Lund University
Department of Political Science

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Tutor: Fariborz Zelli

Europe's Twin Continent

Retroliberalism in EU Development Policy targeting Africa – a Narrative Study

Frederik Söndergaard

Abstract

This study analyses the constitutive power of narratives in relation to a retroliberal paradigm shift in EU development policy by focusing on blended finance targeting sub-Saharan Africa. This study builds on the claims of Mawdsley (2015) that a reconfiguration of global development policy has challenged the North ontologically, which have been accompanied with the emergence of retroliberalism. The study contends that as the EU's routine actions in development policy has been disrupted; it has also challenged the EU's *ontological security*. This has required the EU to shift its narratives on development policy, away from its purpose for atonement, towards one underscoring mutual benefit. It highlights 2015 and the migrant crisis as particularly seminal events to this shift. Through a narrative analysis, the study reveals the constitutive power of the narrative shift. It argues that the shifting of the setting of the narrative to the global stage, allowed EU to envision its own gains from development policy. Furthermore, by undermining character distinctions between Europe and Africa, it legitimised the exportation of blended finance from a European context to an African context.

Key words: Development Policy, European Union, Africa, European External Action Service, Ontological Security, Narrative, Identity

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1 Introduction

This study sets out to develop an understanding of the emergence of a retroliberal paradigm in EU development policy. Based on an assumption that actors have a need to maintain a stable sense of self, it focuses on the ontological dimensions of development policy. It argues that as routine actions of the EU have been disrupted, the EU have sought to maintain its need for a stable sense of self by shifting its narrative in development policy. This have played a constitutive role in the emergence of blended finance, a policy instrument associated with retroliberalism.

Mawdsley (2015) has described a changing relationship between North and South, as the South has come to seize a greater role in global development policy. With newfound influence on the global development agenda, the South has changed the routine actions by which the North and South interact, which have made the South a donor in its own right, while the North's old monopoly on donor identity has been lost (Mawdsley 2015). By that, a new aid regime has been introduced seeking to achieve social progress in terms of 'sustainable economic growth' and 'shared prosperity – 'retroliberalism' (Mawdsley et al. 2017 p.30)

This study extrapolates Mawdsley's claim about the reconfiguration of global development policy to better understand how it has impacted EU development policy, focusing on blended finance instruments directed towards sub-Saharan Africa. With theoretical basis in the ontological security scholarship, it identifies narratives as holding key constitutive power. The study thereby seeks to answer the following question:

Has a narrative shift played a constitutive role in the emergence of blended finance in EU development policy?

To answer such a question, firstly one must determine if a narrative shift has occurred. Therefore, the study also endeavours to answer the question *'has there been a narrative in EU development policy targeting Africa?'* before determining the constitutive powers of such a shift.

This study exclusively deals with development policy on an EU-level in an ontological dimension. It does not take account for narrative shifts in national development policies. This study neither assesses the narrativity, that is *how* narrative the texts are. The data selection is narrowed to communications from the EU's executive branches relating to the African Infrastructure Trust Fund and the External Investment Plan, as well as general strategy papers within EU external action. It is therefore not an exhaustive study of narratives in EU development policy. What this study does assert is whether a shift has happened and if and how it has impacted EU development policy.

In chapter two, one of the key arguments of this study will be made; that development policy, much like other foreign policy areas, constitutes a key routine action for global actors to maintain a sense of self. Such routines are emotionally imbued by narratives and rely on the intersubjective relationships between donors and receivers. To make such an argument, some key aspects of global and EU development policy must be introduced.

1.1 European Development Policy

McMichael (2017) described the emergence of development as a comparative constructive exercise with roots in European colonisation of the non-European world (p.26). Development in this context was about transferring European accomplishments to the colonies. This imperial intervention was legitimised on a basis that the colonies were depicted as underdeveloped and uncivilized. (ibid. p.3).

With the introduction of the United Nations and a global anti-colonialism movement, development came to be characterised as a 'project' in the mid twentieth century, and the aim of civilizing "inferior races" was abandoned. The new paradigm upheld a new idealised global order consistent of self-governing nation-states with the primary role of governing the market, yet the economic disparity between the North and South remained a key ingredient of development policy (ibid. p.4, 44).

As the paradigm shifted, and Europe had to reconsolidate after WWII, the emerging EC/EU came to play an important role for European development policy. As the moral implications of Europe's colonial misdeeds became apparent, it sought to amend them in its emerging European political system. Nicolaïdis (2015) suggests that while early attempts of this sought to incorporate the European project to also include the colonies, dubbed 'the Eurafrica project'. It was soon abandoned as anti-colonial sentiments rose (p.5-6). Instead, Europe sought atonement for its past – a reassertion of Europe in the world - in which the EC/EU played an instrumental role, as it relied on reinverting patterns of exploitation by favouring diplomatic engagement rather than coercion. This was best handled by the EC/EU as the creative use of trade policy became the preferred tool to reinvert patterns of exploitation (ibid. p.7-8).

This highlights some qualities of European development policy. As its purpose is ultimately to atone for the past, the representation of national interests is inappropriate. Instead, the typical European narrative of development depict Europe as altruistic; donating based on sympathy rather than on endogenous interests, as much of northern development policy has done (see Gallagher 2009; Brockington, 2014; Richey, 2016). But much like the early European development projects, it relies on a dichotomisation of North and South which institutes the South as poor, underdeveloped and unable to help itself, and Europe as a benevolent entity set on saving the poor. Yet, this dichotomy has been challenged.

