral allocations of aid from the USA, UK, France and Germany in a period going from 1960 to 1970, with different results for each country. For instance, UK and USA seemed to be pursuing foreign policy interests, whereas France was following an "ex-colonial" pattern of allocation of bilateral aid. Interestingly, Germany seemed to pursue a strategy dictated by economic interests, apart from foreign policy reasons (McKinlay, 1979).

Lot of academic attention has been also received by the specific German allocation of aid. Apart from Hofmeier (1986), Pinto-Duschinsky (1991) and White (1965), who provided an overview on German foreign aid and German political foundations, examples of this strand of literature are Amavilah (1998), who analysed the bilateral aid relationship between Germany and Namibia and Arwin and Drewes (2001) who, through the elaboration of an empirical model based on cross-sectional and time-series data containing German aid to 85 countries from 1973 and 1995, found a "population bias" on German allocation of aid (Arwin & Drewes, 2001). In a similar fashion, Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Schmaljohann (2015) investigated the allocation of German bilateral aid through the estimation of an OLS regression model, evidencing the importance of aligned votes to Germany in the UN General Assemblies, rather than geo-strategic reasons, as a factor influencing the aid relationship. In contrast to the previous studies, Faust and Ziaja (2012) found that neediness and levels of democracy exerted a strong influence in German allocation of aid, thus by highlighting the "civil power" role covered by Germany in development cooperation (Faust & Ziaja, 2012). Contrarily, through the analysis of a gravity model of trade, Martinez-Zarzoso, Nowak-Lehmann, Klasen and Johannsen (2016) evidenced the beneficial effects that aid allocation had on German exports related to machinery, transport and electrical equipment, thus by highlighting the commercial interests of Germany in the processes of aid allocation. Finally, Klingebiel (1999) assessed the impact of German development cooperation in conflict situations.

Always related to the field of Development policy, many studies focused on the shifts undertaken by the international community in the conception of aid relationships and methods of allocation. In these regards, several scholars dedicated themselves to the analysis of the major historical shifts, and their consequences, in international development policy. Examples of it can be found in Biyers & Rosengren (2012), Fakuda-Parr and Hulme (2011), Gore (2013), Keijzer (2011), Mawdsley, Savage and Kim (2014) and Tomlinson (2012).

Nevertheless, the literature on German Africa policy and the new German initiatives for Africa is less varied. German Africa policy has been assessed by Engel (2012), Engel & Kappel

(2006) and Kappel (2016; 2017), hence by showing the lack of a wide spectrum of analysis. Similarly, the new German Africa initiatives of 2017, and especially the CwA which is at the core of the new German development policy, received little academic attention so far. For instance, Kappel and Reisen (2017) provided a critical overview of the CwA, based on assumptions related to the specific issues of low-income African countries partaking in it. Kappel, Reisen and Pfeiffer (2017) and Mabera (2019) provided a general overview of the main pillars and objectives of the initiative, whereas Kappel and Reisen (2019) proceeded by illustrating the major accomplishments, as well as shortcomings, of the CwA after the first two years of its implementation. In a different way, Paulo (2017), assessed the CwA under a perspective based on the influence that it could have on another influential actor in Africa, which is India. In sum, most of the empirical material related to the CwA initiative and German Africa policy can be mainly found in the strategy papers of the Federal Government and its Ministries, which during the years provided a comprehensive overview on the implementation of the CwA, the Marshall Plan with Africa and the more general Africa policy. In addition, some insights can be found in the reports of International Organizations such as the AfDB and the WBG, along with the reports and papers elaborated by the G20.

Generally, the works related to development policy, German Africa policy and CwA initiative do not witness a prevalent usage of theories stemming from the field of International Political Economy or International Relations. As abovementioned, several quantitative researches have been elaborated only in relation to the patterns of allocation of aid, thus there is a concrete absence of theoretical frameworks used for assessing these topics. Indeed, most of the academic works related to Compact with Africa, German Africa policy and German development policy are characterized by descriptive purposes, hence there is no proper analysis based on political-economic theories. Considering these gaps, this research seeks to engage in a qualitative analysis of the alleged motives leading to a drastic shift in German development policy towards Africa. For this purpose, it will build the analysis through the perspectives provided by two different theories such as neomercantilism and social constructivism. In this research, the theories will be juxtaposed in order to be able to provide a significant answer to the central research question. Although both theories engages on the analysis of states' behaviour, therefore seeking for explanations over certain decisions and policies at the national and international level, neomercantilism focuses more on the materialist foundations of state policies which are assumed to be guided by rationality. Contrarily, social constructivism is based on a wider conception on the subject, hence it looks for social explanations of certain policy outcomes. Specifically, norm life cycle theory will be employed to understand whether the shift in German development policy towards Africa has been dictated by gradual changes in the conception of development cooperation at the international level. The theory is based on the work of Finnemore &

Sikkink (1998) and perceives the formation of international norms as a three-stage process. Hence this research will analyse whether Germany underwent through a norm life cycle that led the Federal Government to undertake a different approach to development cooperation in Africa by increasing the role of the private sector. This is opposed to the main tenets of neomercantilism inasmuch the latter regards the international arena as anarchic, thus it assumes that state policies and states' behaviour, in the international dimension, pursue the promotion of national power and national economic capabilities at the expenses of other states. Therefore, the methods of process-tracing and document analysis will be directed towards the objective of building an explanatory narrative useful for describing the background of German African initiatives and the changes occurred in German development policy towards Africa, along with the major international shifts related to development cooperation. By doing this, this research aims at filling the gaps in the literature related to the shift in German development policy, with a specific emphasis on the German Africa initiatives of 2017, mainly Compact with Africa. In this way, it aims to provide a concrete theoretical background, with related expectations, from which further future analysis could be implemented. Therefore, through the application of two different theories to a relatively new and unprecedented shift in German development policy, this research aims at providing further insights on the topic under analysis. In addition, the facts connected to the shift in German development policy, as well as the shifts occurred at the international level, are socially relevant insofar as they are based on contemporary issues related to development policy. Hence, considering the regular debates at the international level over the effectiveness of development policies, it can shed more light on the alleged improvements that a shift towards an increased role of the private sector may present.

The thesis is structured as follows. In the next chapter, neomercantilism and social constructivism, followed by norm life cycle theory, will be discussed at greater length and the main hypotheses related to the topic of interest will be deduced within the theoretical framework they constitute. Chapter three introduces the main research methods employed by this thesis, the main sources utilized, and the operationalization of the main variables related to the hypotheses. Chapter four presents the empirical analysis in which the hypotheses will be tested. Finally, chapter five provides the conclusion of the research.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Neomercantilism

Neomercantilism derives from its classical version, namely mercantilism, which represents a political and economic theory related to the period of pre-industrial Europe (Malmgren, 1970). Mercantilism traces its origins back to the 15th century, thus following the processes of centralization of power implemented by the monarchies that led to the constitution of a framework in which merchants, along with the bourgeoisie, proceeded with the establishment of their relative wealth and power (Fontanel et al., 2008). Its historical context has been identified as corresponding to the period involving the major processes leading to the emergence of the nation-states. Consequently, mercantilism can also be defined as the "political economy of state formation" (Hettne, 1993; p.214). At that time, economy was perceived as the main instrument of the power of states, so that wealth was considered to be at the services of those in power. Therefore, mercantilist ideology led to the conception by which political and economic objectives became associated (Fontanel et al., 2008; p. 332).

The term has been used since the beginning of the 18th century in various ways and for various purposes, due to the absence of common definitions and features. Nevertheless, mercantilist ideology was hardly criticized, given the greater importance attributed to commercial practices rather than extractive and agricultural ones, which were considered as fundamental in the national economy (Brandenburg, 1931; pp. 281-282). These principles reflected the view of the "physiocrats", who were in favour of a promotion of agriculture as a primary activity in the process of economic growth, as more important than trade and industrial activities (Genç & Kurt, 2016). In fact, there is general agreement among scholars in acknowledging the first appearance of the word in the "Philosophie Rurale" (1763) of the physiocrats Mirabeau and Quesnay, who referred to the "système Mercantile" (Magnusson, 1993). In their perspective, the system they were describing was based on two major characteristics: it was moved by "unpatriotic interests" and it was destructive for the agricultural society which previously guaranteed the prosperity of the nation (Herlitz, 1964; p. 102). Subsequently, Adam Smith reinterpreted the term in the "Wealth of Nations" (1776) where he assessed the features of the "Mercantile System" (ibid.). Smith agreed with his predecessors that the term emphasized the role of merchants and manufacturers in the implementation of a system which was assumed to go against the general interest; yet, he rejected the notion that the system was destructive to the agricultural society of that time (Herlitz, 1964). For Smith, mercantilism had its merits in achieving the objective of promoting commercial and industrial sectors through a wider inclusion of societal capital into those specific economic activities (ibid.).

Mercantilism soon after came to be interpreted in political terms thanks to the works of Cunningham (1882), for which mercantilism was a system of power conceived for the promotion of

English supremacy in relation to other states and Schmoller (1884), which described mercantilism as the process of state-formation in the sense that the community forming the state was transformed into an economic society, with an increased importance (Heckscher, 1994; p. 28). In contrast with Smith, these authors described mercantilism in a way by which it did not represent the main interests of the mercantile class anymore, rather the one of the state in its totality, the national interest (Herlitz, 1964; p. 105). In their views, mercantilist principles were representing the expression of ideas related to the creation of the economies on a national basis and of the state itself (ibid.; p. 106). For them, the power of the state was necessarily connected to the concept of private welfare (Wilson, 1957; p. 187). Following up these discussions, Heckscher entered in the debate with his "Mercantilism" (1934) in which he identified the term as indicating a system for promoting economic policies leading to the unification of the state and to the increase of its power through the protection of economic producers, along with representing a specific system of monetary policy (Haley, 1936).

Ontologically, mercantilism may be represented as the "pursuit of stateness", and thus as the pursuit of the specific national interest which is at the core of the mercantilist logic (Hettne, 1993; p.213). Therefore, the mercantilist rationale is political in the sense that it is not only directed towards the pursue of economic development, rather it mainly revolves around the objective of "optimization of the political control"(Hettne, 1993; p. 213). One of the main tenets of mercantilism entailed the necessity of improving the basic economic conditions of a state in order to "elevate" one nation above the others (Cwik, 2011). This, for instance, was reflected by the idea for which "beneficial" exports must outnumber the unfavourable imports (Cwik, 2011; Herlitz, 1964; Schmiegelow & Schmiegelow, 1975). In short, as argued by Barry Jones (1982), the evolution of mercantilism passed through three different phases: the first "bullionist" period during which the main focus was on the mere accumulation of wealth, in form of gold, constituting the basis for the military power of nation-states; the second phase characterized by the perspective under which the political strength of a state was based on its economic structures and not on its supply of metal assets; and the third phase based on the modern version of neomercantilism, focused on all the economic and political features standing at the basis of economic well-being, security and political power (Jones, 1982; pp. 39-40).

Therefore, by moving to the analysis of the contemporary concept of neomercantilism, we can assume that its logic may not be considered as being entrenched anymore in the concept of the nation-state. The contextual framework has changed towards the consideration of a wider "space" represented by the international political economy, thus by reflecting the conceptualization of a transnational structure representing a new "world order" (Hettne, 1993; p. 212). The term "neomercantilism" was therefore coined for illustrating the shift of the analysis of political and economic relations from a national perspective to a global space that transcends the nation-state logic, to the extent that it has been defined as a "transnational phenomenon" (Hettne, 1993; p. 221). Indeed, international political economy deals with the interrelation of politics and economics at the international level and neomercantilism, following this logic, is based on the observations and analyses of the role exerted by political relations in the specific management and organization of global economic features. In these circumstances, neomercantilist designs aim at achieving a specific economic power other than the objective of implementing certain geopolitical strategies. Neomercantilism may be considered as a political realism applied to foreign policy inasmuch is rooted in a specific understanding of the global political economy as a zero-sum game directed towards the control of resources, the control of technologies and, more importantly, of the markets (Wigell, 2016). The national interest of the state is strictly correlated to economic objectives insofar as the ultimate intention corresponds to the maximization of the economic power and security of the state in a globalised world. Hence, the contemporary Neomercantilism is built upon the states' objective of guaranteeing a certain level of economic well-being in the society, as well as political power and security in the international dimension, through a specific addressing of the policies which may lead to them (Jones, 1982). In sum, Neomercantilism may be intended as the pursue of "national prosperity through the management of trade" (Nichols, 2016; p. 222).

Neomercantilism is thus inserted within a framework of competition which entails the understanding of foreign relations as a zero-sum game in which the gains for one state corresponds to the losses of another state (Wigell, 2016; p. 141). Therefore, it focuses on the pursue and maximization of the so-called *relative gains*, according to which the governments are active in the promotion of trade, in the support of national companies and in the elaboration of investment policies (Ziegler, 2010; p. 78). By following this logic, the first general hypothesis may be deduced:

Hp1: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein represent an attempt by the German government to improve market access and trade opportunities for German exporters at the expense of their competitors from other states.

