

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Benign Economic Statecraft in the Making: the Case of German Approach towards Africa

Bartosz Michalski¹, Tomasz Morozowski²

¹Institute of International Studies and Security, University of Wrocław, Wrocław, Poland

²Institute for Western Affairs, Poznań, Poland

Abstract

The emergence of a multipolar order and the growing potential of African states have captured the attention of German authorities. Through our examination of the policy frameworks directed towards Africa, we elucidate the fundamental motivations behind strategic considerations, which tackle the nexus of economic and security issues while striving to influence the architecture of global governance. We have embedded our research at the intersection of foreign policy analysis (FPA) and the realistic stream of thought within the international political economy (IPE), focusing on economic statecraft in particular. Our novel approach unlocks the complexity of internal decision-making processes in German foreign policy towards Africa. Furthermore, we underscore the interconnectedness between foreign policy and globalisation through the synergistic transformationalist approach. In terms of the pragmatic implementation of economic statecraft, we have studied how harnessing global economic dynamics and presence in Africa may bolster the likelihood of achieving German strategic interests. The German approach highlights the importance of the foreign economic policy toolkit while transforming Africa's perception and image from being seen as 'requiring assistance' to one of 'chances and opportunities'. Consequently, the German government seeks to develop a framework that would enable German businesses to increase their investments in Africa, provide local employment opportunities, enhance indigenous industrial capabilities, and promote fair economic transformation within the region. Germany seeks to maintain, safeguard, and strengthen the global order, recognising itself as a primary beneficiary. Therefore, key objectives are supposed to mitigate the impacts of de-globalisation and weaponisation of economic interdependencies. Cultivating and fostering collaboration with Africa, having in mind its untapped potential, determines the anticipated effectiveness of this approach. While peace and stability in Africa constitute essential preconditions, strategic orientation necessities economic initiatives that advance German interests: effective diversification and de-risking.

Keywords

Germany, Africa, foreign policy, economic statecraft, international security

Corresponding author: Bartosz Michalski (bartosz.michalski@uwr.edu.pl)

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Introduction

Africa and its untapped potential have been the focus of extensive political and scholarly debate for some time, given the importance of recent structural challenges in the world politics and economy. They are brought about by the geopolitical dynamics and increasing doubts about the rules that support the liberal model of globalisation. Within a wider framework, there is a growing discussion among scholars about the decline of the liberal international order¹ and the global polycrisis.²

These megatrends will give rise to further systemic tensions. Their origin can be attributed to various factors. These include the recognition of limited resources and capabilities, escalating costs of climate policy, the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the influence of China, the reconfiguration of global value chains, strategic emphasis on economic resilience through technological superiority and the provision of more secure supplies of critical minerals, and short-term adjustments due to Russian aggression of Ukraine, among others. The political and economic agendas reignite discussions about the international economic order and security architecture, with particular attention to the evolving role of African states. In the upcoming years, they are anticipated to alter their stance from being natural resource and low-cost labour providers to leveraging their potential to influence the international rivalry among the US, EU, China, India, and Russia.

Given the above, a critical challenge for European nations, notably Germany which has benefited from the liberal model of globalization, is to create a set of strategies to influence global affairs while acknowledging the growing African factor. This research aims thus to identify the reasons behind Germany's strategic thinking and policy towards Africa, examining the main orientations of policy adopted by the recent German federal governments, taking into account their cooperation with various stakeholders. Our intention is to contribute to the discourse on shaping contemporary globalisation by identifying new areas of collaboration among nations that are not particularly interested in a return to a bipolar world order, with a focus on the German case.

Economic and political pragmatism in foreign policy-making has distanced Germany from US-China block rivalry,³ making it worthy of thorough investigation. As per Kundnani,⁴ Germany has increasingly defined its interest in economic terms

¹ G.J. Ikenberry, "The end of liberal international order?," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 7–23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241>.

² M. Lawrence, S. Janzwood and T. Homer-Dixon, "What is a global polycrisis? And how is it different from a systemic risk?," Cascade Institute, Discussion Paper #2022-4, 2022, <https://cascadeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/What-is-a-global-polycrisis-v2.pdf>.

³ Cf. Die Bundesregierung, "Wehrhaft. Resilient. Nachhaltig. Integrierte Sicherheit für Deutschland," Nationale Sicherheitsstrategie, Berlin: Auswärtiges Amt, 2023.

⁴ H. Kundnani, *The paradox of German power* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 97.

and has used economic means to civilise international relations through the international rule of law and the promotion of exports instead of military means. Hence, political rhetoric highlights the interdependence of challenges to security and economic development. When making foreign policy decisions, modern states face a trade-off between at least three different, competing priorities: trade and economic considerations, hard security concerns, and fundamental values.⁵

The key puzzle, therefore, is on how to foster collaboration framework with new partners from the Global South, specifically Africa. Furthermore, this approach is implemented due to a strategic need to diversify and decrease dependencies on Russia and China. The dynamic progress of the Global South's countries and their mounting demand for raw materials, goods, services, and technology have conferred upon these new partners the authority to leverage the opportunities presented by globalisation and to call for greater participation on global issues, in line with their expanding economic and demographic importance.⁶ As such, Berlin seeks to encourage greater involvement from these states in shaping and integrating into the international order, with this approach being recommended for European policy to sustain multilateralism in a multipolar world.⁷ Through this course of action, the German foreign policy adapts to emerging circumstances to improve competitive advantages and sustain the country's position as a globally networked economic power.

The remainder of the paper is as follows. After our introductory remarks, Section 2 presents our research purpose and a discussion of the methodological approach we have applied in this study. Within Section 3, a short literature review is provided, which serves as a backdrop for our inquiry into the benign character of German economic statecraft in Africa. Section 4 refers to stylised facts regarding the tensions in the international system and the German responses to them, while the primary findings of our research are presented in section 5. The final part concludes.

Methods

What makes our approach novel is the embedding of the analysis at the intersection of two streams of scholarly thought in international relations. The first one relates to the realistic approach within the international political economy (IPE; Gilpin⁸;

⁵ Eurointelligence, 2023, accessed September 25, 2023, <https://www.eurointelligence.com/briefing?newsdate=2023-09-25&cHash=2afa233688794af01ab4300d54bfeca1>.

⁶ O. Scholz, "The global Zeitenwende: how to avoid a new cold war in a multipolar era," *Foreign Affairs* 102, no. 1 (2023).

⁷ Scholz, "The global Zeitenwende."