1.1.1 A Changing World

Acharya (2017) argue that the 'myth' about the liberal world order excluded much of the second and third world, as this part of the world has developed and occupied a growing role in the global political economy, the world is becoming multiplex, represented by multiple modernities distinct from western liberal democracy. Acharya draws the parallel to this and a multiplex cinema, in which different audiences can watch different movies (Acharya 2017). Thereby is our understanding of the global order no longer dictated by one hegemonic script but is constituted by multiple narratives embodying different characters and plots. Akin to Acharya's notion, a new script is emerging on the global stage that is challenging the dichotomisation of North and South. Most notably in how the South has emerged as a player and become increasingly influential.

South donors have been active for decade, but they started to gain attention in the start 2000s, largely because of the increasing prominence of Chinese development policies in Africa (Mawdsley 2018). In 2017 China had 214 development projects in Africa totalling 1,718M USD in official financial flows[1] (Strange, et.al 2017). India, while still the largest recipient of aid, has also emerged as an increasingly important player in development (Kragelund 2008; Fuchs and Vadlamannati 2012), going from a net aid receiver to a net aid provider (Sharma 2017) and even refusing aid (Chaudhury 2018). Additionally, the South has also taken a leading role in the global development agenda by defining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Dodds, Donoghue and Roesch, 2016 p.17). With the introduction of the SDGs, development issues came to be framed as not only relevant for the underdeveloped but became applicable to the developed world as well under the frame of 'sustainable development'. The South has thereby been able to shape global development policy by introducing new norms and relationships (Mawdsley et al. 2018 p.3, Mawdsley 2017 p.110).

This have introduced a new North-South regime which Mawdsley (et al. 2018) refer to as 'retroliberal'. The goal of this aid regime is to achieve social progress under the rubrics of 'sustainable economic growth' and 'shared prosperity' (ibid. p.30). This new dimension of 'self-pursuit' in development policy is enacted in a state-corporate nexus that exports stimulus packages as an expression of shared prosperity (Apeldoorn, de Graaff, & Overbeek, 2012). Alongside these developments has been the mixing of development policy and national interests embodied in the assimilation of development agencies in centralised government bodies, such as foreign and trade ministries (Mawdsley 2015, 2018).

Southern development partners have thereby been acknowledged by contributing with resources and ideas, as well as emerging as rivals on the development stage. This constitutes a re-making of (inter)national identities and has brought about an ontological crisis for Northern donors, as their monopoly on donor identity has been challenged (Mawdsley 2015 p.340). Mawdsley argues that to

[1] Due to the lack of transparency, the nature of this flows cannot be assessed. Therefore, one should not describe these as Official Development Aid (ODA) under the DAC definition

accommodate this, there has been a narrative shift among Northern donors in the rationality behind aid, to better reflect the emerging discourse instituted by the South, that envisions aid as a 'win-win' situation with emphasis on national interests and the mutual benefits from aid partnerships (Mawdsley 2018 p.177). Within this paradigm, trade liberalisation and blended finance has become the preferred tools as they contribute to economic growth and give benefits to the participants (Mawdsley 2018 p.180-1).

1.1.2 EU Development Policy and Blended Finance

The EU has a two-dimensional role in European development policy. On one hand, it is a multilateral donor as it coordinates aid among its Member States. Notably, the majority of aid is not located at the EU-level, but among individual Member States. But the EU is also a bilateral donor, as it directly sends aid to developing countries (Carbone 2011 p.326) As funds are limited, and some Member States tie development policy to ideas of national sovereignty (ibid p.330) EU competences as a bilateral donor remain limited. Yet, one area where the EU has expanded its influence, both as a multilateral and bilateral actor, is in blended finance.

Blended finance is a policy instrument that mobilises private investments by functioning as a safety net for private investors by utilising risk-sharing mechanism and guarantees (see Pereira 2017). The name blended finance thus denotes the way in which public funds are blended with private to incentivise investments in high-risk areas usually associated with the developing world. The blending facilities draw on both the bilateral and multilateral dimensions of EU development competences as they are managed and funded by the Commission alongside the European Investment Bank, with the possibility for individual Member States to contribute as well.

Blended finance originated in EU development policy in the EU-African Partnership on Infrastructure with the establishment of the African Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF) in 2007. From this, the EU developed several blending instruments, generally referred to as the 'blending facilities' targeting different regions. Seeking to increase coherence among its blending facilities it established the External Investment Plan (EIP) in 2016. It was inspired by Juncker's European Investment Plan, which sought to boost development in Europe after the financial crises of 2008. Alongside the establishment of the EIP, the AITF was ended in 2019.

Blended finance is particularly emblematic of a retroliberal shift. It is a kind development instrument commonly utilised by non-DAC members (that is states without a membership in the OECD) (Mawdsley 2019 p.265). By using both public finances to mobilise private investments in the South, it also exhibits a state-corporate effort towards development. By generally focusing on private investments these instruments also have a particular focus on economic growth (see OECD 2018 p.27) It also exhibits the 'shared prosperity' mantra by providing benefits for both the receiver, as inflow of investments, and the donor as their financial sector can diversify their investments further.

1.1.3 Scientific Rationale

As far as what has been observed in reviewing the literature, EU studies has yet to provide an account of why blended finance has emerged as a part of the EU development policy toolkit. By providing such, this study aims to contribute to the wider literature on EU development policy and how it is formed.

Additionally, this study seeks to address some of the theoretical flaws of Mawdsley's claims as they lack any explicit casual functioning. Drawing on narrative theory and ontological security scholarship, this study devises a framework that details narratives causal power through processes of contingency in shaping development policy.