As distinct from its classical version, neomercantilism concentrates on the guidance role of governments in the management of economic activities on a domestic level and the furthering of relations of trade in the international dimension (Jones, 1982). These features led to the claims by which neomercantilism may be considered as the pursuit of national interest through the strong involvement of the government in economic stances (Jones, 1982). The same argument has been shared by Guerrieri & Padoan (1986), for which neomercantilism conceives a system in which states do not consider wealth in terms of accumulation of gold, instead it is based on a different kind of accumulation based on trade surplus and the substantial control of the markets by national businesses in a global environment. Trade surplus, apart from increasing the international prestige of the country under analysis, can guarantee the share of profits in the economy as well as its creditworthiness in the international markets. In addition, a country presenting a positive trade balance may be acting as a sort of financial centre thanks to the guarantees provided by its surplus (Guerrieri & Padoan, 1986; p. 32). Therefore, the political version of neomercantilism reflects a specific strategy based on the elaboration of policies characterised by "mutually supportive political and economic justifications" (Guerrieri & Padoan, 1986; p.32).

Neomercantilism shares many ontological assumptions with neorealism, of which Kenneth Waltz can be considered the founder due to its work called "Theory of International Politics" (1979). Neorealism may be also referred as structural realism, structural in the sense that it "highlights the unintended consequences of great power behaviour" (Parent & Rosato, 2015; p. 58). Similarly to neomercantilists, neorealists tend to accentuate the primacy of economic activities over the others insofar as related to matters of security and state-power (Pease, 2015; p. 50). In these regards, both theories emphasize the importance of specific industrial activities, namely the leading industries in the economies under analysis, which are deemed as crucial for guaranteeing security and power to the state (ibid.). Neomercantilism consider the international system as anarchic, thus the states are perceived as rational entities that seek to maximize their relative power in order to guarantee their self-security along with pursuing their wider objectives in the international arena, as multiple competitive actors (Ziegler, 2010; p. 76). In the same way, neorealism perceives the international order as being characterized by anarchy inasmuch it is the representation of a "realm" in which multiple states, in the absence of a central authority, shape their behaviours in relation to coercive capabilities of other states (Kocs, 1994; p. 536). The international system is based on competition, hence neorealism considers international politics as the representation of a dispute between states for attaining "relative positions" (ibid.; p. 536). In these regards, the strategic actions of states such as the use of military strength or the formation of balancing coalitions are considered as functions depending on that dispute (ibid.).

In the anarchic international system states are pushed to pursue power, since without it they may be subjected to the will of other, more powerful, states (Paul, Wirtz & Fortmann, 2004; p. 4). In these regards, neorealists formulated the so-called "balance of power" theory, based on the notion by which states, as independent subjects, seek their own survival in the anarchy represented by the international system (ibid.). For this purpose, the existence of a more powerful state may lead to the formation of coalitions of states aimed at achieving a certain defensive strength for dissuading potential threatening and powerful states in the global arena (Paul et al., 2004; p. 6). In this respect, the best ways for protection are considered to be internal balancing, occurring when states increase their military power, and external balancing, which is based on the constitution of alliances with other states for counterbalancing the influence of the most powerful ones (Parent & Rosato, 2015). As argued by Waltz (1979), external balancing is likely to occur only in case of a great pressure of war, thus as some sort of extremis move (Waltz, 1979; p. 167).

Nonetheless, due to the problems related to the application of the concepts of internal and external balancing in the unipolar system of today, another type of balancing behaviour, namely *soft balancing*, has been addressed by some scholars (Pape, 2005; Paul et al., 2004). The concept was first used to indicate the international opposition to the war of the USA against Iraq, and it is not related to the increase of military capabilities or to attempts for undermining the stability of the international system through military actions. Rather, the concept of soft balancing can be considered as an evolution of the balance of power theory and it refers to the utilization of certain non-military tools aimed at having actual indirect effects on the power capabilities of a superior state (Pape, 2005; p. 36). Precisely, this may entail strategies of "economic strengthening", which would be based on long-term procedures aimed at shifting relative economic capabilities on the side of the less powerful states. A possible way for carrying out these strategies may be, for instance, the implementation of regional blocs aiming at increasing trade and economic growth for its members, while trading away from its non-members (Pape, 2005; p. 37). Therefore, given these considerations, a second general hypothesis can be formulated:

Hp2: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein represent an attempt by the German government to secure its economic and political position by balancing the presence of other competitor states on the continent.

As the other economic theories falling in the field of International Political Economy, also neomercantilism received some critics about its focal standpoints. As stated by Gilpin & Gilpin (2001), "the nation-state remains the dominant actor in both domestic and international economic affairs" (Gilpin & Gilpin, 2001; p. 4). By taking this perspective into account, it may be challenged the consideration about the perceived dominance of the states in the international dimension since, nowadays, different International Organizations cover a primary role in the management of economic policies at the international level.

Secondly, since trade relations are intended as a zero-sum game rather than a positive-sum game, neomercantilist policies and interventions on the markets might be quite self-defeating in the sense that they could lead to resentment and/or retaliation by other states (Jones, 1982). Hence, under this point of view, one may question whether the pursuit of neomercantilist policies in a globalized world may be benefitting the national economy on the medium and long-term.

Thirdly, some critics were moved to the perceived attempt of neomercantilism to focus solely on national business firms as subjects leading to the desirable national wealth, since other exogenous actors may have some claims over the generated wealth (Nichols, 2016; p. 224). Against this assumption, it has been sustained that large business firms are rarely isolated in political boundaries so that neomercantilism fails in explaining, and thus thoroughly understanding, the regulations characterizing the international environment in which large business firms operate (ibid., p. 223).

Table 1: Independent variables deduced from neomercantilism.

X1: Relative gains X2: Soft Balancing	Y: Shift in German development policy towards Africa

2.2 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism has its ideological roots in the sociology of Weber and Durkheim, who attributed a central role and significance to social facts in international relations: both authors, indeed, claimed that the connections between individuals within a community were represented by shared ideational binds (Ruggie, 1998; p. 861). In the field, important contributions are the ones of Finnemore (1996), Katzenstein (1996), and Klotz (1995), among others. These authors have challenged the emblematic materialism and individualism of the mainstream ideologies of International Relations (IR), hence by highlighting the importance of norms and social aspects in shaping the relations between the agents and the structure in which they are situated (Checkel, 1998).

The term "constructivism" was first coined by Nicholas Onuf in 1989, at the end of the Cold War, in his book called "World of Our Making" (1989). With the usage of this term, the author aimed at describing a new theory in the field of IR characterized by the claim under which international politics would be socially constructed (Wendt, 2000). Hence, a new constructivist approach emerged during the 1990s, and it was based on the substantial rejection of the rationalist approaches represented by neorealism and neoliberalism (Price & Reus-Smit, 1998; p. 259). The new approach was based on the importance given to the role of identities in shaping actions and interests, thus it promoted the analysis of world politics under a sociological perspective (ibid.; p. 259). The main principles of constructivism are based on the assumptions by which "shared ideas", and not material factors as previously thought, are the main determinants of the structures of human association (ibid.; p. 1). These shared ideas are considered to design the major interests and identities of multiple actors, a role that substitutes the one of nature (Wendt, 2000; p. 1). Hence, the main actors and their relative interests are not assumed to be given inasmuch constructivism "problematize them, treating them as the objects of analysis" (Finnemore, 1996; p. 4). According to Wendt (2000), one of the principal researchers in the field of social constructivism, the role of shared ideas in determining the structures of human association may be defined as some sort of "idealist" and "social" approach to social life (Wendt, 2000; p. 1). On the contrary, the construction of identities and interests by shared ideas represents a "holist" or "structuralist" approach due to its focus on the emergence of social structures (Wendt, 2000; p. 1). Therefore, he consequently defined constructivism as a "structural idealism" (ibid., p. 1). Due to the inclusion of insights from the social theories, it has been claimed that constructivism is fundamentally characterized by idealistic features, hence it represents a sort of "idealism" (Palan, 2000; p. 576). Social constructivism is thus based on the "intersubjective dimension of human actions" (Ruggie, 1998; p. 856). According to social constructivists, this attitude made possible for humans to provide significance to concepts and social facts that otherwise would not be existing such as money, rights and sovereignty (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; p. 393). According to social constructivists, the role of norms, culture, knowledge, ideas and political arguments is fundamental: the main focus of constructivists is indeed on social facts, hence their major concern is to understand how they change over time and how they affect politics (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; pp. 392-393).

In these regards, it is important the contribution of Finnemore (1996) who applied the intrinsic discourse of constructivism to the field of international politics: her assumptions are based on the argument by which the relations between states are part of transnational social networks that, in turn, affect their relative world's perception and, consequently, shape the role they cover in the international system (Finnemore, 1996; p. 2). Under this perspective, even states came to be intended as "socially constructed entities" (Finnemore, 1996; p. 4). In addition to this, the author argued that the form and the main characteristics of the international social structure in which states are embedded are of the utmost importance for understanding their major objectives (Finnemore, 1996). In this respect, a process of socialization occurs in the international society, thus a process that shapes the intentions of the states that are part of it (ibid.). In this process it is also important to consider the decisive role of domestic politics in influencing the aims and the national interests of each country, although it cannot thoroughly explain the different choices made by states. What is more important, indeed, is to consider that the interests of the states are defined within an international normative framework capable of addressing what exactly is deemed as good and appropriate (Finnemore, 1996; p. 2). About this, it is noticeable how the normative framework is not static over time, rather it changes its form and so the norms and the values that it entails. Therefore, also the actions and the perceived interests of any single state shift correspondingly. In fact, the typical behaviours and views held by political actors, as well as those of the civil society from which they are constrained, are strongly influenced by these features of the international context (Finnemore, 1996).

These considerations suggest that the alleged shifts in the definition of states' interests are not only driven by internal demands or external factors, rather they are consistently shaped by the fundamental norms and values that organize and define the political perspectives at the international level. In this way the international framework, which is composed by multiple actors and organizations, can modify the willingness of the states to undertake a specific action instead of another.

2.2.1 Norm Life Cycle Theory

In the field of social constructivism, much importance is covered by an innovative approach to the subject implemented by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink in 1998, in their work titled "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change". The authors argued that the bulk of the academic works within the research field of constructivism were more prepared in the explanation of stability, rather than explaining substantial changes (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 888). Therefore, by sustaining the importance of understanding the different processes leading to the formation of norms in the international framework, they tried to elaborate a mechanism of evolution of norms, namely "life cycle" (Finnemore & Sikkink, p. 888). The life cycle is composed by different segments, and each of them entail different logics of behaviour. By introducing this concept, the authors aimed at furthering the common understanding regarding the influence exerted by norms on states' behaviour.

This influence may be represented by a three-stage process, namely the emergence of the norm, the acceptance of the norm understood as "norm cascade" and, finally, the third stage represented by the internalization of the norm (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). In this normative process, the authors identified a sort of threshold (tipping point) dividing the first two stages and, in each of them, the relative changes are driven by a diversity of actors, motivations and influencing mechanisms (ibid.).

By moving to the analysis of the stages, we can start by illustrating the first of them, namely the stage of norm emergence. In this stage, the main mechanism at work is the one regarding the process of persuasion operated by the so-called "norm entrepreneurs" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 896). These agents are assumed to be knowledgeable about the concrete and desirable behaviours to undertake in their communities. Hence their role, which is deemed to be critical for the formation of the norms, mainly consists in illustrating specific issues to be tackled by the community (in the case of the states, the international community). Sometimes this can occur through the creation of specific problems, a process that goes under the name of "framing" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 897). This type of process is considered to be essential for the specific strategies of norm entrepreneurs because, if successful, it may reinforce the understanding of the public towards what is considered to be an appropriate behaviour, so that these "cognitive frames" may be adopted as new ways of understanding particular issues by the community (ibid., p. 897). In the frames' construction, the entrepreneurs base their contestations on a precedent norm: this process of contestation is crucial since it aims at widening the awareness on the "logic of appropriateness" related to the norms (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 897). Indeed, the promotion of the new norms occurs within the boundaries constituting the standard understanding of appropriateness represented by the prior norms that are being contested, thus by requiring a certain "inappropriateness" in the behaviour of the entrepreneurs for favouring a change in these stances (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Furthermore, norm entrepreneurs operate through specific organizational platforms, which could also be purposely constituted for enforcing the creation, and therefore the promotion, of the new norms. For instance, these organizational platforms may be represented by certain NGOs characterized by specific expertise and/or International Organizations such as the United Nations. International Organizations may be very useful thanks to their worldwide influence, to the extent that they can affect the general perception on the norms that may be promoted in the agenda (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 899). Based on these considerations, the following sub-hypothesis can be formulated:

SHp1: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein has taken place because norm entrepreneurs have deconstructed the previous norm through the use of organizational platforms and constructed a new norm on development policy.

At the moment in which the entrepreneurs realize the objective of persuading a certain majority of states to adopt the proposed new norm, the norm reaches the so-called tipping point, also named threshold which divides the first two stages of the process under analysis (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 901). Usually, as stated by the authors, norm-tipping occurs only rarely before one-third of the states involved adopt the norm (ibid.). In these regards, much importance is represented by the specific features of the states adopting it, so that some states are considered to be pivotal, whereas others are not. This is mainly based on the consideration by which states that are deemed as "critical" are those whose non-compliance to the norm may endanger the entire process. Given these considerations, a second sub-hypothesis can be generated:

SHp2: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein has taken place because there has been a tipping point whereby even more states complied with the new norm on development policy.