⁸ R. Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

Ravenhill⁹), with the economic development serving as an essential point of reference in the building of international order and security. The second one focuses on the internal process of decision making in German foreign policy towards Africa. Hence, our research primarily focuses on strategic objectives articulated in official documents. This requires an analysis at the level of an actor/state, while also considering the significance of structural reorientations. Therefore, our approach is grounded in the foreign policy analysis (FPA) as a means to unlock a 'black box', so that one could both recognise the actual complexity underlying decisions and develop a better analysis of foreign policy itself.¹⁰ The classical FPA, however, has failed to integrate the systemic shifts caused by globalisation, leading to a void between the FPA and the theory of the latter.¹¹ Consequently, it is necessary to modify the FPA to account for decision-making in foreign policy in a modern globalised world, taking into consideration new phenomena such as the de-territorialisation and de-nationalisation of foreign policies, proliferation and diversification of international relations actors, and novel interpretations of state power.¹²

Drawing on these observations, we have adapted the FPA concept to changing circumstances by establishing a nexus between foreign policy and globalisation, utilising the synergistic transformationalist approach (STA). It considers both foreign policy and globalisation as equal while acknowledging the transformation of states' forms and roles, rather than their retreat. This methodological integration captures recent modifications of German foreign policy within the global context. Moreover, it also recognises the impact of sovereign states and their foreign policies on global processes.¹³

⁹ D. Ravenhill, *Global Political Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Cf. C. Alden and A. Aran, *Foreign policy analysis: new approaches* (Taylor & Francis, 2016), 25.

¹¹ Cf. M. Albert and S. Stetter, "Actorhood in World Politics: The Dialectics of Agency/Structure within the World Polity," in *Theorizing foreign policy in a globalized world*, eds. G. Hellmann and K.E. Jorgensen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 81–100; G. Hellmann and K.E. Jorgensen, "Introduction," in *Theorizing foreign policy in a globalized world*, eds. G. Hellmann and K.E. Jorgensen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1–11; M. Zürn, "Globalization and global governance," in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse and B.A. Simons (Sage, 2013), 401–425.

¹² Cf. R. Baumann and F.A. Stengel, "Foreign policy analysis, globalisation and non-state actors: State-centric after all?," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 17, no. 4 (2014): 489–521, <https://doi.org/10.1057/jird.2013.12>; A. McGrew, "Globalization and global politics," in *The globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations*, eds. J. Baylis, S. Smith and P. Owens (Oxford University Press, 2017), 14–31; I.B. Neumann, "Foreign policy in an age of globalization," in *Theorizing foreign policy in a globalized world*, eds. G. Hellmann and K.E. Jorgensen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 45–57.

¹³ Cf. Alden and Aran, *Foreign policy analysis*; A. Aran, "Foreign policy and globalization theory: The case of Israel," *International Politics* 48, no. 6 (2011): 707–730, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2011.26>; S.D. Krasner, "Sovereignty," *Foreign Policy* 122 (2001): 20–29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3183223>.

This being the case, we position our research at the intersection of IPE and FPA, offering an insightful theoretical framework of economic statecraft.¹⁴ As Blackwill and Harris¹⁵ put it, most strategists fail to recognise the power and potential of economics and finance as instruments of national purpose, thus conceptual accounts of these techniques of statecraft still remain little studied or developed, especially compared to the vast literature on the mechanics of political-military power projection. The idea steers our perception towards the driving forces, aspirations, and actions of governments across different landscapes.¹⁶

Our point of departure is based on the premise that a state's international influence is largely determined by its economic power.¹⁷ Our study centres on the process of identifying priorities in German foreign policy and evaluates its efficacy in implementing political agendas on the international level. All this requires identification and deployment of economic tools and levers in the right place, time, and scope. Analogous to the Chinese approach, following Deng Xiaoping's belief that it is better to keep a low profile when in a weakened political position,¹⁸ it draws on the Hanseatic merchant-pragmatic experience of cooperation and translates national wealth into the exercise of power to institute new international rules and building (geo)political alliances and networks that recognise the interests of those like-minded.¹⁹ The practical application of economic statecraft, as of Clinton,²⁰ has two parts: first, how we harness the forces and use the tools of global economics to strengthen our diplomacy and presence abroad; and second, how we put that diplomacy and presence to work to strengthen our economy at home.

¹⁴ Cf. D.A. Baldwin, *Economic statecraft: New edition* (Princeton University Press, 2020); J.M. Blanchard and N.M. Ripsman, "A political theory of economic statecraft," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 4, no. 4 (2008): 371–398, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2008.00076.x>; J.M. Blanchard and N.M. Ripsman, *Economic Statecraft and Foreign Policy. Sanctions, Incentives, and Target State Calculations* (Routledge, 2013); B.J. McIntosh, "Wielding the Tools of Economic Statecraft," *Journal of National Security, Law and Policy* 12, no. 101 (2021): 101–108; W.J. Norris, *Chinese economic statecraft: Commercial actors, grand strategy, and state control* (Cornell University Press, 2016); R. Saner and L. Yiu, "International economic diplomacy: Mutations in post-modern times," Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2003; *Geo-economics and power politics in the 21st century: The revival of economic statecraft*, eds. M. Wigell, S. Scholvin and M. Aaltola (Routledge, 2019).

¹⁵ R.D. Blackwill and J.M. Harris, *War by other means: Geoeconomics and statecraft* (Harvard University Press, 2016), 6–8.

¹⁶ L. Weiss and E. Thurbon, "Developmental state or economic statecraft? Where, why and how the difference matters," *New Political Economy* 26, no. 3 (2020): 472–489, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2020.1766431>.

¹⁷ S.S. Kasper, *Systemtheoretische Analyse des Einflusses der deutschen Wirtschaft auf die deutsche Außenpolitik* (LIT Verlag, 2009), 87.

¹⁸ V. Bento, *Strategic Autonomy and Economic Power: The Economy as a Strategic Theater* (Taylor & Francis, 2022), 195.

¹⁹ Cf. Z. Xiaotong and J. Keith, "From Wealth to Power: China's New Economic Statecraft," *The Washington Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2017): 185–203, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2017.1302746>.

²⁰ H. Clinton, "Economic Statecraft," 2011, accessed July 5, 2024, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/10/175552.htm>.

The European integration case demonstrates an effective strategy in the reconstruction of the domestic economy (German *Wirtschaftswunder*). With a more significant political position, it allowed to enforce its own regulations through common European institutions, ultimately shaping the future of relevant regional and global processes.²¹ The economic vitality and resilience of global value chains, in which German companies – both large corporations as well as small- and medium-sized businesses known as *Mittelstand*²² – participate, is of utmost importance. The stability of the German social contract depends on the preservation of welfare and prosperity.