Moreover, the study seeks to account for some lacking methodological systematisms in research focusing on narratives and discourses in international politics. It does so by more rigorously dealing with operationalisation of narratives placed in literature on narrative theory.

1.1.4 Societal Rationale

This study is written in a year that will define the next decade of EU development policy. A new post-Cotonou agreement between the EU and the African, Pacific and Caribbean (ACP) countries is being negotiated. Meanwhile, the EU is internally negotiating a new Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027, hereunder a financing strategy for EU development policy. As part of this, the Commission has proposed the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) which merges all EU external action funds together, with the stated goal of 'streamlining' external action as to make the EU more fit in responding to global challenges (Immenkamp, 2020).

As the study deals with the changing relationship between the EU and Africa, it makes a timely contribution to our foundational knowledge of the EU's relationship to the developing world and thereby to our understanding of the outcomes of these negotiations.

2 Theory

This study draws on the ontological security scholarship as to provide basis for a casual understanding of the relationship between policy change and narratives. While Mawdsley acknowledges that the emergence of retroliberalism has been accompanied by a narrative shift among Northern donors, it is not explicated where the causal powers lie and how they function. The ontological security scholarship can address this problem and complement Mawdsley's claims by theorising the *constitutive* role of narratives for policy developments.

2.1 Constitutiveness and Contingency

The stated goal of this study is to determine the *constitutive* role of a narrative shift for the emergence of blended finance in EU development policy. *Constitutiveness* is a sort of non-sequential causality first proposed by Wendt (1998). While casual theorists inquire about the sequential manner in which one thing leads to another, *constitutive* inquiries are interested in the static qualities of norms, ideas and identities as they define the properties of the perceived world (Parsons p.86). This means that as actors adopt new norms, ideas and identities, so does their perception of the world change. 'Change' can therefore not be understood in a sequential sense as there is no temporal distinction between when a norm or identity is picked up and when its effect is *constituted*.

This chapter will argue that as narratives function as sense-making devices it equates them to the role of norms, identities and ideas. When a narrative is adopted, it can be understood as a moment of *contingency,* which denotes the moment that actors adopt one set of norms, ideas, and meanings over others (ibid. p.88), which limits feasible actions for the actors as they strive to maintain biographical continuity. The way then that the *constitutive* role of a changing narrative is understood, is by understanding how it predetermines which actions are possible and which are not.

Such an assertion does not exclude human agency, as actors are merely restrained by structure and not projections of it. While agency might be limited by constitutive power of narratives, it is nevertheless assumed that agency is exercised in a conscious and strategic manner within the limits of *contingency*. Hay (2002, p.129) defined strategy as "the intentional conduct oriented to the environment within which it occurs." From such an assertion, explanatory powers lie in the consciousness of agents (Marsh 2010, p.219). As such, this study rejects any notion of unconscious influence of narratives. The implications of this is that to remain theoretically consistent, the study sees *every* human action as a strategic choice.

2.2 Placing Mawdsley in Ontological Security

2.2.1 A Stable Sense of Self

While realist and liberal scholarships of international relations (IR) assume that states strive to maintain physical security through power, both military and economic, the ontological security scholarship see self-identification as foundational to state action. Drawing on psychoanalysis, Giddens devised the application of the concept of ontological security to social sciences in 1991 and has been used in IR scholarship for over a decade to explain state behaviour. The concept contrasts normal security needs, by referencing a need for a stable sense of self as a motivator for action. The basic premise is that having a sense of self, is a universal need that can eclipse material security needs (Browning & Joenniemi 2016), which gives understanding to why state behaviour sometimes appears irrational in a material sense. A key proposition is that actors act in accordance with what creates the most stable sense of self, even though it might contradict physical security needs.

Ontological security can be understood as a state of psychological well-being, wherein the need for a sense of identity and belonging is met through structures and exercise of power. Thereby, identity is not understood as a set of given, observable properties, or an essence, but instead as socially constructed, formed in relation to others (Mitzen and Larson 2017). It is not static, but an ongoing concern maintained through stable spatial and temporal emotional structures manifest in habits, routines and predictable intersubjective relations (Johansson-Nogués 2018 p.530). The scholarship tends to emphasise routines and self-narratives as imperative to one's ontological security, as they become imbued emotionally by the performer. Routines provides a stable sense of existence in the contemporary (Miten and Larson 2017 p.3-4), while narratives are the links between actions and the sense of self, used by states to legitimise action by reference to a past and future self (Steele 2008 p.10)

2.2.2 Ontological Security and Narratives

While constructivists traditionally argue that identity leads to formation of interests that in turn predicts action, the ontological security scholarship complements this assertion by contending that agency is a means of maintaining a stable sense of self.

One way that narratives can be understood is through their *constitutive* power, as they constrain feasible actions. In the ontological security scholarship narratives can be conceptualized as sense-making devices that permit the longevity of stable self-identity across time and space (Johansson-Ngoués 2018 p.532). They serve the purpose of creating a sense of being in the now, through incorporating select past

events and establishing a foundation for the future self (Wertsch 2000 p.518), or as Steele puts it, "narrative is the locus from which we as scholars can begin to grasp how self-identity constrains and enables states to pursue certain actions over others (Steele 2008 p.10)". Narratives are thus not only about who one is, but also who one wants to become and the path there. For the sake of biographical continuity, a *normative trajectory* thus is imagined, setting the boundaries of possible action (Subotic, 2016 p.614). When acting in non-accordance with this trajectory, i.e. instituted routine actions, feelings of anxiety might arise (Mitzen and Larson 2017 p.4), thereby incentivising the actions following the normative trajectory. Adopting a certain narrative in a moment of *contingency*, thus restricts future actions, which defines its *constitutive power*.