After this point, the authors presented the second stage of the life cycle of norms, namely the stage of "norm cascade". This stage occurs after the tipping point has been reached and it consists in the substantial spreading of the agreed norm: in these regards, the dominant mechanism is considered to be the one of socialization (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 902). The agents characterizing the process of socialization are not only states: indeed, also specific networks composed of entrepreneurs or certain International Organizations can assume this role. Therefore, they can start acting as socialization agents through some sort of pressure exerted on the actors that have been targeted for adopting new policies. In this process, the states decide to comply with the norms basing themselves on reasons related to their identities as members of the international community (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 902). In these regards, it is worth noticing how the process of socialization and the consequent adoption of the norms by a group of states in a region may be compared to a specific "peer pressure"(Ramirez, Soysal & Shanahan 1997; p. 740). This is comparable to some sort of state-to-state intimidation, and the related motives for states to respond to this particular feature may be reflected by the principles of legitimation, conformity and esteem (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 903). In fact, socialization may also occur through emulation, praise and ridicule (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 902). Instances of this type may also be found in the internal dimension of the states, since leaders may conform to some norms in order not to violate criteria capable of creating inner disapproval from the societal base, thus by reinforcing their own self-esteem at the national level. In light of the above, a general hypothesis can be formulated:

Hp3: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein has taken place because the German government has been socialized into the new norm on development policy.

Finally, we reach the third stage of the life cycle of norms, namely the one implying the internalization of the norm. This stage is considered to be at the extreme of the norm cascade and corresponds to a wide acceptance of the chosen norm that thus become internalized and assumes the features of "taken-for-granted" to the extent that the conformance to it becomes almost automatic (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 905). Hence, the norm reaches a level of acceptance that somehow constrains the behaviour of the actors due to its indisputable characteristics: in sum, the norm becomes integral part of the daily life at the national and international level. In these regards, the authors argued about the important role of professions and iterated behaviour, in addition to habit, for favouring the internalization of the norm (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 905). Indeed, professional training provides the expertise required for socializing people to evaluate some things as more important than others. In addition, social interactions between people may contribute to the consolidation and universalization of the norm (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 905). Given these considerations, a second general hypothesis can be formulated:

Hp4: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein has taken place because the German government has internalized the new norm on development policy.

The contribution of social constructivism to the objective of reaching a thorough understanding of the processes leading to the creation of new norms and behaviours in the international stage is critical. Nonetheless, we can identify three main points of criticism: firstly, Checkel (1998) sustained that social constructivism, while arguing about the mutuality of the relations between agents and structures, "advanced a structure-centered approach", as opposed to the agent-centered approach promoted by rational-choice theories (Checkel, 1998; p. 342). Hence, although this approach is capable of explaining the macro level in which behaviours and identities are influenced by norms and the social framework, it fails in explaining the micro level based on how norms are connected with agents (Checkel, 1998; p. 342).

Secondly Marsh (2009), in disagreement with an excessive ideational turn in the study field of International Political Economy, pointed out that social constructivism may fail in not considering the relative importance that other factors, such as materialist ones, have in the desired explanation of the concepts of stability and change, since "real economic processes have causal powers" in the explanation of political outcomes (Marsh, 2009; p. 695).

Thirdly, by following the arguments of Engelkamp & Glaab (2015), critics have been moved towards the language used by constructivists in the field of norms research, which is deemed as seeking to minimize the ambiguity of norms and normative procedures. As argued by the authors, this kind of issue may result as very problematic since it does not consider alternative approaches or explanations about normative changes (Engelkamp & Glaab, 2015; p. 202). Specifically, the authors moved some critics to the work of Finnemore & Sikkink (1998) about life cycle of norms. In these regards, they consider the evaluations contained in the text as being biased towards Western norms, an attitude that would not favour the complete comprehension of the complexity of the International normative framework and the multiple ambiguities present at that level of analysis.

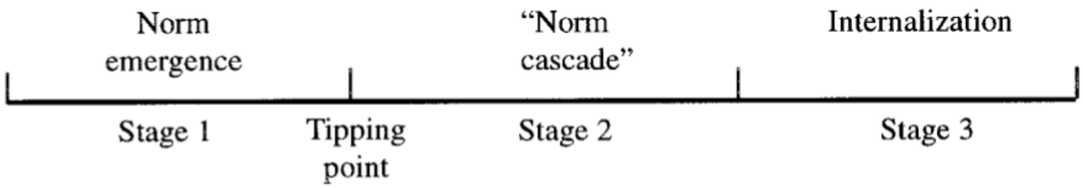

Figure 1. The norm life cycle. *Retrieved from Finnemore & Sikkink (1998, p. 896).*

Table 2: Independent variables deduced from Social Constructivism.

X3: Socialization of Germany X4: Internalization of the new norm	Y: Shift in German development policy towards Africa

In the next chapter, the research methods employed in this thesis, as well as the operationalization of the concepts here introduced, will be presented. Subsequently, the hypotheses here formulated will be tested, and thus confirmed or rejected, in the empirical analysis so as to provide an answer to the research question.

Chapter 3. Methodology and Operationalization

The following chapter develops a thorough elaboration of the research methods employed for the aim of answering the central research question of this thesis. It is subdivided in two different sections: section one describes the methods utilised for analysing the main data and documents, and section two is devoted to the operationalization of the main theoretical concepts previously introduced in the theoretical framework.

3.1 Methodology and data sources

This research is built upon a qualitative analysis of testing the hypotheses deduced from neomercantilism and social constructivism. The main method employed in this research is process-tracing, a method that focuses on the identification of causal mechanisms at work between independent and dependent variables (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Process-tracing is "one of the most valuable methodological tools for main causal inferences in the social sciences" (Beach, 2017; p. 23). Finnemore & Sikkink (1998, p. 896), for example, also consider process-tracing one of the most appropriate methods for testing norm life cycle theory. There are three different variants of process-tracing, namely theory-testing, theory-building and explaining-outcome. In this research, the theory-testing approach will be employed. By following the methodology outlined by Beach and Pedersen (2013), the four general hypotheses, along with the two sub-hypotheses related to norm life cycle theory, will be tested according to the different steps of theory-testing process-tracing. The first step consists in the conceptualization of the hypothesized causal mechanisms, based on the existing theorization (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; p. 14). Since the conceptualization has been implemented in the previous chapter, the next section is based on the operationalization of the main concepts under analysis, representing the different parts of the causal mechanisms. The operationalization of the concepts, which constitutes the second step of the process-tracing methodology, aims at ensuring the measurement of the theorized causal mechanisms in process. In this way, the theoretical expectations outlined in chapter two may be transformed into observable manifestations of the phenomenon assessed (Beach & Pedersen, 2013; p. 14). Finally, the third step consists in the collection of empirical evidence: through this procedure, the hypotheses may be, eventually, confirmed or rejected (ibid.).

Process-tracing is based on the deployment of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are non-opinionated documents containing objective information, whereas secondary sources refer to the opinionated documents used for complementing the main information retrieved from primary sources. These sources will be used for illustrating the main changes occurred at the international level, especially from the 1990s onwards, in relation to development cooperation as well as for describing the main changes in German Africa policy and German development policy, which gained a new momentum in 2011.

For this purpose, process-tracing method will be supplemented by the usage of Document Analysis and literature analysis. Document Analysis consists in a systematic analysis of official government documents, such as speeches and press briefings by the German's federal ministries, official documents from international organizations, such as the G20, and various interest groups. In these regards, the main documents that will be analysed are those referring to the German Africa policy and policy guidelines and measures for Africa elaborated by the Federal Government, the strategy papers by the Minister for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) and the Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), the OECD-DAC's Peer Reviews and the BDI policy paper. These are useful for reaching a greater understanding of the major standpoints of German Africa policy, the progresses of the development policy and the opinion of an important interest group such as the Federation of German Industries (BDI). Document Analysis will be then based on the identification, the selection and consequently the discernment of the main data contained in the documents under analysis for the purpose of the research (Bowen, 2009). Documents are fundamental because they can provide the researcher and the readers the background, the contextualization of a process as well as means for "tracking change and development" (Bowen, 2009; p. 30). In addition, they can provide supplementary data (ibid.). On the other hand, literature analysis is based on the retrieval of information from secondary sources, thus second-hand information contained in the works of other researchers, journalists, reviewers as well as opinion makers. Through this procedure, even the opinionated pieces of information and analysis will be supportive of the evidence collected in the primary sources, even though their influence will be limited.

The data gathered through the abovementioned sources will be then elaborated in the form of an explanatory narrative aiming at describing the main features and facts connected to the gradual shift of German development policy, as well as its major objectives. As argued by Patterson and Monroe (1998), narrative approaches help in reaching a greater understanding of the reality, and they have a crucial role in the development and understanding of political behaviours (ibid., p. 315-316). This approach implies the organization of different events in a sequential order, which will then form a set of events from which the significance of a particular affair will be expressed in relation to the whole set of events (Elliott, 2005). The explanatory narrative will be employed for describing the evolution of German Africa policy and its political-economical background. In addition, it will be used for illustrating the main changes, occurred at the international level, that led to the formulation of a different norm in development cooperation. It is elaborated by the use of process-tracing, document analysis and different sources, so that the hypothesised mechanisms will be tested within this particular narrative: in this way, the central research question may be answered.

3.2 Operationalization

Following the main steps of theory-testing outlined by Beach & Pedersen (2013), this section revolves around the operationalization of the concepts involved in the theorized causal mechanisms. This procedure is fundamental to the purposes of the research because it permits the translation of the expectations presented in the theoretical framework into specific observables for the empirical analysis. In fact, the operationalization of the main concepts provides the researcher, and consequently the reader, the empirical definition of evidences that need to be present for validating the hypotheses. Thus, in the following, all the independent variables will be operationalized.

3.2.1 Neomercantilist variables

The first general hypothesis is the following:

Hp1: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein represent an attempt by the German government to improve market access and trade opportunities for German exporters at the expense of their competitors from other states.

The first general hypothesis is based on the independent variable X1, which is *relative state gains*. Since Germany is considered to be one of the major exporters worldwide, just behind China and the USA (World Bank, 2018), the analysis will be directed towards an evaluation on whether German government attempted to implement supportive measures for its national companies through its new Africa policy and especially through the elaboration of the CwA initiative, with the objective of levelling the playing field and consequently attaining possible comparative advantages at the expenses of those from its main competitor states. Compact with Africa has been chosen since it is considered the core initiative of the new German Africa policy. Hence, the main documents of the new German Africa policy (AA, 2011; AA, 2019; BMZ 2014, BMZ, 2016, BMZ, 2017a, Die Bundesregierung, 2014a) as well as documents containing the measures elaborated to favour private investments in the continent (Die Bundesregierung, 2017, BMWi, 2019) will be assessed. In addition, information will be retrieved from the document titled "Toolbox: instruments available to support private investment in CwA countries" (AAG, 2018a). Likewise, the "CwA Flagship Investment List" (AAG, 2018b) will be assessed along with the information retrieved from the websites of the German Ministries involved. In addition, the information retrieved from the websites of the Kreditanstalt für

Wiederaufbau (KfW), the state-owned German development bank, and its subsidiary Deutsche Investitions-und Entwicklungsgesellschaft (DEG), a Development Finance Institution (DFI) involved in the promotion and financing of companies in developing countries, will be assessed. These information will be inserted in the analysis which will also concern the Chinese activities of support of national companies in Africa. This is to check whether German initiatives, mainly CwA, aim at levelling the playing field therein through state support. China has been chosen as the main competitor state of Germany since it is the major exporter worldwide (World Bank, 2018) and, along with being an economic partner of Germany, as a "driver of the global economy" it poses "economic and political challenges" to Germany and its companies (BDI, 2019). Moreover, China is a country massively engaged in Africa, also through the supply of public funds that do not always respect OECD regulations (Bräutigam, 2010; Bräutigam 2011). Therefore, Hp1 will be confirmed if evidence will be found over Germany attempting to level the playing field with Chinese companies through the provision of government-backed economic measures. On the contrary, Hp1 will be rejected if such evidence will not be found.

The second general hypothesis is the following:

Hp2: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein represent an attempt by the German government to secure its economic and political position by balancing the presence of other competitor states on the continent.