Our position is that the economic statecraft toolkit provides an appropriate lens for examining the backdrop of German foreign policy. As per the classical-historical approach to economic statecraft, the German leitmotiv ‘change through trade’ (*Wandel durch Handel*) can be identified when a state enforces positive sanctioning with an expectation of bringing about a political transformation and desired changes in target behaviour through sustained economic engagement.²³ The current approach has moved its focus from positive and negative sanctions to analysing the effect of changes in the distribution of power and the contested government–firm relations. According to Aggarwal & Reddie,²⁴ contemporary industrial policy, trade restrictions, and new legislation designed to impact cross-border investment, mergers, and acquisitions have become salient aspects of geostrategic competition. Regarding the Germany’s foreign economic policy, three pivotal instruments of economic statecraft, specifically industrial policy, trade measures, and investment regulations, are widely enforced.

Literature review on German economic statecraft in Africa

For more than a century now, the use of economic instruments in international politics has been acknowledged, Germany not being an exception.²⁵ The League of Nations’ inadequate capacity to control imperialistic aspirations, the catastrophic aftermath and effects of two world wars obstructed the significance of economic statecraft in the post-war era. In spite of this, given the age of global and regional interdependence, the political consequences of economic sanctions and incentives are more than evident.

²¹ Cf. M. Matthijs, “The Three Faces of German Leadership,” *Survival* 58, no. 2 (2016): 135–154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2016.1161908>.

²² Cf. J. Germann, “Global rivalries, corporate interests and Germany’s ‘National Industrial Strategy 2030’,” *Review of International Political Economy* 30, no. 5 (2022): 1749–1775, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2022.2130958>.

²³ Cf. M. Mastanduno, “Economic Statecraft,” in *Foreign Policy. Theories, Actors, Cases*, eds. S. Smith, A. Hadfield and T. Dunne (Oxford University Press, 2012), 204–222.

²⁴ V.K. Aggarwal and A.W. Reddie, *Economic Statecraft in the 21st Century: Implications for the Future of the Global Trade Regime* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 137–139.

²⁵ See N. Mulder, *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War* (Yale University Press, 2022).

No literature review of this subject could be deemed complete without considering the work of Kundnani.²⁶ Although not directly related to German economic statecraft in Africa, it offers valuable insights into Germany's liberal approach to geoeconomics. The author draws primarily on German policy in the European Union and Eurozone. His primary argument rests on the limitations that democratic countries face when deploying economic resources, as well as their reluctance to do so.²⁷ In light of its ambiguous geo-economic power, present-day Germany promotes a set of interests that are consistent with the European security order. Nevertheless, Germany remains doubtful of the possibility of military intervention, preferring to pursue economic objectives over hard politics. This serves as evidence that generations of German policymakers have internalised the idea that European integration is in the national interest.²⁸ Finally, as he puts it, rather than discovering geopolitics, Germany shifted to a hard version of geo-economics, meaning the pursuit of strategic objectives by striving to institutionalise its own preferences and constitutionalise economic decision-making.

Surprisingly, the very topic of German economic statecraft towards Africa has not been covered in academic literature. As a consequence, our attention was redirected towards those that cover German policy and African contexts, both directly and indirectly. The discussion by Schirm²⁹ revolves around the novel role of emerging powers in global governance and the world economy. Against this background, he seeks to identify conditions under which potential followers support emerging powers' bids for leadership and emphasizes the idea of non-coercive, benign leadership which is organised around more reciprocal, consensual, and institutionalised relations.³⁰ For Germany, the attainment of permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council remains crucial. Moreover, it goes along with maintaining influence on the political and economic agendas of international organisations via top managerial positions and a non-confrontational, inclusive stance in international trade negotiations (e.g. WTO), as well as via European bodies. It has even been argued that Germany should intensify the European-African cooperation through engagement with African states during non-permanent membership in UN Security Council.³¹ German politicians portray their country's role as that of a

²⁶ H. Kundnani, "Germany's liberal geo-economics: Using markets for strategic objectives," in *Geo-economics and Power Politics in the 21st Century*, eds. M. Wigell, S. Scholvin and M. Aaltola (Routledge, 2019), 61–74.

²⁷ Kundnani, "Germany's liberal geo-economics: Using markets for strategic objectives," 64.

²⁸ Kundnani, "Germany's liberal geo-economics," 68.

²⁹ S.A. Schirm, "Leaders in need of followers: Emerging powers in global governance," in *Power in the 21st Century: international security and international political economy in a changing world*, eds. E. Fels, J.F. Kremer and K. Kronenberg (Springer, 2012), 211–236.

³⁰ Schirm, "Leaders in need of followers: Emerging powers in global governance," 213.

³¹ M. Müller and J. Vorrath, "Kooperation mit afrikanischen Staaten: Es geht noch was im UN-Sicherheitsrat," SWP Kurz gesagt, 2020, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/kooperation-mit-afrikanischen-staaten-es-geht-noch-was-im-un-sicherheitsrat/>.

moderator which subordinates its national interests to the common weal of the European cause, underlining the increasing interdependence between developed and developing countries as a core characteristic of international trade relations.³²

With regard to Africa, Engel³³ expounds on how German policy has been more influenced by the growing international consensus formed in the United Nations, among G8 member states, and within the European Union. The evolution of Africa policy, as he sees it, has been marked by a transition from a primarily bilateral approach to a more multilateral one influenced by external factors. Despite this, the first German integrated Africa policy document published in 2011 makes reference to strategic partnerships between Germany and specific African countries in areas where Germany still has concrete self-interests, such as energy and raw materials. The policy mechanisms include aid, trade, foreign direct investment, and development assistance.³⁴ Furthermore, the financial dimension of networked security underscores Germany's standing as the fourth largest contributor to UN peace support operations, after the United States, China, and Japan.³⁵

Regarding the aforementioned multilateralisation, Haastrup's³⁶ analysis highlights the critical issue of incorporating security into the business of EU-Africa relations. This nexus aims at human security and strives to move beyond the donor-recipient paradigm to one that emphasised equality, ownership, and partnership.³⁷ Thus, given the fragilities and tensions in Africa, it is crucial that cooperation advances towards a strategic partnership that addresses developmental and security agendas, as stipulated by the Joint EU-Africa Strategy adopted in December 2007. The objective is to ascertain the European Union's status as a crucial player in international security, with the potential to establish its strategic culture and mitigate Chinese influence in Africa. Haastrup³⁸ shares his insights on German policy, which distinguishes itself through its preference for the G8 mechanism over the European Commission. Prioritising development assistance through bilateral cooperation broadens political options and allows Germany to opt out of proposed EU initiatives when unhappy with British or French motives.³⁹

³² Schirm, "Leaders in need of followers," 228.