Within the scholarship, elites construct narratives in their communicative efforts. As the legitimacy of political leadership rests on their capacity to order social relations and make life intelligible (Huysmans 1998, p.243), narratives become an important tool for them. Indeed, the consensus within the scholarship appears to be that the primary way of creating a sense of being, and thus legitimising elite capture of power, both in spatial and temporal structures, is through the authoring and telling of narratives (Johansson-Nogués 2018 p.534). Given their legitimising role, elites are thus motivated to maintain narratives consistent with the actions the state pursues.

2.2.3 Ontological Security and Development Policy

It should be acknowledged that ontological security scholars tend to focus on patterns of violence and security. Yet, this has not been the exclusive endeavour of the scholarship. Infact, the literature shows much promise in explaining patterns of development policy. For example, Steele (2007) has applied ontological security to explain why strong states might give humanitarian aid to weaker without any clear material benefit with reference of a need to maintain biographical continuity. In this sense, ontological security deviates from traditional constructivism as aid is not provided as a moral imperative enforced by a discourse from an intersubjective understanding of others (see Wendt 1999), but rather as a rational pursuit of an endogenous need of the state, or as Steele would put it, "any form of rationality is itself a normative construct" (Steele 2008 p.43-44). As such, within this scholarship, development policy may be understood as a pursuit to maintain a sense of stable self. In this case, narratives can be understood as constructs imbuing development programmes, which can be understood as 'routine' actions, with meaning.

Steele (2008) argues that actions dissonant with an actor's biographic narrative might bring forth emotions of shame evoked by memories of past traumatic misdeeds that threatens a stable sense of self, for example apologising. But just as actions may produce shame, so can they be used to distance oneself to help repair ontological security (Steele 2008 p.61-2). This resonates well with Nicolaïdis assertion that EU development policy has been a means for European atonement

for colonial misdeeds, as development becomes a way to distance oneself from the past.

As Mawdsley observes the changing relationship between the North and South, she argues that the donor identity of the North is being challenged (Mawdsley 2015). Mawdsley characterises this changing relationship as having an ontological dimension, even going so far as characterising it as a 'crisis' (ibid p.340), denoting a departure from a previous identity to a more precarious, anxiety-ridden situation of unstable self-identification. As a result, Mawdsley observes changes in the routine actions among Northern donors as economic growth takes centre in their development agendas accompanied with a narrative shift (Mawdsley 2015, 2018).

Reading Mawdsley through the lens of ontological security then provides a casual understanding and direction: (1) As the South takes an increased role in the development agenda, they upset the routine actions and narratives of the North. (2) The loss of routine actions creates anxieties for the North. (3) To reinstate a stable sense of self, new routines are adopted, accompanied by a new narrative which imbue them with meaning.

While the basic premise that actors act in accordance with a need to maintain a stable sense of self, with routine actions and narratives being the main contributors is kept, this assertion deviates slightly from the general scholarship in one sense. Namely, in times of ontological instability, actors tend to seek ontological security by self-consciously engaging in actions that reinforce a sense of self and by reasserting comfortable narratives (Mitzen and Larson 2017 p.4). What Mawdsley's claim suggests is that in the overture to a new state of ontological security, the North redefine their routine actions and write new narratives to better accommodate a changing relationship on the global stage. This is the causal mechanism that this study intends to explore.

2.2.4 Elites and Narratives

So far, this study has portrayed the ontological security scholarship as quite homogenous. This is a mischaracterisation, as scholars debate over a multitude of the abovementioned aspect. Mitzen and Larson (2017 p.12) highlight the debate over the unit of analysis. Reading the previous sections, one question stands unanswered: for whom is ontological security maintained? Some scholars argue that the elites act 'above' the narratives they construct – that they are unaffected and manipulate them to suit their own interests (see Lupovici 2012, Subotic 2016, Selden and Strome 2016). This means that the constitutive effect of the narrative does not affect them themselves, but rather that elites reshape narratives to better fit their strategic needs and that ontological security is maintained for a societal level.

Other argues that elites may be constrained by their own conceptions of the "nation" [read: actors self-identification[2]] (Steele 2008 p.18-19). This means that elites themselves are subject to feelings of anxiety as routine actions are disrupted and would seek to address this when changes occur. Narratives are thus not only constructed for society, but for an individual or national level.

This study adopts the middle ground. Scholars does not always explicate their unit of analysis and there is a good reason not to do so. Ontological security can instead be understood as an assumption that when adopted, allows the analysis to acquire new knowledge of international politics (Mitzen and Larson 2017 p.12). Ontological security then could be conceptualised as a rule for effective policymaking, a sort of logic which elites abide to, regardless whether they operate within or outside of the narrative's constrains. The interest then is how much freedom elites have in constructing these narratives.

To Mawdsley, a narrative shift in the North did not occur as part of an elite strategy to promote economic growth in aid, but rather out of a necessity as the world changed. Elites are nevertheless conscious and strategic players, so within these confines, they pursue their own strategies. This happens within a political context with various interests. So simultaneously with responding to new global circumstances, the narrative shift also represents elite agency. To which degree elites do so depends on the *constitutive* power inherent in the moment of *contingency* that is, to which degree is the narrative determined by the moment of *contingency*, and how flexible is it for elites to mould the policies to meet their own interests. This means that the changing global circumstance cannot be the sole determinant for the narrative.