Hp2 is based on the concept of *soft balancing*, which is the independent variable X2. China will be taken as the major competitor state of Germany in Africa since it is not a member state of the OECD, comprehending all the traditional donors alike Germany, the USA and other EU countries, and also because in the recent decades has consistently increased private investments in Africa (Kappel & Reisen, 2019). China's engagement in Africa may be perceived as following a specific Africa policy aiming at bolstering industrialization and economic growth in the motherland, rather than pursuing ideological reasons like other traditional actors (Jauch, 2011). In addition, Chinese state-backed investments and loans are often considered as a threat to exporters from OECD countries (Massa, 2011). In this respect, this research aims at collecting evidence over an alleged German attempt of balancing the Chinese presence in Africa by shifting its development policy and implementing CwA and other initiatives. For this purpose, the main documents concerning the new German Africa policy (AA, 2011; AA, 2019; Die Bundesregierung, 2014a; Die Bundesregierung, 2017; BMZ, 2014; BMZ, 2016; BMZ, 2017a; BMWi, 2017) will be examined in order to identify explicit and implicit references to China as a competitor or a threat for German companies, thus by expressing the need of undertaking a different pattern in the German economic involvement in the continent. Along with this, press briefings and public statements from German government officials will be assessed with the same objective. Finally, the policy papers of the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI), the Federation of German Industries, will be assessed in order to check whether representants of German industries called the Government to undertake a different approach to Africa in response to Chinese engagement therein, thus by explicating the need of levelling the playing field in the continent. Hence, Hp2 will be confirmed if evidence will be found over explicit or implicit references to China as a competitor challenging Germany in the African continent and at the international level, which might have led the government to undertake a shift in its development policy vis-à-vis Africa. In these regards, references to China as a competitor for German industries will be considered as the identification of China as a "threat" (language of competition), hence it will be indicative of an alleged attempt of Germany to balance its engagement in Africa by undertaking a different approach entailing an increased role for the private sector in the continent. On the contrary, Hp2 will be rejected if evidence of this type will not be found, thus if Chinese economic engagement in Africa is not perceived as threatening for the German companies therein or if China is identified solely as a commercial partner.

3.2.2 Social Constructivist variables

For testing the alleged influence of Social Constructivism in the shift in German development policy vis-à-vis Africa, we must first define what the term "norm" represents. As stated by Finnemore & Sikkink (1998), a "norm" can be defined as a "standard for appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity" (ibid., p. 891). Norms are differentiated from institutions since they represent the elaboration of a "single standard of behaviour", whereas "institutions" represent the aggregation and interrelations of behavioural logics (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 891).
The first sub-hypothesis is based on the first stage of the norm life cycle theory and is the following:

SHp1: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein has taken place because norm entrepreneurs have deconstructed the previous norm through the use of organizational platforms and constructed a new norm on development policy.

SHp1 is based on the first stage, the one related to norm emergence. SHp1 will be confirmed if evidence will be found on the existence of *norm entrepreneurs* which deconstructed the previous norm (public development aid) and, through the usage of "organizational platforms" (which may be NGOs or International Organizations) have constructed another norm based on an increased role for the private sector in development assistance. We consider norm entrepreneurs those individuals,

states or organizations which construct a new international norm and, through the usage of organizational platforms, seek to convince other actors (critical states) to adopt it. In the empirical analysis, norm entrepreneurs will be identified as those individuals, states, or international organizations that endorsed the move towards a different conception of development policy. For this purpose, this research will focus on secondary sources related to public development aid as well as general overviews illustrating the shifts in development policy during the years. In this way, this research aims at finding the main driving agents that promoted a new norm. SHp1 will be confirmed if evidence on the existence of the norm entrepreneurs will be found, otherwise it will be rejected.
The second sub-hypothesis is the following:

SHp2: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein has taken place because there has been a tipping point whereby even more states complied with the new norm on development policy.

SHp2 is based on the concept of *tipping point*, namely the point in which a critical mass of pivotal states (whose non-compliance may endanger the creation of the norm) adopt the proposed norm. This can be considered as an intermediate stage between the first of norm emergence and the second of norm cascade. For testing SHp2, this research will focus on secondary sources in order to check whether and when, at the international level, the new norm on development policy became a prominent idea. A major focus will be dedicated to the European Union since German's development policy (and Africa policy) is inserted within the European framework (AA, 2011). SHp2 will be confirmed if evidence will be found over the occurrence, at the international level, of a specific moment in time in which the new norm on development policy became prominent, otherwise it will be rejected.
The first general hypothesis is the following:

Hp3: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein has taken place because the German government has been socialised into the new norm on development policy.

Hp3 refers to the concept of *socialization,* namely variable X3, and is based on the second stage of the Norm Life Cycle theory, thus the one of "norm cascade. For confirming Hp3, the previous two sub-hypotheses must be confirmed. Socialization is the main mechanism at work in this stage and it refers to the process of persuasion, operated by the norm leaders, to conform to the new norm (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 902). In the field of international politics, socialization may entail "diplomatic praise or censure", thereby norm entrepreneurs may act as "agents of socialization" and pressure a certain actor to adopt the new norm (ibid., p. 902). In these regards, literature will be analysed in order to check whether alleged norm entrepreneurs pressured or praised Germany for having adopted, or not, the new development policy norm and implemented its related steps. Besides, the peer reviews of the OECD's DAC (i.e. Development Assistance Committee, the international forum composed by the biggest aid providers) will be assessed in the attempt of retrieving possible material for the analysis. Therefore, in addition to the confirmation of the previous sub-hypotheses, evidence must be found over alleged bilateral or multilateral pressures (or praises) directed to Germany for adopting the new development policy norm, and related measures, for confirming Hp3. The second general hypothesis is the following:

Hp4: The shift in the German's development policy towards Africa and the increased role of the private sector therein has taken place because the German government has internalized the new norm on development policy.

Hp4 is based on the third stage of the norm life cycle theory, namely the one consisting in the *internalization* of the norm, which constitute variable X4. As aforementioned in the theoretical chapter, internalization occurs when the new norm assumes the role of taken-for-granted, thus when it is considered to be the best way to deal with a specific issue in an uncontested manner. Strategy papers from the Federal government and its Ministries, as well as public statements from government officials, press briefings and reports will be assessed for gathering evidence of this type. In addition, secondary sources will be consulted. For internalization process to be successful, the new development policy norm must be considered as the only effective way for promoting economic development in Africa and thereby it must be defended as such at the national and international level by German political exponents, and within their Africa strategy papers. Hence, along with proofs of iterated behaviour related to the new norm (which might be connected to Hp1, the first neomercantilist hypothesis) evidence must be collected over the public endorsement and defence, from the Federal Government and/or its Ministries, of the new norm as the best approach to undertake for fostering the economic development of African countries. Hp4 will be confirmed if this type of evidence will be collected, otherwise it will be rejected.

Chapter 4. Empirical Analysis

This chapter is dedicated to the empirical analysis and it comprehends three sections: section 4.1 incorporates a description of the main subject under analysis in broad terms, section 4.2 is devoted to the tests of neomercantilist hypotheses and section 4.3 presents the tests of social constructivist hypotheses.

4.1 The German Africa policy and the new German development policy: a general overview

German engagement in the African continent has been, to some extent, marginal if compared to the commitment of other Western actors (Mair, 2006). The so-called German Africa policy, especially before the '90s, may be perceived as reflecting the determination of Germany as some sort of civil power, rather than a state pursuing mere economic interests (Mair,2006; p. 10). Even in more recent years, the main initiatives undertook by the German government were based on the guidance of international organizations as well as on the assumption of a secondary role centered around the enforcement of the rule of law and human rights, along with the enhancement of international cooperation in the continent. In fact, during the '90s, the total share of imports and exports, especially with countries of Sub-Sahara, was not even reaching the two percent (Mair, 2006). Just a few countries were characterized by German direct investments and these were South Africa and Nigeria, namely those countries where the economy was able to create a satisfactory demand for machinery, vehicles and chemical products made in Germany (Mair, 2006; p. 12).

German Africa policy, before the new millennium, could be divided into four different phases, as argued by Engel (2012). The first phase, during the 1950s, was characterized by the reintegration of Germany in the international system thanks, for instance, to the recognition of West Germany by South Africa: thus Africa, in this case, acted as a "gate" for political reasons (ibid.). On the contrary, it is assumed that during the second phase, going from 1959 to 1972, African countries were subjected to some sort of "manipulation through aid", with the objective of denying the diplomatic acknowledgment of East Germany (Engel, 2012; p. 473). This, mainly as a result of the "Hallstein Doctrine" (Faust & Zjaja, 2012, Hofmeier, 1986). In the third phase, from 1973 to 1990, Africa became the object of political discourses related to the issue of apartheid and "traditional development policy" (Engel, 2012; p. 473). Finally, the fourth phase going from 1990 to 1999, coincided with the first bilateral engagements of the unified Germany in the continent, along with initiatives of political reorganization of African states (ibid.).

Nonetheless, Africa can be considered, since the beginning, one of the main recipients of German public funds, as a result of the national development policy. The first German fund for development cooperation was established in 1956, and it was worth 50DM (Deutsche Mark) million

(Frymark, 2015). Five years later, the Minister of Economic Cooperation was established, which then became the current Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) (Faust & Zjaja, 2012; Frymark, 2015). Nevertheless, the political rivalries affected the efficiency of the new Ministry, which lacked a specific definition of its duties and functioned mainly as a coordinating agency (White, 1965). The main focus of German development policy was following the principle of effectiveness, rather than concentrating on quantity (Faust & Zjaja, 2012). German aid were assumed to be guided by the primary objective of promoting an efficient economic development of the recipient countries, instead of pursuing wider economic interests. Indeed, only in a very restrained logic they were directed towards industrial benefits (White, 1965). During the 1960s German efforts under this point of view were mostly committed to Europe, in a more profitable ambition (ibid.). As abovementioned, diplomatic issues were at the centre of German development aid at that time and an official aid policy was lacking (White, 1965; p. 76). The main leading motives were technical assistance, contribution to multilateral aid programmes and some sort of export financing which, however, lost importance in the subsequent years. Under the German perspective, the role of the recipient was fundamental: responsibility in contributing to the effectiveness of German aid was a duty of the recipient, with the objective of imposing a certain discipline in the administration of the funds for creating real development (White, 1965). The main issue, under this point of view, was that German aid became project-tied, even though the recipient could have invested the capital received in competitors' tenders, at the expenses of German industries (White, 1965; p. 82).

Interestingly, during the same years, much importance in the field was covered by political party foundations alike the Social-Democrat "Friedrich Ebert Stiftung" that since the 1957 was carrying out projects in least-developed countries, through funds from the Federal ministries, in the attempt of providing aid through non-governmental institutions and not for political objectives, except from contrasting communist regimes (Pinto & Duschisnky, 1991). In the subsequent years, German aid were involved in the process of promotion of German exports even if, contrary to other states, in the German case there was no real manipulation of aid for maximizing the benefits stemming from asset and source dependence (McKinlay, 1979; p. 446). During the 1970s, German aid policy was weakly reflecting imperialist stances, contrary to the American and French cases (ibid.). Apart from these assumptions, the general idea behind development aid, at that time, was entrenched in the view by which government-to-government aid was the best way for promoting real development of "poor" states (Dollar & Pritchett, 1998). This was based on the provision of the so-called Official Development Assistance (ODA), one of the most common financial means for supporting development policies since 1969 (OECD, 2020). It was established by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and it has been defined as "government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries" (OECD, 2020). Precisely, ODA are provided by states or governmental agencies and consists in concessional measures, such as soft loans or grants, directed towards the promotion of effective economic development in recipient countries (OECD, 2020). Nowadays, even though Germany can be considered as one of the largest donor countries worldwide and especially to Africa, whereby it is just behind the USA and the UK (OECD, 2019), a new approach to development policy started to gain a concrete momentum. At the international level, considering the ineffective results of traditional aid, an approach based on the achievement of sustainable development objectives, the promotion of human rights and good governance, and the boost of trade for guiding economic development was conceived. In Germany, as of the beginning of 2017, in continuation of a process started in 2011 with the first Africa strategy paper, a broad blueprint related to a different engagement in the continent was elaborated and witnessed the implementation of a specific plan of action. This was aiming at accelerating the development of African countries through the implementation of three different initiatives, namely the "Marshall Plan with Africa" (BMZ, 2017a) elaborated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation, the "Pro!Africa" initiative (BMWi, 2017) elaborated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and, finally, the "G20 - Compact with Africa" initiative, elaborated by the Federal Ministry of Finance and promoted within the "Finance Track" of the G20 of 2017, under the guidance of the German's presidency.

As abovementioned, already in 2011 Germany promoted an innovative framework for establishing a new relationship with African countries: the strategy paper elaborated by the government in the same year, in fact, advanced a clear-cut scheme for promoting a so-called "Africa Strategy" aiming at strengthening the cooperation between Germany and the African continent in the following years (AA, 2011). In the paper, six areas of "common values and interests" varying from issues concerning peace and security to other related to economic development, raw materials, climate change and good governance were identified (AA, 2011; p. 5). What may be considered as changed from the previous decades is the German outlook of Africa inasmuch a renewed approach has been pushed into the agenda, thus a method based on an "equal partnership" and which goes beyond the "outmoded donor-recipient structures" (AA, 2011; p. 17). In these regards, it may be witnessed a striking difference from the past: the abovementioned documents were indeed based on the promotion of a modernized approach characterized by a major role of the private sector in leading the new development policy. For this purpose, other documents were published by governmental offices as, for instance, the Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation, which worked on two consequent strategy papers in the years 2014 and 2016, both emphasizing the need for an increased role of the private sector in developmental stances (BMZ, 2014a; BMZ, 2016). All these strategy papers may be considered as the antecedents of the newest German initiatives previously mentioned, among which the Compact with Africa (CwA) lies at the core, being it promoted at the platform of the G20 with the intent of enhancing the capabilities of African economies and encouraging the commitment of private actors to invest in a continent experiencing enormous changes politically, socially and economically (AA, 2011).