³³ U. Engel, "The G8 and Germany's Africa policy: a case of hegemonic mainstreaming," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 18, no. 4 (2012): 471–476, <https://doi.org/10.1163/19426720-01804007>.

³⁴ Engel, "The G8 and Germany's Africa policy," 474, 475.

³⁵ U. Engel, "Networked security between "restraint" and "responsibility"? Germany's security policy towards Africa," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 17, no. 2 (2016): 50–69.

³⁶ T. Haastrup, *Charting Transformation through Security: Contemporary EU–Africa Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

³⁷ Haastrup, *Charting Transformation through Security: Contemporary EU–Africa Relations*, 3.

³⁸ Haastrup, *Charting Transformation through Security*, 98.

³⁹ Haastrup, *Charting Transformation*, 102.

In the study of donorship in the MENA sub-region, Furness⁴⁰ recognises a vital dilemma due to inertia in the German foreign policy system. Hence, there is no well-defined governmental strategy that gives precedence to the security interests of Germany and Europe over addressing development and humanitarian concerns. With reference to his experience at the former German Development Institute, he accentuates the critical issue of fragmented programmes and operations, as opposed to strategic clarity. This can be partly accounted for by the institutional complexity of the German aid system. The big question for Germany's aid policy-makers is whether a co-ordinated approach based on a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy is really worth working towards, or whether it would be better to remain strategically ambiguous⁴¹ and by doing so to operationalise a benign economic statecraft in Africa.

The German perspective on globalisation amidst tensions within the international system

Germany acknowledges the costs of operating in a challenging system but still leans towards shaping a new multipolar order that involves a growing number of international centres of power, connected by a network of global value chains with countries of the Global South, including Africa. The rationale for Germany's engagement in new partnerships aligns with Chancellor Scholz's perspective on the turning point in the formation of a multipolar world.⁴²

Scholz has pointed out the contradiction between the de-globalisation thesis and the idea of multipolarity, while calling for innovative methods of cooperation, multilateralism, and international solidarity.⁴³ By framing the rhetoric of order and economic security, he stays true to the long-standing guideline of German foreign policy thinking since reunification, which is to defend pragmatically the rule-based international order.

Germany's international position has been vastly defined by its economic potential, power, and impact (*Wirtschaftsmacht*):⁴⁴ the Federal Republic is the fourth world's largest economy by GDP in 2023, with a 4% share of the global GDP.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ M. Furness, "'Donorship' and strategic policy-making: Germany's Middle Eastern and North African aid programme since the Arab uprisings," *Development Policy Review* 38, no. S1 (2020): O70–O90, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12461>.

⁴¹ Furness, "'Donorship' and strategic policy-making," O83.

⁴² The Federal Chancellor, "Shaping a multipolar world through 'new paths of cooperation,'" Federal Chancellor Scholz addresses the World Economic Forum in Davos, 2022.

⁴³ The Federal Chancellor, "Shaping a multipolar world."

⁴⁴ See M. Staack, "Deutschland als Wirtschaftsmacht," in *Handbuch zur deutschen Außenpolitik*, eds. S. Schmidt, G. Hellmann and R. Wolf (Wiesbaden, 2007), 85–97.

⁴⁵ World Bank, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?most_recent_value_desc=true.

The technological sophistication of German exports⁴⁶ helped it secure third place among the top players, contributing to 47% of its GDP.⁴⁷ It has been estimated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy⁴⁸ that about 28% of jobs in Germany are related to exports either directly or indirectly, with the manufacturing sector accounting for as much as 56%.

In contrast to its economic potential, the role of hard military in German external engagement is marginal and limited to modest participation in allied missions within the EU, UN, and NATO. Germany prefers financial support over direct engagement. In 2024, a total of 1,037 soldiers from the Bundeswehr participated in international missions.⁴⁹ Historically, the largest participation of 1,158 soldiers was in the MINUSMA mission in Mali.

Given that the prosperity and security of Germany rely on exports, open trade routes, as well as attractive investment markets are taken into account. Due to this reason, Germany relies on the toolkit of economic foreign policy (*Außenwirtschaftspolitik*) for its international engagement, which effectively combines economic interests and security policy with realism being the defining factor. Business lobbies, economic organisations, and industrial unions have a considerable impact on the economic dimension of German foreign policy, be it the Federation of German Industries (*Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie*, BDI), the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Deutsche Industrie- und Handelskammer*, DIHK); German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (*Auslandshandelskammern*, AHK), and Germany Trade & Invest (GTAI), in coordination with the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (*Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz*, BMWK).

By adopting the FPA perspective, we emphasise that the federal government considers the interests of economic organisations and business lobbies in shaping strategic frameworks for global policy, including African states. Germany's perception of its role in global politics as a 'trading nation' (*Handelsnation*) is influenced by the belief that networking is an economic recipe for success. The appeal of new

⁴⁶ Trade Map, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.trademap.org>.

⁴⁷ World Bank, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.ZS?locations=DE>.

⁴⁸ Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, "Facts about German foreign trade," Berlin, September, 2019, accessed May 29, 2024, https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/facts-about-german-foreign-trade.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1.

⁴⁹ Statista, "Anzahl der an internationalen Einsätzen beteiligten deutschen Soldaten der Bundeswehr, as of 24.06.2024," 2024, accessed July 7, 2024, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/72703/umfrage/anzahl-der-soldaten-der-bundeswehr-im-ausland/>.

partners is based on market potential for German exports.⁵⁰ For this reason, policy development in Germany, especially during the second decade of the 21st century, has been geared towards partnering with Asian, African, and Latin American nations to promote German interests and position itself as a capital exporter. Along with growing economic achievements, the narrative of shared responsibility for shaping globalisation, and for an open and fair multilateral trading regime in particular, has determined German strategic thinking. With that said, the next section delves into the evolving role of Africa for Germany, along with the rationales behind.