2.3 Analytical Framework

One of the most apparent weaknesses of the ontological security scholarship is not theoretical, but rather an inability to exploit some methodological opportunities to create more systematic research. The problem arises as scholars struggle with clearly distinguishing narratives and discourses (see Steele 2008), or just conceptualising narratives as a product of discourse (see Johansson-Nogués 2018). The following sections aims to make a clear distinction between narratives and discourses to advance the methodological practices of the scholarship further.

The epistemological position of this study can be characterized as phenomenological hermeneutic. Phenomenology traditionally concerns the human consciousness and studies the human experience (Sokolowski 2000 p.2). Hermeneutics deal with the art of interpretation. The two fields are combined in this study by conceptualising the observation of narratives as both containing phenomenological and hermeneutic elements. As conceptualised by Chatman, (1978), Ricoeur (1981) and Greimas (et al. 1982), narratives are *what is said*, meaning that narratives are simply the form the text assumes. The meaning of this text, on the other hand, is a work of discourse based on the textual elements, understood as *how it is said.* The discourse is thus the medium and context that the narrative is presented and interpreted in.

This distinction is methodologically important as Ricoeur uses it to overcome the problem of *distinctiation* – the problem that texts themselves do not hold meaning without interpretation. When a narrative is transcribed to text, it is a work of discourse which distances it from its initial meaning (Czarniawska, p.69), or in

this case the unwritten narrative existent in the social structures among EU elites. To overcome the problem of *distinctation*, Ricoeur seeks to combine phenomenology with hermeneutics in what he calls a hermeneutical arc: To Ricoeur, the identification of narratives is a phenomenological exercise, while recovering their meaning is hermeneutical. In an epistemological sense this means that narratives can be experienced consciously and a 'truth' about them can be extracted from that experience. Meanwhile, their meaning can only be extracted through interpretation and is therefore coloured by the subjectivity of the reader (ibid p.70). To put it into plain language: This means that the interpretations made in this study are made on the basis of 'real experiences' of the narrative. The limits to the scope of feasible interpretation is thereby anchored in the empirics.

Understanding narratives from a phenomenological perspective further allows for the systematic observation of these. A problem not only faced by the ontological security scholarship, but the wider interpretivist scholarship, is the lack of a well-developed methodology to allow them to engage systematically with the empirics (Wagenaar 2011 p.10). The second aim of this study is to further propel the methodology to allow for a greater systematic engagement with the material. To allow for this a more detailed conceptualisation of narratives will be developed.

Scholars of narrative policy framework have made great advancements in constructing an analytical framework that allows for the systematic engagement with narratives. While the entire framework will not be used, it does provide a great ground for understanding what constitutes a narrative. Shanahan, Jones and McBeth (2018) contends that narrative form is determined by four elements: *setting*, *characters*, *plot* and *moral of the story.* These elements all provide markers which can be operationalised and observed over time. The following sections will combine these markers with the ontological security scholarship and narrative theory to develop an analytical framework that allows for the contextualisation of these markers within a wider discourse.

2.3.1 Setting

Setting is the space where action takes place. It can be understood in two ways. Either in a simply spatial sense reflecting a geographical area, or by referencing a socio-economic-geographic-political context, for example the Wild West (ibid p.4). To the ontological security scholarship, the meaning of places is an important element of ontological security as it provides a space for routine action and which thereby grounds the narrative (Edjus 2017 p.3). Edjus argues that not only social environments, wherein narratives are constructed, but also material environments play an important role, as they become 'ontic spaces', that is, spatial extensions of collective self (ibid). The constitutive power of narratives expressed through setting is in the way it dictates where routine action should be maintained as spaces are given emotional meaning. While some scholars tie ontological security and spaces to an imagining of home as a place of belonging (see Browning 2018), extrapolating the idea of 'ontic spaces' to development policy suggests that a sense of self tied to

a specific space can be understood exported outside of home, as routine actions (maintaining development programmes) are maintained elsewhere.

2.3.2 Characters

The populous of the narrative are the characters, who can be identified as those who act or are acted upon (Shanahan, Jones & McBeth, 2018 p.4). As such, characters are intrinsically connected to the actions undertaken in the narrative. While narrative policy frameworks suggest that characters can be understood in terms of hero, victim and villain, with the hero and villain identified by acting upon the victim. Greimas (1982) thinks about characters in terms of their stability. To Greimas, narratives are processes under which actants (which is Greimas' term for character, and simply describes an entity undergoing an action) becomes an actor (which is an entity with distinct and stable character) (Greimas 1982 in Czarniawska 2004 p.80-1). Thereby, narratives connect action with actors to create a sense of stable character, or 'ontological security'.

Within this understanding, one would expect the entity authoring the narrative to assume the hero role to thereby institute ontological security. The units of interest then become which actions that make the hero a hero and the direction of these, as well as which other characters show agency in the narrative other than the central hero. By understanding which role which entity takes, one can understand which intersubjective relationships/routines are imbued with meaning by the narrative.

2.3.3 Plot

A plot is the narrative element that links characters to each other and the setting. It serves the purpose of underlining the moral of the story (Shanahan, Jones & McBeth, 2018 p.5). In its most basic form, Todorov (1971) defines a plot as a passage from one equilibrium to another, or to put it differently, it is a connection of causal mechanisms that details how A became B. Given the setting and the surrounding characters, the plot explains why certain characters act the way they do. Plots then serves as means for the author to rationalise action by contextualising it with reference to a past and future self, thereby securing ontological security in spatial and temporal dimensions. The plot is important as it underpins which values are important to the entity authoring the narrative.