The G20 (or the "Group of 20") is an international forum created in 1999 following a series of financial crises: the member states are the seven most industrialized countries (Germany, USA, UK, Canada, France, Japan, Italy), the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and other industrialized countries such as Australia, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Argentina, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Along with them, the European Union is represented (G20 Foundation, 2017). Its main tasks consist in policy coordination for promoting economic growth, promotion of financial regulations for avoiding further economic crises and modernization of the international financial framework (G20 Foundation, 2017). It is composed by the finance ministers and the governors of the central banks of the member countries and it may see the participation of "guest countries" such as Guinea, Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland and Vietnam in the case of the G20 Compact with Africa of 2017. CwA initiative is inserted in the wider blueprint of the "G20 Africa Partnership", launched by the Group of 20 for supporting private investments, fostering employment and achieving sustainable development objectives in the African continent (G20, 2017a). It is mainly built on previous regional and international agreements and sees the participation of International Organizations such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG), along with other institutions headed by the German government alike the Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau (KfW, a German public bank) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), a German development agency. The organizations identified the main area of interventions of the initiative, stressing the importance of intervening in areas related to macroeconomic policies, business environment and financial sector (G20, 2017b). Hence, the main objective is to establish a different framework for development in a continent where, too often, traditional aid resulted to be ineffective and the influence of the private sector limited. Economic development is considered a top priority, and by improving these frameworks, the main objective results to be the increase in the rate of attractiveness of African economies for private investments (Kappel & Reisen, 2019). Hence, African countries must move from the role of recipients of public development aid to full-fledged economic partners. The traditional government-to-government aid resulted to be ineffective, and the new approach which has also been promoted at the international level, must represent the successful termination of the "donors and recipients" era.

In the next sections, all the hypotheses deduced from Neomercantilism and Social Constructivism will be tested with the aim of providing sufficient explanations on the factors that led Germany to reorient its development policy towards an increased role of the private sector in Africa.

4.2 Testing Neomercantilism in the new German development policy towards Africa

4.2.1 Improvement of the conditions for German private investments in the CwA countries

In the last decades, Africa witnessed a sharp increase in the rate of direct investments. What is different from the past, however, is the fact that Western companies, although being still massively engaged in the continent, started to be challenged by another actor that led to critical changes in the fields of international business and politics, China (Alden & Davies, 2006). In fact, Chinese firms have increased their presence worldwide as a response to the "Go Global" policy, elaborated by the Chinese government at the beginning of the new millennium and entrenched towards the objective of increasing Chinese investments abroad (Bellabona & Spigarelli, 2007). The strategy was designed with the intent of developing the technological skills of Chinese corporations as well as opening the access to new markets and capitalize on their comparative advantages (Gill & Reilly, 2007; p. 39). Through this approach, China has been able to advance its economic interest in the African continent, also by accompanying the pursue of strategic and diplomatic objectives (Gill & Reilly, 2007). Although controversial, Chinese engagement has been welcomed by many African leaders thanks to the possibility of receiving more capital and thus push the process of economic growth (Gill & Reilly, 2007). More importantly, a specific feature of these practices is related to the support that Chinese companies expanding abroad receive from the national government, through the provision of instructions, mechanisms of coordination and especially financial assistance (Gill & Reilly, 2007; p. 39).

Chinese economy can be considered, indeed, as state-led: although competition is present between companies in China, the state still has a strong influence in the allocation of resources as well as in the provision of subsidies (often non-transparent) to the major firms and to entire industrial sectors (BDI, 2019). This is mainly reflected in the international stage, where Chinese companies take advantage of the state support for conducting investment activities in multiple regions, varying from investments in industrialized states to investments in the least developed countries (LDCs). In Africa, Chinese investments massively increased during the past decades after the establishment of the first aid policies during the 1950s, followed by a continuous program of expansion operated in the continent through different initiatives at bilateral and multilateral levels (Bräutigam, 2010). Importantly, China is not a member country of the OECD which comprehends all the traditional donors, and most of its overseas finance consists, contrary to other Western states, of "Other Official

Flows" (OOF) rather than ODA (Bräutigam, 2011). Precisely, OOF are constituted by i) government loans or grants issued mainly for commercial reasons rather than being directed towards fostering economic development or by ii) government loans issued for developmental reasons but not sufficiently concessional in character for being qualified as ODA (OECD, 2009; p. 180). In Africa, Chinese OOF levels have always been well above the levels of ODA, thus the majority of China's financing activities in the continent consist in "preferential export credits, market-rate export buyers' credits and commercial loans from Chinese banks" (Bräutigam, 2011; p. 205). In addition to these activities, China assists its companies investing in Africa through the provision of equity funds by the "China-Africa Development Fund", whose supportive measures of Chinese companies do not qualify for ODA (ibid.). Furthermore, China set the basis for an increased engagement in the continent through the implementation of the so-called "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative that was announced by the incumbent President Xi Jinping in 2013 (Sooklal, Simelane & Anand, 2018). The initiative aims at furthering the economic development of African states through an improvement of infrastructure as well as an increase in trade with China, thus by enhancing the existing collaboration with multiple countries (ibid.).

Most of the Chinese finance in Africa is provided by China Eximbank and China Development Bank, both established in 1994 with the intention of carrying out the commercial activities aiming at favouring Chinese development policy (Bräutigam, 2011; p. 204). Despite part of China Eximbank's operations are based on the provision of concessional loans that could be classified as ODA, this still represents just a minor portion of the financing activities characterizing the bank's portfolio (Bräutigam, 2011). Indeed, in the attempt of favouring the sales of Chinese exporters, China Eximbank specializes in the provision of short-term and long-term credits to African buyers for backing the export of goods and services from the motherland (Bräutigam, 2010; Bräutigam, 2011). Similarly, China Development Bank expanded its operations in Africa by offering policy loans at very competitive rates as well as strategic lines of credit for Chinese major companies identified as having the potential for becoming "competitive multinationals" (Bräutigam, 2011; p. 207). These information suggest a decisive engagement of Chinese government in the expansion of commerce abroad. The several measures implemented for favouring the sale of Chinese products and services, especially in emerging markets alike Africa, have the objective of creating added value through which national economy could profit and thrive. Given these circumstances, China is pursuing a Neomercantilist strategy characterized by state interventionism that has the potential of influencing the international economic system and lead to increased competition (Beeson, 2009; Yu, 2017). Therefore, Chinese economic engagement in Africa may represent a sort of "threat" for Western economies: although Chinese investments have benefited the economic growth of some African countries, the neglection of social, economic and financial sustainability issues may result in an increased rate of indebtedness of African economies to the extent to which there may be a transfer in the control over resources and strategic assets (European Commission, 2019; p. 4). Considering also that Chinese companies have largely increased their investments in sectors such as manufacturing and services, in which German companies can boast their comparative advantage (Kappel et Reisen, 2017), it is in this context that the recent German developmental initiatives in Africa may be inserted.

As aforementioned, the new German Africa policy introduced a different developmental approach vis-à-vis Africa based on an increased role for the private sector for bolstering the development of African countries. The main initiative under this point of view is the Compact with Africa (CwA) of 2017. For increasing the reliability of participating countries, and thus for attracting more private capital, a major focus has been given to the improvement of their macroeconomic, business, and financial environment (Mabera, 2019). For this purpose, national priority areas were identified along with concrete measures for promoting country-specific reforms (ibid.). In this respect, Germany and South Africa govern the implementation of the CwA by co-chairing the so-called G20 Africa Advisory Group (AAG) with the objective of assessing the major progresses of the initiative through the identification of policies and support activities under the three different frameworks (Floyd et al. 2019). Moreover, Germany contributed further to the initiative by developing the "Reform Partnerships" aiming at improving the environment for investments of some selected CwA countries (Floyd et al., 2019; p. 7). In fact, the bilateral measures proposed by the government would have been tailored to the specificity of the CwA countries, on condition that they implemented the necessary reforms for facilitating business relations (Die Bundesregierung, 2017).

The first reform partnerships were agreed by the BMZ in 2017 with the Finance ministers of Ghana, Ivory Coast and Tunisia, all receiving 100 million euros by Germany as an incentive for applying the reforms needed (BMZ, 2017b). By looking at the "CwA Flagship Investment List" (AAG, 2018b), it can be noticed how Germany, after the signing of these partnerships, increased its investment in the relative countries, with a particular emphasis on the Manufacturing industry, a sector in which it always had a comparative advantage, that started to be challenged by Chinese large investments (Kappel et al., 2017; p. 41) . In Ivory Coast, for instance, fourteen different German projects were implemented. The main ones were related to the sector of Manufacturing, being it represented by projects of Siemens, BASF and Merck KGaA (AAG, 2018b). The situation appears to be similar in Ghana, where German investors focused again on the Manufacturing sector. In fact, Thyssen Krupp, Kuhne & Nagel and B. Braun established regional offices there after 2017, Sievers invested in the production of license plates and other companies engaged extensively in the country since other investments were implemented by Heidelberg Zement (18.5$ million), Robert Bosch (2.3$

million), Merck & Ridge Management Solutions (30$ million) and HL Hamburger Leistungsfutter GmbH (10$ million) (AAG, 2018b). Moreover, Volkswagen signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ghanaian government with the goal of building new plants and developing new solutions for the mobility in the country, in addition to nine other projects related to Infrastructure and Transports & Logistics implemented by other firms (AAG, 2018b). In Tunisia, German companies elaborated expansion plans in the country, especially in the field of Manufacturing. Draxlmaier, Kaschke, Nani SARL, Van Laack, Marquardt, Gonsor Group and Henkel AG operationalized new expansion plans within the CwA framework and LEONI invested 63.7$ million for constructing a new plant in the country (AAG, 2018b; p. 5). It is worth mentioning that no Chinese investments have been found in these countries within the CwA framework. Nevertheless, all these factors are indicative of an increased involvement of German investors in the selected countries, to the point by which other three Reforms Partnerships were agreed with the Ministers of Ethiopia, Morocco and Senegal in the year 2019 (BMZ, 2019). However, although German companies increased their presence in Africa, investments still appeared to be minor when compared to the ones of other competitor countries (Kappel & Reisen, 2019).

Already in 2011, through the first strategy paper, the Federal government outlined its intention to support German investments in Africa. Indeed, the German Africa policy aimed at promoting the "strength" of German businesses through a "greater dovetailing of external economic promotion" which would have created "more potential markets for German companies" (AA, 2011; p. 31). In this way, the government was prepared to "support German companies in Africa through a range of instruments of external economic promotion" (AA, 2011; p.31). Therefore, through the provision of export credit guarantees, the Federal government planned to secure German business in areas with unfavourable market conditions (ibid., p. 34).

In this respect, the CwA initiative, has been supported by an array of measures and instruments made available to governments, investors and firms by the multilateral development banks involved for favouring investments in the participating countries (Kappel & Reisen, 2019; p. 20). In these regards, the so-called "toolbox" (AAG, 2018a) introduced specific financial instruments at disposal of the investors with the participation of the KfW and its subsidiary DEG, which "provide the funding on a fiduciary basis on behalf of the German Ministry for Development (BMZ)" (AAG, 2018a; p. 2). In the document, all the co-investment platforms providing blended finance instruments, namely mechanisms linking ODA grants with loans from a public owned insititution (Eurodad, 2013), and guarantee vehicles incorporating the participation of KfW were presented. In addition, the document introduced the equity instruments available to the KfW' subsidiary DEG for supporting private investments in Africa, mainly in CwA countries, alike medium and long-term loans as well as equity investments in individual enterprises and guarantees, which do not always pertain to the ODA category (OECD, 2020).

At the beginning of 2017, the Federal government elaborated the main standpoints of its comprehensive approach to Africa policy, aiming at setting up the bilateral contributions of the renewed approach to development policy (Die Bundesregierung, 2017). In the key paper "Economic Development in Africa – Challenges and Options" (Die Bundesregierung, 2017), after having acknowledged the limited amount of African investments by the German business community, the government declared to be willing to intensify the promotion of investments with the intent of boosting bilateral cooperation and fostering the process of sustainable development in the African continent (Die Bundesregierung, 2017; p. 2). The governmental measures for the new Africa policy would have been directed towards the substantial improvement of the local financial sector, the intensification of foreign trade and the strengthening of the cooperation for private sector development. Hence, the government claimed its readiness in implementing several measures. Within the framework of the CwA initiative, for example, it declared to be willing to extend the double taxation agreements, which would have gone conjointly with "capacity-building measures in the finance ministries of the development cooperation partner" (Die Bundesregierung, 2017; p. 5). More importantly, the Federal government aimed at extending the so-called "Hermes Cover", thus the German export credit guarantees along with other investment guarantees. In these regards, for the CwA countries resulting to be able to undertake the required reforms for improving the business environment, the non-reimbursable portion of the Hermes covers would have been reduced from ten to five percent (ibid.). In addition, the strategic office of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) would have offered political assistance to companies willing to invest in Africa, along with providing financing options (Die Bundesregierung, 2017; p. 6). Finally, the government stated its objective of increasing the permitted local costs allowed by the OECD regulations over export credit guarantees, with the intent of conciliating the increase in globalised value chains with the objective of "preserving German jobs" (Die Bundesregierung, 2017; p. 5).