The evolution of German Africa-policy and its strategic focus

Building upon coalition agreements and strategic documents published by successive German governments, several trends and patterns in the development of German policy towards Africa can be discerned. A pivot in the recognition of German strategic interest in Africa occurred in the second decade of the 21st century. While previous coalition agreements of the CDU, CSU, & SPD,⁵¹ and CDU, CSU, & FDP⁵² did not prioritize political attention nor resources to Africa, the matter gained more prominence in the agreements of CDU, CSU, & SPD,⁵³ CDU, CSU, & SPD.⁵⁴ However, a notable decline in attention to Africa marked the government's agreement of SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, & FDP.⁵⁵

The primary interdepartmental strategic document known as the 2011 Africa Concept of the Federal Government laid the foundations for subsequent developments. The principles set forth in this document were refined and revised in the Africa-policy guidelines by the federal government released in 2014 as 'Increased Engagement in Africa', and further updated in 2019 as 'Deepened Partnership

⁵⁰ Cf. BDI, "Globale Kräfteverschiebung – wo steht die deutsche Wirtschaft in der Globalisierung?," Eine Studie der IW Köln Consult GmbH im Auftrag des Bundesverbands der deutschen Industrie e. V. (BDI). Ausgewählte Ergebnisse der Studie, Berlin, 2015; BDI, "Wer handelt, gewinnt," 2019, accessed July 5, 2024, <https://bdi.eu/artikel/news/wer-handelt-gewinnt>; BDI, "Deutschland und Afrika: Mehr Strategie, mehr Investition, mehr Partnerschaft auf Augenhöhe," 2024, accessed July 5, 2024, https://bdi.eu/artikel/news?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=10334&cHash=1438baa8ee8e7cc138ef7fb4951c79ed.

⁵¹ CDU, CSU and SPD, "Gemeinsam für Deutschland. Mit Mut und Menschlichkeit. Der Koalitionsvertrag von CDU, CSU und SPD," Berlin, 2005.

⁵² CDU, CSU and FDP, "Wachstum. Bildung. Zusammenhalt, Der Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und FDP," Berlin, 2009.

⁵³ CDU, CSU and SPD, "Deutschland Zukunft gestalten. Der Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD," Berlin, 2013.

⁵⁴ CDU, CSU and SPD, "Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa, eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland, ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land. Der Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD," Berlin, 2018.

⁵⁵ SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and FDP, "Mehr Fortschritt wagen. Bündnis für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit. Der Koalitionsvertrag 2021–2025 zwischen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (SPD), Bündnis 90/Die Grünen und den Freien Demokraten (FDP)," Berlin, 2021.

with Africa'.⁵⁶ The next phase of modifications was launched in 2023. Besides, a multitude of documents and strategies linked to Africa policy were distributed meanwhile by individual ministries.

Among the enduring factors, one can discern rationales associated with Africa's increasingly favourable demographic and economic prospects. This have spurred calls for expanded German engagement in cultivating partnerships with the African countries. Their advantages have made them an essential ally in addressing global challenges and in reinforcing Germany's global impact in the face of turbulent environment. Thus, recognition of political and economic interests in harnessing opportunities in Africa has consistently served as a fundamental driver of German strategies.

The Africa-policy Guidelines of 2014 and 2019 both stemmed from the recognition of Africa's growing importance for Germany and Europe. This was attributed to factors such as the continent's demographic potential, the rise of its middle class, the dynamism of its youthful and innovative societies, the anticipated high growth rates, the wealth of natural resources, and the robust agricultural sector.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the recent Africa Strategy by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development⁵⁸ revisited the reasons detailed in the 2014 and 2019. Nevertheless, the objectives remained unaccomplished. An enduring and substantial gap persisted between the ambitious aspirations for African policy in light of its capabilities and the lasting shortcomings in the 'reconsideration' of Germany's strategic standpoint.

Moreover, there existed the absence of a comprehensive, interdepartmental framework and transparent delineation of responsibilities, which translated into multiple strategic documents by individual ministries, subsequently bringing about a lack of consistency. The case of the 2023 Africa Strategy developed by BMZ illustrates this point well. Implications of the recent attempt to review the German Africa policy directives by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2023 contribute to ongoing uncertainties.

When examining the shift in perceptions regarding Africa's participation in consecutive coalition agreements and strategic documents, one can observe varied levels of engagement by the German government in cultivating connections with Africa, alongside the evolving understandings of the potential roles that African countries may assume over time. This development has also influenced the varied

⁵⁶ Deutscher Bundestag, "Ein neuer Aufbruch," Drucksache 18/1484, Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung, Berlin, 2014; Deutscher Bundestag, "Fortschreibung und Weiterentwicklung der Afrikapolitischen Leitlinien der Bundesregierung," Drucksache 19/8765, Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung, Berlin, 2019.

⁵⁷ Deutscher Bundestag, "Ein neuer Aufbruch," 2014; Deutscher Bundestag, "Fortschreibung und Weiterentwicklung der Afrikapolitischen Leitlinien der Bundesregierung," 2019.

⁵⁸ BMZ, "Shaping the future with Africa. The Africa Strategy of the BMZ," Berlin, 2023, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/137602/bmz-afrika-strategie-en.pdf>.

self-identification of Germany's stance — whether as a partner merely supporting transformative initiatives or as their patron, embracing a more active and engaged role.

The coalition agreements of the CDU, CSU, and SPD⁵⁹ and CDU, CSU, and FDP⁶⁰ only briefly mentioned the humanitarian, social, political, and economic challenges, emphasizing the self-responsibility for development. Throughout history, German governments have consistently expressed their commitment to providing financial assistance, which includes efforts to combat poverty, protect the environment, ensure food security, address epidemics, manage migration, and enhance stability and security through participation in EU and UN peacekeeping missions. These governments have also highlighted the importance of integration initiatives and organizations in the region, such as NEPAD and the African Union.⁶¹

The concept of self-responsibility among African nations in tackling their challenges was expanded in the 2013 coalition agreement, which highlighted German interests in addressing issues through regional actors. Enhancing the capabilities of states and security institutions was considered essential for Germany's interests. This development emerged as the primary goal of Germany's security policy involvement, with a focus on empowering African partners to effectively prevent and respond to emergencies, as stated by Deutscher Bundestag.⁶² As per the 2014 Africa-policy guidelines, the German authorities were to promote peace and stability to reduce potential negative impacts on both Germany and Europe resulting from conflicts, disruptions, and crises in Africa, migration in particular. Moreover, the 2014 revision of the guidelines showcased a significantly more positive narrative regarding Africa's stability and its resilience in the face of crises and conflicts.

The discourse transitioned after 2015. The coalition agreement of 2018 has experienced significant modifications – as opposed to preceding agreements – placing greater importance on the threats confronting Europe and Germany. The origins can be traced back to the political and social unrest in Africa, which arose in the aftermath of the 2015 migrant crisis. Additionally, the 2019 revision of Africa-policy guidelines indicated yet another shift in communication, highlighting the incorporation of African nations within the development of a multilateral, rules-based global order.