2.3.4 Moral of the Story

The moral of the story is the policy action promoted and is usually embodied in the actions of the hero (Shanahan, Jones & McBeth. 2018 p.5). While the plot provides the rationale for the action, the moral of the plot is the action. States often attempt

to portray themselves in a positive manner in their narratives (Steele 2008, p.40). The moral of the story, in this sense details who the actor should become, or put differently, describes the *normative trajectory*. As the authoring identity is the hero of the plot, and as the hero is defined by its actions, the moral of the plot details what good actions are. Thereby, the moral of the story is the *constitutive* power of the narrative at force.

3 Methodology

Given the phenomenological hermeneutic position assumed by this study, the method by which the narrative is analysed is akin to a combined content and interpretive qualitative analysis. The content analysis is applied to answer the question, '*has there been a narrative shift in EU development policy targeting Africa?'* The answer will be yes if a change in the narrative elements is observed, which is answered by applying an operationalisation of each of the four narrative elements to the material.

The second question, *'has a narrative shift played a constitutive role in the emergence of blended finance in EU development policy?'* will be answered through an interpretive exercise. Drawing on Mawdsley's claims, a hermeneutical device is constructed to give the interpretation direction and transparency. Assuming a narrative has occurred, the interpretation aims at determining how the narrative change has restricted feasible actions for the EU, that is, what moral the combined narrative elements advocate.

This chapter consists of three sections. One detailing with the data selection and its strengths and limits. The second section deals with the operationalisation of the narrative elements. The third section deals with constructing a hermeneutic device.

While the material could be presented in a quantitative manner, this will not be the case. Due to lack of resources and time, it will be presented in a textual and qualitative manner. Automation, while theoretically possible, has never been applied to narrative analyses of this kind (Shanahan, Jones & McBeth 2018 p.8). While a quantitative measure would have been desirable, its omission does not affect this studies ability to answer the research questions since the inquiry does not concern quantifiable variables, such as the to which degree the narrative has shifted or how big its impact has been.

3.1 Data Selection

Given the phenomenological aspect of narrative forms, a narrative shift can be proved empirically. This requires the study to meet the criteria of validity: that it should be replicable and unaffected by subjectivity. Validity must be dealt with in two dimensions: operationalisation and selection of data (Boréus & Bergström p.40-1).

The data selection is dictated by a logic of where the narrative shift is expected to be found. Mawdsley observes the narrative shift to be accompanied by a new retroliberal paradigm in development policy. As blended finance is emblematic of this retroliberal paradigm, a narrative shift is expected to have

occurred in communications relating to this. Yet, the blending facilities target different developed regions. This study focuses on the efforts targeting the least developed part of the world: sub Saharan-Africa. This is also the region that receives most aid from the EU (European Commission, 2020), representing the majority of the EU's efforts in development. These communications are complemented by general strategy papers on development and foreign policy, as to give a more nuanced picture and provide some context for the interpretive exercise.

As noted earlier, trade policy is also a preferred tool within the retroliberal paradigm. Yet, the choice has been made not to include communications relating to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) (the EU's trade instruments with the developing world). Due to the richness of the data, a representative picture of the narratives would not have been plausible within the limits of this study if these communications were included. Blended finance is chosen over the EPAs as trade policy has been a fundamental part EU development policy from the beginning, with little change since the Cotonou-agreement in 2000. Blended finance is therefore a more expressive policy change, more representative of a retroliberal shift.

This study narrows the dataset further by exclusively focusing on elite communication from the EU's executive branches – the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The reason being that the elite plays a magisterial role in constructing narratives for the public. Given the intrinsic relationship between narratives and routine actions, narratives would be expected to be authored by those who maintain routine actions, I.e. executive branches. Furthermore, due to the agenda-setting nature of executive branches work, they would be expected to consider the narrative preferences of other elites, this includes both legislative branches as well as interest groups. The executive sphere can thus be envisioned as the EU-level's narrative nexus.

The data selections thus consist of 37 documents between 2006, when the EU introduced blended facilities in development, and 2020[2]. While these have all been analysed, it is beyond this study to represent all of them in the analysis. Some select communications will be presented. An attempt is made to make the analysis as representative as possible to the entire dataset.

Narrativity cannot be expected to be found everywhere. Texts can also assume a more technical character without containing any of the narrative elements. Therefore, some, or parts of, the texts may not showcase any narrative. This study is not aiming to determine how narrative the communications are, as it already assumes that narratives play an important role in policymaking. Yet, while technical texts do not constitute empirical material, these parts serve the purpose of contextualising the narrative elements and give directory to interpretive undertakings. They will therefore still be considered in the interpretive exercise.

[2] See annex for full list

3.2 Phenomenological Operationalisation

The operationalisation serves the purpose of constructing an analytical framework that can identify a narrative shift. It does so by focusing on the 'form' of the narrative, which is given by its setting, characters, plot and moral. The identification of which permits the distinction between narrative and non-narrative (Shanahan, Jones & McBeth p.4). Each of these elements will have to be operationalised, it does so by answering four sub-questions: 1. *Where is the problem and solution located*? 2. *Which characters show agency? 3. Why does the hero act? 4. What are the actions pursued by the EU and Africa?*

3.2.1 Setting – Where is the Problem and Solution Located?

The identifier of setting as a narrative element is a reference to where the actions takes place. In relation to EU-Africa development policy, three possible geographical settings can be deduced: Africa, including any geographical location on the continent, the EU and the global stage. Actions pursued anywhere else would be irrelevant for the policy. Given that actions of heroes/villains constitute and resolve problems respectively (ibid.), the setting is where the problem persists. Thus, the setting is identified by references to where the problems reside and where action is needed to solve them.