Due to the small number of German investments during the first two years of the initiative, German government implemented additional measures and further instruments for de-risking investments in CwA countries in the year 2019 and thus incentivise German investors to devote more capital in the partner countries (Kappel & Reisen, 2019; p. 21). Precisely, the existing supportive measures were complemented by the establishment of the Development Investment Fund (DIF) consisting in four different programmes, namely "AfricaGrow", "AfricaConnect", Economic Network Africa and the Special Initiative for Training and Employment (Kappel & Reisen, 2019). Among these, the most relevant is AfricaConnect, of which DEG is responsible, that aims at supporting German and European companies investing in CwA countries through loans and risk sharing measures (KfW DEG, 2019). Furthermore, clear statements of intent on backing national enterprises investing abroad may be found in the "2019 Annual Economic Report" (BMWi, 2019) elaborated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi). In the document it is specified how the German government aims at improving the backing of national firms in making use of the enormous potential presented by the African continent, especially in light of increased competition from "Asian rivals" that "are given comprehensive backing by their governments" (BMWi, 2019; p. 57). Therefore, it is stated that the German government, for preventing further disadvantages in the international markets, "will provide greater backing for German companies pursuing projects abroad", hence by providing additional financial instruments (ibid.; p. 57). For this purpose, one billion euros were provided to the DIF for the biennium 2019-2021, along with ameliorating the general conditions for export and investment guarantees. In this respect, the excess charged on the export credit guarantees issued in "highly promising markets" witnessed a cut from 10 to 5 percent (as declared in the measures of 2017), with a possible future extension depending on the state of reforms of other African states. Moreover, in the countries partaking to the CwA initiative, the excess has been cut from 5 to 2.5 percent (BMWi, 2019; p. 57), thus by further improving the conditions in respect to the first plans (Die Bundesregierung, 2017).

Given the above considerations, evidence has been collected over the supportive measures that the German government implemented for facing increased competition in Africa. Especially by considering the massive engagement of China in the continent through government-backed loans and export credit guarantees, the shift in the development policy vis-à-vis Africa and mainly the implementation of the CwA initiative may be seen as an attempt by the German government to level the playing field for its national firms through the provision of multiple supportive measures. In this way, the Federal government aimed at strengthening the capacities of German investors and increase their possibilities for promoting investments in Africa and thus keep, or increase, the comparative advantage in determined sectors such as manufacturing. This may be connected to the Chinese engagement in the continent, especially in relations to investments in sectors instrumental to the wealth of German economy. The Asian power has been able to widen its influence and began to be considered as a major competitor by German and European economies on the international markets, also in Africa (BDI, 2019; European Commission, 2019). Although it is difficult to assess whether this governmental backing strategy within German Africa policy will lead to gain further comparative advantages at the expenses of the Chinese "rival", the shift in the development policy vis-à-vis Africa towards an increased role for the private sector and the implementation of multiple initiatives alike the CwA, may be considered to be a German attempt to level the playing field for its national companies. It is because of these reasons that Hp1 can be confirmed.

4.2.2 Not only a partner: China as a competitor

German commercial and political cooperation with China is inserted within the framework of EU-China relations. In these regards, the basis for a more comprehensive framework of cooperation was launched with the elaboration, in 2003, of the so-called "EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership", aiming at moving beyond mere commercial and economic relationship towards a political and transnational security partnership (Maher, 2016; p. 961). This would have represented, from the perspective of EU officials, an opportunity for achieving a change in Chinese policies, thus for leading to an increased openness in the markets and transparency in commercial practices by China (Maher, 2016). Unfortunately, the strategic relationship has been limited in scope and depth due to ideological and political differences between China and European states. Despite these stark differences, China always represented an important commercial partner for the European Union, to the extent that both sides mutually elaborated the "EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation" in 2013, with the intent of further enhancing coordination in global political issues as well as fostering the dialogues on industrial, agricultural and environmental policies (EEAS, 2013). Nonetheless, the remarkable processes of economic growth and industrialisation undertaken by China, as well as its assumed role of global power in recent years, started to be considered as a challenge, other than an opportunity for European economies (European Commission, 2019). The opportunities of the Chinese growing domestic market are considerable even though China, by failing to provide an equal market access and a reciprocated retainment of a concrete level playing field, became "a strategic competitor for the EU" (European Commission, 2019; p. 5). Nonetheless, China gained a concrete prestige in economic and political stances and, apart from being a competitor in the global economy, it also represents a convenient partner in commercial relations. Although European officials claimed the importance of developing an equitable and mutual economic exchange (European Commission, 2019; p. 6), European and Chinese economies are nowadays strictly interrelated. Specifically, Germany is primarily connected to Chinese economy, and this is due to some processes started in the first decade of the 21st century.

Following the global financial crisis, German economy resulted to be hit particularly hard: one of the most harsh economic downturn in the history provoked, starting from 2008, a significant drop of 6.7 percentage points in the Gross Domestic Product of state's economy (McKinsey Germany, 2010). The effects were even larger than the ones occurred to other European economies and to the USA, which GDP dropped for 3.8% (ibid., p. 4). Especially on the production side the effects were critical, with the manufacturing industry witnessing a sharp drop in production equal to 21.5% between the fourth quarter of 2008 and the first of 2009 (Heymann, 2020; p. 3). However, the economic recovery in Germany managed to be quicker and less dramatic than in other countries: industrial sector has always been very strong and export-oriented so that this favoured a substantial revival due to the ability of German producers to meet the higher demand coming from growing markets after the crisis, and especially from Asia (Heymann, 2020). In these regards, the biggest export destination was China that, from 2009, has imported a total share of German products much higher than those of any other European state (Heymann, 2020). Therefore, China represented a fundamental export market for Germany, and German industrial sector benefited consistently from its global orientation and its focus on exports. By looking to the global value chains, which constitute the international framework of coordinated production and cross-border activities, China lies at the core and represents an important market for German key industries (Jungbluth, 2018). This is mainly the result of the shift to a market-oriented economy that occurred in the Asian country during the '90s, which permitted the flourishing of Chinese economy to the extent that it soon became an attractive destination for many manufacturing companies that decided to establish production facilities in the country (Ma et al., 2018). German exports became dependent on Asian markets and mainly on China, a factor that led to a substantial reinforcement of bilateral and economic relations between the two countries (Schnellbach & Man, 2015). As stated by the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI), the Federation of German Industries, the bulk of Chinese investments in Germany corresponds to "brownfield" investments, useful for acquiring experienced workers, managements and consumers, whereas most of German investments in China take the form of "greenfield" investments that, along with representing a bigger risk for the investor, are able to create new jobs in the country as well as added value to Chinese economy (BDI, 2017; p. 11).

Therefore, as aforementioned, China became one of the key trade partners of Germany in the global economy, and Germany could profit substantially from the growing Chinese market to the extent that it has been argued that no other European country managed better the integration of China in the global markets (Erber, 2012; p. 28). Many German companies are established in China and German exports to China, as well as imports from there, have increased at a steady rate since the beginning of the new millennium, along with direct mutual investments in the respective countries (BDI, 2017). Nonetheless, this greater interdependence between the two countries as well as the further economic growth and integration in the global economy, led to the perception by which China, apart from representing a strategic partner, also represented a strong competitor for German and European companies worldwide (Erber, 2014; GCEE, 2016, BDI, 2019).

In similar terms, the increased Chinese engagement in developing countries are representing a concern for Western companies, especially due to the lack of a level playing field as a result of state backed loans and export credits guarantees issued by Chinese government to its national firms to increase their competitiveness (European Commission, 2019). Especially Africa, which witnessed a considerable increase of Chinese investments since the '90s, represents a continent of strategic interest for Europe and Germany itself (Die Bundesregierung, 2014a; European Commission, 2019), and the Chinese widespread presence may represent a concrete challenge. It is for these reasons, indeed, that a new German approach to Africa development policies may have gained a decisive momentum. In these regards, already in the first Africa strategy paper elaborated by the German government, China was identified as a growing political and economic partner for African countries (AA, 2011; p. 6). Along with the consideration of Africa as the "scene of a global competition", China was depicted as an influential country that expanded its economic ties in the continent, thus by representing a factor implying the need for Germany to support its businesses in light of the increased competition therein (AA, 2011; p. 29). Hence, Chinese businesses were portrayed as competitors in Africa, competitors that had to be challenged with the support of the German government. In a similar way, the "Policy Guidelines for Africa of the German Federal Government" of the year 2014, identified Africa as a continent with an enormous potential representing an opportunity for German businesses (Die Bundesregierung, 2014a). In these regards, China was again considered as "the most conspicuous player" in the continent through its "increasing interest in longer-term investments" (Die Bundesregierung, 2014a; p. 3). Thus, in light of the above, it was expressed how Germany should have engaged more extensively in the continent inasmuch a country with strategic interest in furthering its influence therein. For this purpose, it was expressed the need of improving "the knowledge and understanding of other players in Africa" (Die Bundesregierung, 2014a; p. 3). Differently from the previous strategy paper, it was also sustained the need of strengthening the collaboration with China and other strategic "partners", with the intent of developing "new formats of dialogue" (Die Bundesregierung, 2014a; p. 12). It is then noticeable how German government depicted China not only as a sort of competitor but rather as a strategic partner in light of the intensive engagement in the continent and the common economic interests. This factor assumes more relevance when inserted into the context of the comprehensive strategic partnership launched in the same year. Precisely, in occasion of the official visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping in Germany in 2014, the governments of the two countries released a joint declaration aimed at establishing a comprehensive strategic partnership between the two states (Die Bundesregierung, 2014b). As expressed in the related press briefing, the partners acknowledged the positive development of political, cultural and economic bilateral relations in the previous years, along with the announcement of a furthering of cooperation "in the interest of Europe and Asia" (Die Bundesregierung, 2014b). The two countries claimed the importance of implementing a long-term strategic partnership, especially within the framework of EU-China relations. In the joint declaration, the German government claimed its support for a "mutually beneficial innovation partnership" in several fields such as industrialisation and technology (Die Bundesregierung, 2014b). In addition, the two governments claimed the importance of deepening strategic cooperation in the field of foreign policy, thus by engaging on common exchanges related to environmental and international development cooperation issues within the framework of international organizations and platforms such as the United Nations and the G20 (Die Bundesregierung, 2014b).

Some references to China as a partner, but also as a competitor, were present in different speeches by the Chancellor. For instance, during an official visit in Kenya in 2016, Angela Merkel publicly assessed the Chinese engagement in Africa, especially in terms of financing and project planning. In this respect, she claimed the fundamental importance, for German companies, "to offer complete packages including both financing and implementation" (Die Bundeskanzlerin, 2016a) for being equally competitive. In the same year, she also confirmed the importance of a possible cooperation between the two countries in developmental issues in Africa, after having sustained the importance of the "constructive role" played by China internationally (Die Bundesklanzerin, 2016b). By moving to the main motives leading to the implementation of the Compact with Africa and other initiatives of 2017, however, just a few outspoken or unspoken references to China were made by government officials. For instance, on the sidelines of the G20 Hamburg Summit in July 2017, the Chancellor acknowledged the existence of a multipolar world in which countries such as China have strategic geopolitical goals (Die Bundeskanzlerin, 2017). Nonetheless, Merkel later declared: "We now need to ensure – and the G20 will of course provide a good forum for this – that we also discuss these different sets of interests and do not turn them into irreconcilable disputes, but instead, to put it very simply, turn them into a real win-win situation for the benefit of the global economy. And that will be our aim in Hamburg." (Die Bundeskanzlerin, 2017). More explicit were the references to China one year later, at the conference on the G20 Compact with Africa of the 30th of October 2018 in Berlin where the Chancellor, in a speech addressed to the main representants of Compact countries, declared that Germany was frankly observing Chinese operations in Africa, characterized by "very compact investment offer" (Die Bundeskanzlerin, 2018) followed by "We've thus learned something from observing China, especially as it has experienced remarkable development during the last few years and thus knows very well how to leave poverty behind and increase prosperity" (Die Bundeskanzlerin, 2018). Similarly, at the "Investment Summit of the G20 Compact with Africa" held on the 19th of November 2019 in Berlin, the Chancellor Angela Merkel mentioned China, but just for assessing the state of affairs of the initiative, hence by acknowledging that Chinese investments were more rooted in Africa compared to German ones (Die Bundeskanzlerin, 2019).