The 2021 coalition agreement differed from prior political agreements by exhibiting a reduced level of detail regarding Africa strategy, although its overarching principles were in line with existing priorities. The 2023 Africa Strategy by the BMZ brought forth a fresh viewpoint by acknowledging the increasing inclination towards moderate autocracies within African nations. Consequently, Germany

⁵⁹ CDU, CSU and SPD, "Gemeinsam für Deutschland. Mit Mut und Menschlichkeit," 2005.

⁶⁰ CDU, CSU and FDP, "Wachstum. Bildung," 2009.

⁶¹ CDU, CSU, and SPD, "Gemeinsam für Deutschland," 2005.

⁶² Deutscher Bundestag, "Ein neuer Aufbruch."

aims to support its partners in strengthening democratic practices, upholding the rule of law, and promoting respect for human rights, while also maintaining a commitment to monitoring governance reforms. Therefore, the distribution of financial resources (e.g. under the G20 Compact with Africa) should be channelled towards governments that are pro-reform, providing support for structural transformations, fostering employment opportunities, and improving labour conditions in Africa.⁶³ This strategy specifically targets the security framework in Africa, with a particular emphasis on the pivotal role played by the African Union, with the backing from Germany for a network of mediators.⁶⁴

The prioritized issues by Germany confirm the evolving agenda and revised set of priorities. Following an initial emphasis on development assistance in the first decade of the 21st century, the establishment of new markets for investment and growth prospects for German enterprises emerged as the subsequent priority. Over time, these objectives were further reinforced by pronouncing peace and security concerns, challenges of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Following this, matters related to the safeguarding of women's rights and the enhancement of opportunities for young individuals were brought forth, along with new areas of economic cooperation like energy and digitalization.

In accordance with the comprehensive agenda of German Africa policy, the 2019 revision of the guidelines underscored the significance of safeguarding international peace and security, disarmament and arms control, fostering global economic cooperation and free trade, as well as advancing human rights and the rule of law.⁶⁵ Energy-related collaboration emerged as one of the most promising fields for German interests. The initiation of potential partnerships is intended to occur through political channels (e.g. with South Africa, Morocco, Nigeria, or Tunisia), ultimately leading to direct investments by corporations capable of ethically managing natural resources to meet the demand for more resilient supplies of critical resources in African economies.⁶⁶

In the 2021 coalition agreement, emphasis has been placed on African democracy, human rights, and the reform of the rule of law, along with environmental issues, largely driven by the ideological traits of the coalition parties, notably the Greens. This emphasis is further illustrated by the feminist aspect of foreign policy, supported by Annalena Baerbock, aiming to promote increased participation of women in the political and economic spheres of African nations. Furthermore, the German government has endorsed the creation of a pan-African free trade area, along with a commitment to bolster Africa's participation in the global economic

⁶³ Cf. BMZ, "Shaping the future with Africa. The Africa Strategy of the BMZ," 2023.

⁶⁴ Auswärtiges Amt, "Feministische Außenpolitik gestalten," Leitlinien des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin, 2023.

⁶⁵ Deutscher Bundestag, "Fortschreibung und Weiterentwicklung der Afrikapolitischen Leitlinien," 2019.

⁶⁶ Deutscher Bundestag, "Fortschreibung und Weiterentwicklung," 2019.

landscape. Within the 2021 coalition agreement, the EU and G20 frameworks were have been deemed vital, as well as the requirement to engage with the African Union and other regional institutions. Also various aspects of connectivity between Europe and Africa have been examined, encompassing digitalization, energy, infrastructure, and scientific collaboration. In the context of security issues, the emphasis was on involvement in the Sahel region as a way to prevent instability, with a specific mention of Mali.⁶⁷

Another trend that can be observed within the evolving German agenda of strategic thinking in Africa-policy is the focus on enhancing German presence in Africa, in response to the increasing involvement of other international players. Recent years have witnessed a mounting recognition of the necessity to compete in infrastructure development and the extraction of critical resources, particularly in rivalry with China. Germany's approach on how to tackle this challenge revolves around leveraging the European Union platform, which involves initiatives like the Global Gateway.

The Africa Strategy by BMZ⁶⁸ represents a milestone for German foreign policy as it situates these relations within a broader geopolitical context. It highlights the competition for influence in the region from various global players such as China, Russia, Turkey, and Gulf states, who are involved in infrastructure development, resource access, market penetration, and political sway (e.g. through arms and mercenaries, as in the case of Russia). A key assertion in the document highlights the necessity of creating partnerships with African nations for both Germany and the European Union. These alliances necessitate not only financial commitments but also robust political support.⁶⁹ A striking illustration pertains to the participation of Germany in the UN MINUSMA operation in Mali, representing the most extensive overseas mission conducted by the Bundeswehr subsequent to its exit from Afghanistan.

The initiation of the revision of the outdated 2019 Africa policy guidelines by the German Federal Foreign Office in 2023 underscores the intricate nature of challenges and the multi-faceted dimensions. Deliberations among experts within the framework of the 'thought laboratory' led by the SWP think tank indicate that the updated German Africa policy needs to consider the different obstacles presented by the continent's diversity and the necessity for customized solutions. This task involves the delicate balance between promoting economic growth in key sectors

⁶⁷ Auswärtiges Amt, "Feministische Außenpolitik."

⁶⁸ BMZ, "Shaping the future with Africa. The Africa Strategy," 2023.

⁶⁹ BMZ, "Shaping the future with Africa," 2023.

of African countries on one side and addressing security and destabilization issues on the continent on the other.⁷⁰

It is also imperative to outline the objectives and priorities of Germany in collaborative efforts with African counterparts to address contemporary mega-trends like urbanization, demographic shifts, digitalization, and climate change. Additionally, there is a need to address emerging impulses and obstacles, such as competition with China for investments in African infrastructure, the growth of digital markets, and cooperation in data sharing. Striving towards an equal partnership calls for the active participation of the African diaspora in Germany to ensure the integration of African perspectives in new projects, particularly in infrastructure, to effectively meet the requirements of both parties.⁷¹ Finally, issues related to the acknowledgment of the colonial history also persist,⁷² as well as strategies to enhance the activity of German enterprises, including *Mittelstand*, in African markets,⁷³ and approaches to tackle the diminishing ability of Germany and the EU to resolve conflicts and offer mediations in Africa.⁷⁴

A goal yet unattained, as described in most official texts, involves a shift in the approach to interacting with Africa from one characterized by unequal support to a more balanced and cooperative relationship. The driving impetus can be traced back to the initial prevalence of developmental assistance components in Germany's African policy, a situation shaped by its perception of civilizational challenges, low levels of development, poverty, and inadequate healthcare and education standards. Despite some gradual modifications – primarily evident in the rhetoric of official

⁷⁰ B. Erforth and W. Lacher, "Große Erwartungen, Impulse, und viele offene Fragen: zum Abschluss von Joint Futures," SWP Blog Joint Futures 47, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/mta-joint-futures-47-grosse-erwartungen-impulse-und-viele-offene-fragen-zum-abschluss-von-joint-futures>; C. Hackenesch and D.M. Tull, "Germany's Africa Policy: Time for an Update," SWP Blog Joint Futures 01, 2023, accessed July 5, 2024, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/mta-joint-futures-01-update-german-africa-policy>.