3.2.2 Characters - Which Characters Show Agency?

The characters of interests are presumed to be the EU (or any of its institutions) and Africa (or any actor located within it). Therefore, the character types of interests are the hero and the victim, as none of them would be expected to assume a villain role. Shanahan, Jones and McBeth (2018 p.4) suggests that characters can be operationalised by identifying verbs and sentiments. A hero would in this regard be identified as the potential fixer of the problem, while the victim would be identified as the character suffering from it. The way to discern between the characters would then be by determining if they exhibit agency or not. The hero is a character that though its actions showcase agency, while the victim is a passive character which is the target of the hero's actions.

The list of possible verb/sentiments to identify the characters by is almost endless. Therefore, a list has been devised iteratively to identify the most relevant verb/sentiments in the material. It should be noted 'support' stands out as a particularly common sentiment alongside 'need'. There are also significantly more hero identifiers than victim identifiers.

While other characters appear throughout the material, this study is only interested in the EU and Africa, alongside relating institutions or countries which

might substitute them. It will therefore not apply this operationalisation to determine the role of any characters that might appear in the narrative.

Hero sentiments/verbs (agency)	Victim sentiments/ verbs (passive)
Support, help, save, grant, give, improve, promote, provide, establish, lead, increase, address, ensure, contribute, aid, strengthen, coordinate, donate, facilitate, reduce, create, launch, include, boost, fund, focus, mobilise, give, maintain	Need, remain, require, suffer, struggle, benefit, depend

3.2.3 Plot - Why does the Hero act?

Plot is a connection of causal mechanism and is thus the reason why the hero acts by reference to the setting or other characters. Madwsley suggests that as part of the move towards retroliberalism, there has been a shift in what motivates donors away from sympathetically motivated reasons towards serving empathy and self-interest. (2018 p.177) Thus, two different plots can be discerned. One apparent altruistic plot, which refers to the interest of someone else than the actor which undertakes the action (the hero). It is sympathetically motivated as the driver is another actors suffering, it can thereby be identified by reference to passive sentiment structures another character. The self-interested plot can be observed by a reference to the interests of the actor that acts. These can further be divided into two separate plots, one detailing potential benefit and the other one referencing a passive sentiment structure of the actor that acts.

Sympathy-motivated plot	Self-interest plot
Reference to victimhood	Reference to gains for oneself Or Reference to one's own victimhood

3.2.4 Moral of the story - What are the Actions Pursued by the EU and Africa?

By answering the above questions, the answer to this one will be quite apparent as the plot serves to underscore the moral of the story. It requires firstly, that the hero can be identified. This might not be exclusive to one actor and can be a joint effort. Secondly, it requires the identification of the plot which highlights what action that has been motivated. The moral of the narrative is the expression of who the actor wants to become. This part is especially important as it is how the constitutiveness of the narrative will be understood. By identifying a change in character, plot, and setting, one identifies a moment of contingency, that is, the emergence of a new sense-making device. The implications of which is expressed in how the narrative determines future actions as actors strive to maintain biographical continuity.

3.3 The Hermeneutic Arc

Ricoeur's hermeneutic arc proposes that an interpretation should depart from the phenomenological aspects. As narratives are products constructed by conscious and strategic actors the creation of their form can be understood as deliberate action (Czarniawska p. 71), pursuing the interests of the elite within the discretion of a need for ontological security. This means that the feasibility of an interpretation can be challenged based on a phenomenological basis, as the form it takes should reflect the intentions of the author.

To guide the interpretation of the material, a hermeneutic arc will in the following sections be developed. The intention of this arc is not to 'test' the feasibility of Mawdsley's claim. Given that it is assumed that elites exercise some degree of agency, an observed narrative shift cannot be assumed to be the lone product of a reconfiguration of global development policy. Thereby, restricting the interpretation to only consider Mawdsley's claims would restrict the analysis too much. The goal is rather to provide a more consistent understanding of the narrative characteristics in the EU's communicative efforts and their *constitutive power*. This is done by deducing what narrative elements would be present to support Mawdsley's claimed narrative shift or a *status quo.* This is then compared to the phenomenological observations and the given context they appear within.

The two narrative archetypes will from now one be described as 'the old narrative' and 'the narrative shift'. Mawdsley did construct such a device herself, while not broad enough to incorporate all narrative elements, it will serve as a point of departure.

3.3.1 The Old Narrative

In a discursive sense, Mawdsley envisions the old narrative as sympathetically motivated (Mawdsley 2018 p.177). As Nicolaïdis argues, EU development policy served an atoning role for Europe's past colonial misdeeds. To serve such a purpose, the reference to one's own interests would be inappropriate as it could be interpreted as a continuation of colonialism in the 21st century, thereby evoking a traumatic past imbued with shame for Europeans. The plot of the old narrative must thus be motivated by sympathy.

Such a plot relies on some assumptions about the characters of the plot. A sympathetically motivated plot is identified by the reference to the victimhood of another character. As such, the narrative relies on a construction of the North as rich and superior contrasted to the South as poor (ibid). This predicts the direction of action going from the North that 'helps' or 'saves' the South. Thereby, the character roles would be that the EU assumes the role of a hero and Africa assumes the role of the victim.

With no reference to self-interest the problem that the hero sets out to solve must be framed in such a way that is does not affect the hero. As the narrative also would be expected to frame the South as poor, one would expect the problem, and thus where the hero needs to solve the problem, to be Africa, and to be consist with this narrative, the setting must be a poor and underdeveloped Africa.