Given these considerations, the shift of the development policy enacted by Germany towards an increased role for private sector may be considered as being influenced by the widespread presence of Chinese companies and investors on the African soil. Although China is mainly considered as a partner since, as aforementioned, all the countries (and especially Germany and China) are strictly interconnected to each other in the field of global economy, several references related to a "language of competition" were found. On the one hand, Germany is a key partner in Europe for China, and China represents a key market for sales and procurement for the German industries (BDI, 2019). On the other hand, many reasons for concern still remain for German and European industry: Chinese markets still present restrictions related to investments from abroad and, most of all, the many initiatives undertook by Chinese government in emerging markets such as Africa, represent a "new competition for influence" (BDI, 2019; p. 20). Since the government's role is still very pronounced in commercial practices, China is being portrayed as a new competitor in global issues (BDI, 2019; p. 2). Moreover, China has been extensively investing in sectors in which Germany enjoys a comparative advantage such as manufacturing and services (Kappel et al., 2017). Then it represents another reason that might have led Germany to undertake a shift in its development policy vis-à-vis Africa and thus gain certain shares of a relatively new market. The Asian country, apart from being depicted as a fundamental partner of Germany in trade policies, and this is not surprising if we consider the global value chains mechanisms and the strong entanglement between German and Chinese economies, is also portrayed as a competitive and influential actor that increased its level of engagement in the African continent as well as in other markets, thus it represents a strategic competitor for German and European industries. In this respect, the shift in the development policy vis-à-vis Africa and the increased role for private sector may represent an attempt by the German government to balance the Chinese influence in African economies. Given these considerations, Hp2 can be confirmed.

4.3 Testing Social Constructivism in the new German development policy towards Africa

4.3.1 The beginning of a new era for development cooperation

With a report published in the 1996, the OECD-DAC contributed to promote the debate on how to enhance international cooperation on development policies, given the "poor" results of the previous decades (OECD-DAC, 1996). In these regards, the main notions were centered around the acknowledgment of the importance that the developing world would have had in shaping global and economic issues in the 21st century: most of the world's population would have lived in developing countries, and cultural, social and political sustainability of development cooperation were intended to be fundamental in guaranteeing well-being and security in a more than ever "globalised" world system (OECD-DAC, 1996; p. 5). New challenges were ahead, and international support to development cooperation would have been critical. The OECD-DAC report was followed, two years later, by the World Bank's report "Assessing Aid" (Dollar & Pritchett, 1998), which aimed at furthering the discourse on how to improve the effectiveness of foreign aid in a world witnessing systematic changes. The main findings of the report were based on the observation that development assistance was more effective in countries characterized by factors such as good governance and good institutions (Hermes & Lensink, 2001). Although financial gaps were still considered as important factors in hampering economic development of LDCs, institutional and political gaps were deemed as decisive in holding back the economies of the developing world (Dollar & Pritchett, 1998; p. 103). The "Assessing Aid" report led to fierce debates on the subject, hence it provided the "stimulus" to an improved discussion over macroeconomic effects of aid and development cooperation (Hermes & Lensink, 2001; p. 3). The specific institutional and economic characteristics of recipient countries took the centre stage in the main discourses: "selectivity" overcame "conditionality" as the main criteria in the allocation of aid, and "ownership" of the major processes for recipient countries became connected to the "partnership" provided by donors (ibid., p. 14).

Few years later, the UN promoted the so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), entrenched in the principle by which aid effectiveness had to be related to the pursue of specific targets such as gender equality, health and environmental sustainability, thus outcome-based procedures were connected to economic development (Mawdsley et al, 2014). Consequently, in 2002, the UN organized an International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, which saw the participation of the main Heads of State and relative Ministers (Keijzer, 2011). The event led to the creation of the so-called "Monterrey Consensus" and led to general agreements on policies related to six macro-areas related to the mobilisation of domestic and international finance and private flows for development as well as the conception of trade as a main driver for development (Keijzer, 2011; p. 1). Therefore, the private sector started to be seen as a major factor in developmental issues because, in addition to public initiatives, could have created "business-enabling environments" (UN, 2003; p. 10) and hence "pave the way for robust growth" (UN, 2003; p. 14). In the process, much importance was attributed to the eight commitments adopted by the European Union in the field of FfD (Finance for Development), through which EU officials pledged to a set of principles to be implemented in the following years, among which the role of trade and finance in developmental policies was emphasised (European Commission, 2004).

Already in the previous decades, indeed, European Union undertook a different approach to development aid: in 1975, with the "Lomé Convention", fifteen member states of the EU and seventy-one states from the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), reached an agreement on aid and trade policies (Gibb, 2000). The Convention led to agreements concerning the free access to EU markets for products from ACP countries (without reciprocity), the provision of financial aid to ACP countries as well as industrial and technological cooperation for reducing the disadvantages of ACP members (Gruhn, 1976; p. 248). Hence, development cooperation started to be conceived not only in relation to the provision of development aid, but also on a substantial enhancement of trade between industrialized countries and LDCs. After subsequent renovations of "Lomé Convention", the agreement was substituted by another one in the year 2000 which was entrenched in the principle of aid effectiveness, the "Cotonou Agreement". This represented a significant "neoliberal" shift guided towards the integration of ACP countries in global markets, the attachment of conditionality on the provision of aid over principles like good governance and rule of law and, more importantly, on the conception of the key role of the private sector, expressed in the article 21 (Hurt, 2003; p. 164; European Commission, 2014). In these regards, development cooperation aimed at supporting the "necessary economic and institutional reforms" for creating a "favourable environment for investment" (European Commission, 2014; p. 39). The Cotonou agreement created a new era for economic partnership between LDCs and European donors insofar as led to a different conception on development cooperation that, through the development of the private sector as well as the promotion of good governance and human rights, was intended to lead to a more substantial integration in the world economy of LDCs.

By following the definition of Finnemore & Sikkink (1998), there is evidence over the existence of norm entrepreneurs that promoted a different approach in the field of development cooperation. The OECD, the World Bank, the UN and especially the EU, endorsed a shift in the conception of development aid to a renewed approach based on an increased role for the private sector and trade along with supporting principles such as good governance and social rights, thus by conditionally tying aid to specific social, economic and institutional reforms that would have boosted economic growth and development. Therefore, SHp1 can be confirmed.

4.3.2 The tipping point of a new development policy

One year after the "Monterrey Consensus", a new "High-Level Forum" was held in Rome, with the objective of jointly implementing the measures agreed at the previous UN conference (Keijzer, 2011). A major emphasis was put in the harmonisation of the operational measures of the national development institutions with those of the partner countries for increasing the rate of effectiveness of aid (OECD, 2003; p. 10). In these regards, harmonisation referred to the concrete coordination and clarification of the main activities of aid agencies for promoting common arrangements, simplified procedures and information sharing (De Renzio et al., 2004; p.3). Again, much importance was given to the degree of ownership of partner countries and their capability in undertaking the necessary reforms, hence they were encouraged in country-plans of harmonisation (OECD, 2003).

The second High-Level Forum was held in Paris in 2005, this time related to the broader topic concerning aid effectiveness (Keijzer, 2011; Mawdsley et al., 2014). The forum resulted in the elaboration of the "Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness", which was based on the pursue of five preeminent principles to ensure the effectiveness of aid policies. These were *ownership*, related to strengthen the organizational capabilities of partner countries, *alignment*, based on donors' support for partners' development strategies, *harmonisation*, related to coordination between donors, *managing for results*, directed towards improved decision-making processes and *mutual accountability*, related to a transparent use of development resources (OECD, 2005). Although the private sector was mentioned as an important actor in developmental stances, the references to it were limited. Similarly, in the third High-Level Forum held in Accra in 2008, which promoted the so-called "Accra Agenda for Action" (AAA), the private sector was considered amongst the principal driver of economic development, even though the main evaluations were centered around the objective of improving substantially the predictability of the flows of aid and the untying of the aid from other purposes (Mawdsley et al., 2014). In these regards, the Ministers of developed and developing countries partaking to the forum acknowledged that even if progress had been made, still it was not enough, thus by calling for further reforms (OECD, 2008).

The real turning point came with the fourth High-Level Forum held in Busan, South Korea, in 2011. Although social issues and problems related to good governance were considerably stressed, an attempt to favour a concrete shift towards an increased engagement of the sectors deemed as "productive" in development cooperation was promoted (Mawdsley, 2014; p. 3). In this respect, the importance of proper infrastructure for transportation, as well as the modernization of agricultural and energy generation sectors was emphasized (Mawdsley, 2014). In addition, private-sector-led development was deemed as crucial, also in light of the increased engagement of other actors in the developing world (China) and in response to the Great Financial Crisis of 2008 that led to a renewed pursue of economic self-interests (Mawdsley, 2014; p. 3). During the Korean forum, there was the consistent presence of major exponents of private sector firms alike pharmaceuticals, extractive and consultancies companies among others, hence by demonstrating a drastic shift that led to the conception of the private sector actors as "agents" of development, rather than being targets or vehicles of it (Mawdsley, 2014; p. 5). Along with this, a greater role for Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) was conceived, thus by increasing the importance of instruments of blended finance in the processes of development. In the final document, an entire section was dedicated to the "central role of the private sector in advancing innovation, creating wealth, income and jobs, mobilising domestic resources and in turn contributing to poverty reduction" (BPA, 2011; p. 10). Therefore, more efforts were required for enabling private sector actors, under an administrative and regulatory point of view, to increase foreign direct investments and public-private partnerships in addition to the objective of reinforcing global value chains (BPA, 2010; p. 10). The promotion of "Aid for Trade", following the rationale by which trade-related assistance has the potential to reduce poverty, (Voionmaa & Bruntrup, 2009; p. 14), the development of financial mechanisms and the mitigation of risks for private sector were deemed as necessary factors for leading to an effective economic development (BPA, 2011).

Given the above considerations, the dialogues during the High-Level Forum held in Busan in 2011, and the guidelines conceived in the related "Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation" (BPA, 2011), may be considered as representing the "tipping point" in the shift towards an increased role of the private sector in development policy. According to the OECD (2020b), 162 states endorsed the partnership, among which critical states alike USA, UK, Germany, France, China and Japan. For these reasons, SHp2 can be confirmed.

4.3.3 The socialization of the German government

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD periodically reviews the progresses made by its members in the field of development cooperation every four or five years (OECD, 2006). Every review includes all the main findings and further recommendations for strengthening the efforts towards reaching the common agreed goals for development within the major international forums and conferences. The main goal of this practice is to support the state under review in improving its policies and implementing the best approaches for complying to the standards and principles established at the international level (Pagani, 2002).

In the Peer Review related to the year 2005 (OECD, 2006), the DAC assessed the steps taken by Germany in relation to the previous conferences and forums, included the one of Paris of the same year. In these regards, the DAC approved the German efforts by acknowledging the commitment in increasing the ODA "in support of the MDGs and to improve the quality of aid in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness" (OECD, 2006; p. 11). Moreover, the Committee recognized the progresses made by Germany in the fulfilment of the international commitments by stating that "notably in the context of the MDGs, the German government has made considerable progress in adjusting its policies and approaches", followed by an appeal at perseverating in the implementation of the policies focused on poverty reduction (OECD, 2006; p. 11). The major recommendations were directed towards the need to promote a better coordination of the individual structures of development policy as well as the abolishment of the distinction between financial and technical cooperation (OECD, 2006; p. 12). In addition to this, the DAC recommended to elaborate "a more strategic approach towards geographic and thematic focus", and to implement an improved framework for multilateral cooperation (OECD, 2006; p. 14). Overall, the evaluation of German efforts in the field of development cooperation were positive, complemented by just a few recommendations for further improving the effectiveness of aid provision mechanisms in line with MDGs and the Paris Declaration of 2005.

Five years later, the DAC published the Peer Review for the year 2010 (OECD, 2011). In the document, the Committee stated that Germany made considerable progress compared to the previous review: in fact, a strategic approach was elaborated in relation to a diminishment of partner countries from 84 to 57, most of them in Sub-Saharan Africa, thus by stressing the importance of principles promoted alike good governance, education, health and sustainable economic development, along with "an increased emphasis on the private sector", consistent with the actions agreed at the international level in the previous years (OECD, 2011; p. 134). Furthermore, the DAC appreciated the German efforts to meet the criteria prompted by the Committee by planning to reform the structure of its development agencies as well as for increasing the amount of bilateral ODA to partner countries for the subsequent years (ibid.). Finally, the DAC exhorted Germany to "go further and faster with these planned reforms to achieve greater efficiency and ensure more effective delivery of its ODA" in order to reinforce its contribution to meet the MDGs, mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa (OECD, 2011; p. 134). The DAC encouraged the increase of the private sector engagement in partner countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, provided that this did not lead to a diversion of ODA towards a financial assistance oriented to favour German's commercial interests (OECD, 2011; p. 19). Therefore, the efforts of Germany in reforming its development policy were again positively assessed by the DAC, which also encouraged the increase of private sector initiatives for boosting the economic growth of partner countries. Besides, the DAC supported the German action plan for implementing the objectives of the Paris Declaration of 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action of 2008.