⁷¹ S. Bergner, "Anspruchsvoll, aber notwendig: Impulse für die Einbindung afrikanischer Diaspora-Gruppen," SWP Blog Joint Futures 22, 2023, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/mta-joint-futures-22-einbindung-afrikanischer-diaspora-gruppen>.

⁷² K. Azamede and A. Mehler, "Restitution als Chance zum Dialog zwischen "Zentrum" und "Peripherie"," SWP Blog Joint Futures 13, 2023, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/mta-joint-futures-13-restitution-als-change-zum-dialog>.

⁷³ E.K. Brown, "A Catalyst for Transformation: Exploring Germany and Africa's Joint Venture for Private Sector Development," SWP Blog Joint Futures 36, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/mta-joint-futures-36-catalyst-for-transformation-private-sector-development>; B. Erforth, "Was macht eine gute Digitalpartnerschaft mit Afrika aus?," SWP Blog Joint Futures 26, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/mta-joint-futures-26-was-macht-eine-gute-digitalpartnerschaft-mit-afrika-aus>.

⁷⁴ N. Bagayoko, "The International Interventions in the Sahel: a Collective Failure?," SWP Blog Joint Futures 37, 2024, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/mta-joint-futures-37-the-international-interventions-in-the-sahel-a-collective-failure>; V. Rosoux, "Conflict Mediation: Limits and Pitfalls," SWP Blog Joint Futures 14, 2023, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.megatrends-afrika.de/publikation/mta-joint-futures-14-conflict-mediation-limits-and-pitfalls>.

documents – the identification of measures through which Germany intends to transform the established model, heavily reliant on direct financial aid from Germany, remains a complex task.

This phenomenon can be illustrated in the Marshall Plan with Africa released by the BMZ in 2017, which aimed at reassessing the prevailing donor-receiver paradigm. This transition would endorse restructuring of alliances, anchoring them on three pillars: 1) economy, commerce, and employment, 2) peace and security, and 3) democracy and the rule of law.⁷⁵ Consistent with the narrative of the German G20 presidency in 2017, there has been a substantial increase in the number of publications dedicated to African issues by federal ministries. These include also the 2017 Key Points Paper on ‘Economic Development of Africa – Challenges and Options’ by the Federal Ministry of Economy, the Pro!Afrika initiative. As a result, the strategic dialogue between Germany and Africa underwent a shift from perceiving the continent as ‘needing assistance’ to recognizing it as a domain of ‘opportunities and possibilities’ due to its increasing geopolitical importance.⁷⁶

With that being said, the prioritization of Africa is clearly demonstrated in the approach taken by the SPD-FDP-Green government. It serves to enhance the notion of equitable collaboration, acknowledgment of the untapped potential, and responsibility of African nations in influencing global processes. Consequently, the primary objective outlined in the most recent ministerial publication, the Africa Strategy by BMZ,⁷⁷ is to foster interaction with Africa and promote global structural policy. As a result, African nations have been recognized as equal partners to Germany in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

The German approach to the economic-security nexus appears to prioritize economic benefits while mitigating security threats. Initiatives such as investments, developmental assistance, and trade aim to bolster economic expansion and job creation. It is believed that through these efforts, African nations can better combat poverty, reduce disparities, improve educational access, and tackle corruption. Promoting peace, security, and stability in African regions is considered crucial for enhancing economic cooperation and, consequently, promoting German economic interests in Africa.

The 2014 and 2019 Africa-policy guidelines extensively delineated these concepts. The emphasis on fostering political and economic alliances ultimately aims to facilitate entry into new markets, job prospects, and access to financing, while

⁷⁵ BMZ, “Putting the Marshall Plan with Africa into action,” 2017, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/23708/eadc1eb3296b1c0c27f06bd123428cbd/materialie510-marshallplan-data.pdf>.

⁷⁶ J. Bergmann *et al.*, “Friedenspolitische Kohärenz deutscher Afrikapolitik,” Eine Analyse anhand der Afrikabezogenen Leitlinien und Strategiepapiere der Bundesregierung, Studie 1 aus der Studienreihe des Beirats, Berlin, 2020.

⁷⁷ BMZ, “Shaping the future,” 2023.

simultaneously reducing trade barriers and strengthening the attractiveness of African economies for foreign direct investments (FDI). Moreover, the primary objective is to identify prospects for the German *Mittelstand* to engage with African markets, leveraging its assets and competencies to establish sustainable business models, professional training, and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The updated guidelines as of 2019 highlight better investment conditions in Africa that, when combined with macroeconomic stability, increased purchasing power, demand for high-quality products, technical expertise, and innovation, could bring advantages to both German enterprises and local communities. It is crucial that the foreign trade promotion toolkit (*Außenwirtschaftsförderung*) aligns with strategies addressing developmental obstacles by providing support to local financial sectors and facilitating easier access to capital for African businesses. The main objective is to attain economic prosperity and job creation, with specific attention given to African youth and women. The German engagement should be therefore linked to the conditions and contributions of partner governments for effective outcomes.⁷⁸

The position taken was in line with the coalition agreement of 2018, which emphasized the importance of cooperation in international trade for German enterprises, in addition to various support measures like financial aid for business investments, innovative financial programs, and Hermes export insurance. This proves also the growing impact of AHKs on German foreign economic strategy towards Africa. The key objective was to expand into new markets, with a specific focus on digital transformation, innovations, and educational initiatives. Addressing the security dimension in the context of the 2015 migrant crisis, it was declared that all trade agreements between Europe and Africa should encompass social and human rights aspects, as well as economic living standards, as guiding principles.⁷⁹

Moreover, The Africa Strategy by BMZ⁸⁰ integrates crucial viewpoints from contemporary German economic interests, all encapsulated by the theme of 'just economic transition'. The strategic positioning of Africa, characterized by abundant critical resources and promising technological prospects, especially within the renewable energy sector, positions it as a prime contender to boost economic prosperity alongside environmental sustainability, social equity, and the establishment of quality employment opportunities.⁸¹

The dialogue promoting this shift in Africa is intended to strengthen the engagement of German businesses providing essential solutions and technologies, such as

⁷⁸ Deutscher Bundestag, "Fortschreibung."

⁷⁹ CDU, CSU and SPD, "Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa, eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland, ein neuer Zusammenhalt."

⁸⁰ BMZ, "Shaping," 2023.

⁸¹ BMZ, "Shaping."

those in the renewable energy sector, sustainable urban infrastructure, agriculture, green hydrogen,⁸² as well as the extraction and processing of critical minerals, innovations, future industries, and digitalization. Consequently, the German approach to economic transition in Africa may be perceived as a component of the broader OECD agenda. The engagement of BMZ as a pivotal collaborator in the 'Africa's Development Dynamics' publication,⁸³ illustrates the effective implementation of German goals at the multilateral level.

To sum up, German strategic deliberations on Africa policy are intricately linked and mutually shaped by security and economic considerations. The complexities arising from global economic uncertainties and the widening gap between Western nations and autocratic regimes highlight the pressing need for a swift adjustment of German foreign economic strategy to maintain German competitive advantages as a globally interconnected economic power. This concern, in turn, aligns with the imperative to broaden international alliances, decrease strategic dependencies, and explore new sources of energy and key resources for resilient supply chains.

The big shift in German foreign policy has been discussed in the context of insights from past mistakes and miscalculations in dealing with Russia. Annalena Baerbock asserts that Germany's stance towards China should not replicate the errors made in handling Russia.⁸⁴ Consequently, the ongoing process of adaptation, coupled with a discourse focused on shaping a new multipolar global order, demands new partnerships with nations in the Global South, with Africa's increasing importance becoming more and more apparent.

Conclusion

The case of German foreign policy in Africa illustrates how the amalgamation of economic and security concerns impacts the aspiration to actively shape the global order. Nonetheless, the methods through which such presumptions are achieved have been evolving gradually as a result of the dynamics of the global context. Germany's goal is to maintain, protect, and strengthen the global order as its main beneficiary by resisting de-globalisation and striving to foster cooperation with new partners from the Global South, including Africa. Having said that, the following conclusions about German strategic thinking and policy towards Africa are drawn.

⁸² In Africa, the BMZ is already working with Morocco, Tunisia, South Africa, and Algeria to construct pilot and reference plants. Rich countries see green hydrogen as the best hope to keep their energy-intensive industry running while slashing carbon emissions; *The Economist*, "Why Africa is poised to become a big player in energy markets," 2023, accessed July 20, 2023, <https://www.economist.com/interactive/middle-east-and-africa/2023/07/18/why-africa-is-poised-to-become-a-big-player-in-energy-markets>.

⁸³ OECD, "Africa's Development Dynamics 2023: Investing in Sustainable Development," 2023, accessed October 24, 2024, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/3269532b-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/3269532b-en>.

⁸⁴ *Die Welt*, "Dürfen den Fehler, den wir mit Russland gemacht haben, mit China nicht wiederholen," Annalena Baerbock Exklusiv, 2023, accessed June 11, 2023, <https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/video241920931/Aussenministerin-Baerbock-bezeichnet-China-als-zunehmend-unfairen-Wettbewerber.html>.

Germany remains fundamentally committed to its role as a mediator, supporter, and enabler of multilateral cooperation. In this context, African countries are anticipated to assume a more prominent role owing to their economic and demographic potential, as well as their desire to co-create global governance. The approach taken by Germany towards Africa is multilateral in nature, with emphasis placed on the United Nations, G7, G20 and European Union levels. Meanwhile, regional and bilateral cooperation serve only a complementary function. The objective of Germany is to gain the backing of African nations for their global pursuits, particularly with regards to their attitude towards Russia or China.

While striving to reform the United Nations, it is crucial to prioritise granting Germany permanent membership in the Security Council. However, this initiative necessitates the support of African partners who share Germany's narrative, emphasising the need to reassess the power balance in global organisations, including the UN, to enhance their effectiveness and legitimacy. Consequently, Germany has persistently called for the inclusion of Brazil, India, Japan, and two African nations as permanent members of the UN Security Council.⁸⁵

The second crucial factor revolves around Germany's transforming mindset, exemplified by the proclamations of successive governments to move beyond the traditional donor-recipient framework and to transition from an emphasis on development and humanitarian issues to a partnership among equal parties. On the one hand, Germany acknowledges African nations as significant contributors to global challenges such as climate change, technological progress, human and social development, trade regulations, and healthcare. On the second one, however, one recurring theme in the German political narrative regarding Africa has been the assertion that African countries bear the primary responsibility for their own development, while Germany and Europe should merely offer aid and support.

Given this context, certain reservations arise regarding the reduction of the security component. (e.g. Germany's mission in Mali) as it would adversely affect the already weakened German and European potential to effectively address emerging risks that could have a detrimental impact on democracy building, the rule of law, and protecting human rights in Africa, as well as on the overlapping security and economic interests. The pre-conditions of peace and stability are of utmost significance for economic cooperation to provide a business- friendly environment attracting FDIs. Hence, the German challenge centres around the creation and adaptation to this emerging security-economic nexus.

⁸⁵ Cf. A. Ariyork, "Players and Proposals in the Security Council Debate, Global Policy Forum," 2005, accessed January 2, 2022, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/200/41204.html>; "Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the G4 countries Brazil, Germany, India and Japan – United Nations Security Council Reform, Joint Press Statement," New York, 2019, accessed January 2, 2022, <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/en/press-releases/20897-meeting-of-the-foreign-ministers-of-the-g4-countries-brazil-germany-india-and-japan-united-nations-security-council-reform-joint-press-statement-new-york-25-september-2019>.

The third conclusion concerns the novel aspects of German strategic orientation on Africa, which originate from Germany's gloomy economic prospects. By advocating for a fair economic transformation of African nations, Germany seeks to ensure its interests in the fields of renewable energy sources and raw materials. Through this, the German government has established a framework for German businesses to expand their investments in Africa, thereby serving local job markets and industrial capabilities through exports of goods and technologies. Many stakeholders advocate for the diversification of foreign markets to reduce overdependence, and suggests that a new stream of public support, exports, and investment guarantees, especially covering those in Africa, could be beneficial in seeking for de-risking from the Chinese market and achieving greater inclusion.

Ethics and consent statement

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data availability statement

No data are associated with this article.

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