Before every Peer Review, each country has to prepare a Memorandum, functioning as a fundamental input and guidance for the DAC during the whole process: internally, background information on the progresses must be presented and it should be self-critical (DCD/DAC, 2019). In the one prepared by Germany in 2015 (OECD, 2015a), it was highlighted the German support to the agreed measures and policies, especially in Busan, for achieving stronger results in development cooperation (OECD, 2015a; p. 4). Germany introduced the undertaken reform that led to the creation of the GIZ, through the incorporation of the different developmental agencies into one single entity, as requested by the DAC five years before. Furthermore, after emphasising the thorough support to the processes of change of aid policies in Paris, Accra and Busan, Germany recognized the importance of the DAC peer reviews in the major steps pursued for increasing the effectiveness of its agencies and its assistance, hence by stating that "the recommendations have been largely implemented" (OECD, 2015a; p. 5). In this respect, Germany showed its commitment in pursuing the agreed measures in the international fora also in relation to its first strategy paper in Africa (AA, 2011), in which it was asserted that German engagement was entrenched in the implementation of the aims appointed by the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the MDGs (AA, 2011; p. 44). For this purpose, Germany developed its own development policy in contribution to the goals set by Accra Agenda for Action, in which acted as a signatory state (AA, 2011; p. 46). As a result, the Peer Review for the year 2015 (OECD, 2015b), pointed out the effective progresses made by Germany in the field of development cooperation: it emphasised the advancements made in the development of a strategic approach to development and financing beyond aid which resulted to be in line with international commitments, the acknowledgment of the efforts for gradually increasing the percentage of GDP devoted to ODA as well as the efficient delivery of quality programs by maximising their economic impact, as expected under Busan partnership (OECD, 2015b). Finally, the transparency and the effective pursue of the values promoted through its development policy were positively welcomed by the Committee.

Finnemore & Sikkink (1998) indicated that socialization may occur through emulation, praise or ridicule (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; p. 902). In these regards, the different "DAC Peer Reviews" that have followed one another during the years provided a clear illustration of the process of socialization undertaken by Germany in order to comply and conform to the main principles agreed in the High Level Forums. Through the mechanism of the reviews, which represents a form of "peer pressure" (Pagani, 2002; p. 15), the OECD and the DAC could monitor the progresses made by all the member countries that agreed to the set of policies and principles promoted at the international level. Hence, by officially criticising, or praising, the initiatives implemented by the countries under review in developmental stances, they could lead to an increase of the level of conformity to the new norm on development cooperation. Therefore, based also on the stated intentions of Germany to comply to the main development principles and implement the effective policies established within the international framework and determined by the different High Level Forums of the previous years, Hp3 can be confirmed.

4.3.4 Internalization of the new norm at the German national level

In describing its main objectives through the draft of the first strategy paper related to the new German Africa policy (AA, 2011), Germany affirmed the commitment in promoting economic growth through the extension of private sector operations in the continent. German Africa policy aimed at encouraging the growth of African wealth "through trade, investment and economic development", considering that private investments and trade could benefit African economies (AA, 2011; p. 31). Hence, a major involvement of private resources has been seen, since the beginning of the new turn in German Africa policy, as a necessary instrument for leading the process of change in developmental operations and thus foster the economic growth of partner countries.

Likewise, in the Africa paper of the BMZ of the year 2014, the Minister for Economic Development and Cooperation acknowledged the necessity of increasing private sector engagement in the continent. Indeed, the BMZ sustained that "new jobs and good future prospects for Africa's youth can only be created in conjunction with the private sector" (BMZ, 2014; p. 8). In the same fashion, the BMZ sustained the importance of leveraging private investments in the document of two years later, in which it declared that cooperation with the private sector would have been "particularly important" also for the purpose of creating new job opportunities in Africa (BMZ, 2016; p. 10). Moreover, the collaboration with the private sector was deemed necessary for guiding the process of economic development because that would have benefited the poor as well as creating new income opportunities for African people (BMZ, 2016; p. 12). The BMZ supported a further increase in private investments in Africa even through the document introducing the "Cornerstones of a Marshall Plan with Africa" (BMZ, 2017a), the other major initiative undertaken by the German government in the framework of the new Africa policy. Indeed, the document claimed that the focus of the new partnership with Africa would have been centered around a major involvement of the private sector, given that "it's not the governments that will create the long-term employment opportunities that are needed, it's the private sector", this along with the claim that Africa, rather than needing subsidies, was in need of more private investments (BMZ, 2017a; p. 5). For these reasons, also ODA should have been directed "to facilitate and promote private investment" (BMZ, 2017a; p. 6). Similarly, in the "15th Development Policy Report", the measures for increasing the role of private sector were defined as an "imperative", along with the implementation of trade relations with partner countries (BMZ, 2017b; p. 3). These claims were accompanied by the statements related to the need of demanding from partner countries an increase in the degree of ownership, even in complicated settings, where also the private sector had to be "involved to a greater extent" (BMZ, 2017b; p. 46). Hence, private sector was considered as having the potential to "reduce poverty and create employment and prospects for the future", in light of the considerations by which economic measures represent the drivers of progress and well-being (BMZ, 2017b; p. 53).

In the same year, in the document including the measures designed to boost the investments in African countries and at the basis of the German initiatives therein, the Federal government sustained the importance of creating opportunities and jobs for African people, hence by promoting an approach directed towards the ultimate goal of sustaining economic development (Die Bundesregierung, 2017). In these regards, the involvement of the private sector was considered essential, since actual economic development could be accomplished only if "alongside the countries' own efforts and those of the international community, the private sector also increases its engagement in African states" (Die Bundesregierung, 2017; p. 2). In the same document, indeed, the mobilisation of the private capital to Africa was perceived as "increasingly important in view of mounting challenges in the areas of development and climate policy" (ibid., p. 4). Moreover, the mobilisation of more private resources was considered as necessary in supporting the achievement of the main principles at the base of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Die Bundesregierung, 2018; p. 12), thus in relation to the efforts for achieving the main objectives of the "Agenda 2030" for sustainable development. The critical role played by private investments in development was furtherly stressed in the document representing the continuation of the policy guidelines for Africa, in which the sustainable economic growth of the continent was perceived as requiring better conditions for business, better infrastructures and a "dynamic private sector" (AA, 2019; p. 11).

Given the above considerations, it can be argued that German government and its relative Ministries internalized the new norm on development policy. By analysing the main documents and strategy papers concerning the basis of the implementation of the new German Africa and development policy, it can be observed the fundamental importance attached to an increased engagement of the private sector in the field of development cooperation. Private investments are seen as necessary for creating more added value for African economies and, consequently, to provide more opportunities to Africa's youth and achieve the main sustainable development goals contained in the "Agenda 2030", for which Germany pledged its commitment in increasing the mobilisation of private resources for reaching its main objectives (BMZ, 2017b; p. 68). As outlined by Finnemore & Sikkink (1998), norms become internalized once they assume the "take-for-granted" feature: in this case, it seems that the increased promotion and involvement of the private sector is considered as fundamental, thus by reflecting the feature of "taken-for-granted" in relation to the feasibility and ductility of its major objectives. For Germany, the expanded role for the private sector became, in recent years, "one of the strategic goals of development policy" (BMZ, 2017b; p. 68) and the successful internalization of the norm become clear even when assessing the "iterated behaviour" in the application of it. Indeed, all the strategy papers during the years promoted, in similar or less similar ways, the importance of an increased mobilisation of private resources to Africa, to the extent that German private investments gradually increased in the continent, as mentioned in the section 4.2.1, after the implementation of the main German initiatives, mainly the CwA. Therefore, Hp4 can be confirmed.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The central aim of this thesis was to answer the following research question: *What can explain the shift in German development policy in the African continent, from public development aid to the increased role of the private sector after the first decade of the 21st century?* To investigate and analyse the main factors at work in this process, two theories were employed, namely neomercantilism and social constructivism. Two general hypotheses were deduced from neomercantilism in addition to two sub-hypotheses and two general hypotheses deduced from social constructivism and based on norm life cycle theory. Therefore, the hypotheses were tested in the empirical analysis through the usage of process-tracing and document analysis.

Neomercantilism offered a possible explanation to the research question. The shift in the German development policy towards Africa, thus from the traditional approach based on the provision of public development aid to an increased role for the private sector, may be described as the depiction of a state-led economic initiative representing a modus operandi designed to increase the competitiveness of national businesses in the international arena. Bearing in mind that Africa, in recent decades, moved from being the largest recipient of development aid to representing a continent full of resources, commercial opportunities and unexploited markets, the formulation of the different initiatives within the framework of the new German Africa policy, among which the Compact with Africa is central, may be considered as a neomercantilist approach vis-à-vis Africa by the German government. In this research, the German initiatives were put in comparison with the Chinese operations in Africa since China, as one of the largest exporters worldwide and investors in the African continent, has often been portrayed as a competitor for Western and German economies due to its state-led economy, other than representing a strategic commercial partner for many. Under this perspective, this research found that the German government, through the implementation of different measures aimed at supporting the investments of its national companies, attempted to level the playing field in Africa with Chinese firms. Furthermore, after having analysed the main documents of the new German Africa policy as well as the main speeches related to Africa by the Chancellor, this research argued that the German initiatives represent an attempt to balance the Chinese engagement in the continent, and thus secure Germany's economic and political position therein. Hence, Germany attempted to secure it economic position in Africa through the adoption of a different development approach based on the furthering of economic relationship with specific African states.

Norm life cycle theory provided another possible explanation of the motives leading to the shift in German development policy. Considering that Germany always represented one of the biggest donors worldwide, with less economic interests in the developing world compared to other Western states, as well as one of the most important actors in development cooperation after its unification, the adoption of a different development policy vis-à-vis Africa may be understood as the gradual internalization of a new development norm promoted within the international arena. In these regards, this research argued that Germany underwent a norm life cycle process whereby it was introduced a different development approach to undertake, a process entailing a primary role for the private sector and based on the attachment of social principles to the achievement of developmental objectives. It is then argued that Germany adopted the new norm on development which was promoted within the framework of the European Union, as well as by International Organizations such as the OECD, the World Bank and the UN in different time frames, guided by the aim of rendering aid more effective. Hence, after a series of adaptative measures agreed in the multiple international fora that succeeded during the years, a tipping point has been reached in the High-Level Forum of Busan in 2011. Subsequently, a successful process of socialization undertaken by the German government, favoured also by the progressive supervision of the DAC, led Germany to internalize the new norm at the national level, which started to be seen as the only effective way for dealing with development cooperation internationally.

Although both theories were able to provide possible explanations to the phenomenon under analysis, the perspective offered by social constructivism, and specifically by norm life cycle theory, appears to be the most exhaustive and suitable to the analysed topic. Neomercantilism offers a feasible explanation that, however, does not take into account the specificity of the domain of global political economy, in which the strict interrelation existing between different economies clashes against the mere pursue of national interests at the expenses of other powerful states that, given the circumstances, may firstly represent economic partners. In particular, Germany and China are strictly interconnected: Germany represents the major commercial partner of China in Europe, as well as one of the largest partners worldwide. Although the consistent backing of the state on the global commercial operations of Chinese companies, as well as the debated closeness of Chinese market, are often considered "threats" by Western states, China still represents a powerful actor in global economy and a fundamental commercial partner for many. In this respect, neomercantilism fails in explaining how a shift in the development policy, allegedly directed towards the achievement of certain comparative advantages at the expenses of other actors, interconnects with the stability of commercial relationships between long-standing partners, as in the case of Germany and China. On the contrary, norm life cycle theory appears to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon under analysis. The successful processes of socialization and internalization show how Germany, as an influential actor in the field of development cooperation, adopted the new norm on development policy that has diffused internationally within the frameworks of multiple International Organizations. In this respect, the adoption of the new norm may be perceived as a demonstration of international legitimation by Germany that, along with pursuing economic interests (introduced as win-win situations), showed its conformity to the ideas and measures agreed on development at the international level as a legitimate and respectable member of it. Thanks to the utilization of a theoretical framework based on two contrasting theories, this research was able to provide different insights over a topic that has not received great academic consideration yet. Although the two contrasting theories have different explanatory value, they can both provide a valid perspective on the topic of interest. Therefore, by considering the substantial lack of theoretical perspectives on the topic under analysis, this research may represent the basis for further qualitative analyses on the shift undertaken by Germany in the development policy towards Africa.

Nonetheless, this research also presents some limitations. Due to the limited amount of literature on the recent German Africa policy and its related initiatives, extensive importance has been given to the strategy papers of the German Government and its Ministries, so that it may be difficult to discern the importance and the existence of alternative explanations on the shift undertaken in development policy, especially under a neomercantilist perspective. In addition, the substantial lack of written material by African scholars "influenced" the outcome of the analysis, which was then based on a bulk of Western literature with the risk of providing an umpteenth "Western-biased" overview on topics related to the developing world. In this respect, future research might investigate more deeply the perspective of the African civil society on this topic. As aforementioned, more theoretical backgrounds may be utilized, and relative expectations may be formulated, therefore with the aim of widening the theoretical spectrum related to modern approaches of development cooperation, which are constantly evolving during the years. Finally, it would be interesting to assess the evolution of German development and Africa policy during the next years in order to provide a more comprehensive explanation of other possible motives that led to this drastic shift, along with assessing the real effectiveness of this approach to development. Only further research, and time, can indeed provide the definitive response on the efficiency of this approach.

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