3.3.2 The Narrative Shift

The plot of the narrative shift is suggested to have its roots in South-South empathy rather than sympathy. Instead of relying on the victimhood of another character, the motivator relies on solidarity and a reference to similarities. As the action is rooted in empathy rather than sympathy, it changes from that of a donation to a gift that is reciprocal in nature (Mawdsley p.177). Framing the situation as a 'win-win situation' explicit in the claim of mutual benefits is thus the expected plot. It should then refer to benefits for both the EU and Africa.

As the plot changes, it no longer relies on the hero-victim dichotomy between the EU and Africa. The plot is instead envisioned to maintain the dignity of both parties and rely on shared identities (ibid). It would therefore see a more diffuse character distinction between the EU and Africa, wherein both parties can assume both hero and victim roles, even simultaneously. Although, as the material consists of EU communication, it would be very unlikely to see a complete departure from an EU hero role.

If the EU is to be able to assume a victim role, then the problem that must be solved has to persist in a setting where it also can affect Europe. But since the character distinctions are expected to break down, victimhood can be held by both the EU and Africa. The setting then is either global in the sense that the problem is 'above' the actors, or transnational, in the sense the problem exists in both the Europe and Africa, although it might take different shapes.

3.3.3 The Hermeneutic Device

The old narrative	The narrative shift
Setting: Africa, poor and underdeveloped	Horizontal or vertical shift, the problem is global or transnational
Hero: Exclusive to Europe, the EU and its institutions	No longer exclusive to Europe, but still held by Europe
Victim: Africa, the poor and underdeveloped world.	No longer exclusive to the South
Plot: Sympathetically – the EU acts by motivation to African victimhood	Empathetically - motivated with reference to shared interests
Moral of the story: Aid as a donation, non-reciprocal	Aid as a gift, a 'win-win situation'

4 Analysis

4.1 2006-2016: Pre-External Investment Plan - African Infrastructure Trust Fund

In 2006, the Commission presented its first blending facility, the Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF) as part of a wider partnership between the EU and Africa. The AITF was presented joint in a communication titled on the partnership entitled "Interconnecting Africa: the EU-Africa Partnership on Infrastructure" which in turn was a part of a wider collaborative effort between the EU and the African Union. The AITF was operational from 2007 to 2018, and its communicative efforts primarily consisted of annual reports.

The below sections detail the narrative developments of the AITF between the years 2006-2017. This period excludes the last two years of operation for the AITF during which the AITF was incorporated under the EIP.

4.1.1 Partnership – Action and the extension of Character

Although this partnership requires actions from both the EU and Africa, the EU is taking a distinct lead in the narrative. While applying the operationalisation to these documents, a problem of how to understand the word 'partnership' unearthed itself. The idea of a partnership suggests some shared role in solving the present problems and shared benefits. Yet applying the operationalisation to the narrative reveals that it serves but a rhetorical purpose. One consistent problem throughout the data processing was the way the word partnership appears as both character and action in the communication. The communication portrays the partnership as an EU initiative, "based on the EU Strategy for Africa", and "is the EU's response to Africa's… Infrastructure Action Plan". It is a framework for enhancing and scaling efforts up to aid Africa (COM 2006, p.7). Thus, the EU portrays itself as taking the lead in carrying out this partnership, which is aimed at heloing Africa. In this sense, the partnership, although requiring the consent of both parties, is an EU action. But the partnership can also be understood as the hero. This can be observed in the sentiment of actions. "The partnership aims to support programmes that facilitate interconnectivity at continental and regional level." "The Partnership will also tackle service delivery issues that are essential for removing obstacles to intra- and inter-regional trade, thereby seizing the opportunities created by liberalization of services and customs reforms" (ibid.). Given that the partnership can be understood

as an EU action, it should not be understood as a shifting hero role towards Africa. Rather, it should be understood as an extension of the EU as an actor. While the partnership does see its African parties assume some decision-making power, it was initiated by the EU, and in that sense is just an expression of the EU's offish relationship to conditionality in development policy.

Part of the partnership is the AITF which the communication describes as "a collective EU response and an innovative way to co-finance along with the European Investment Bank and European and African development financing institutions". This trust fund does see some African autonomy by including representatives from the African Union in its governing bodies and by including African finance to leverage fund. Yet, the same logic applies, it is an EU action and is thus but an extension of the EU. Therefore, while analysing this material, there is made no distinction between the EU and 'the partnership' as characters.

Given the abovementioned approach, there is a clear sentiment denoting the EU's hero role in these communications. As an example, the forewords of the AITF's 2011 annual report begins:

"The ITF *provides support* by way of grants from the European Commission and EU Member States to continental or regional infrastructure projects in Sub-Saharan Africa." (AITF 2012, p.4 emphasis added)

These sentiments, although surrounded by much technical language with little or no narrativity, is consistent throughout the lifespan of the AITF. For example, a similar quote can be identified in the 2017 annual report:

"…the Fund *contributes to* reducing poverty and *helps* boost sustainable economic growth across the continent by *improving* interconnectivity between sub-Saharan African countries and *facilitating* trade and regional integration." (AITF 2018 p.6 emphasis added)

This quote comes from a paragraph that reconfirms that the AITF is a European endeavour by stating:

"Established in 2007 by the European Commission and several EU Member State, the [AITF] is an instrument of the wider EU-African Infrastructure Partnership." (ibid.)

4.1.2 Africa – Victim and Setting; suffering and struggling

Going over the material, there is a clear tendency in the sentiment structure that would identify Africa as a victim. This can be observed in two ways. Firstly, that EU agency is directed towards Africa. Note the following passages:

"The Partnership *aims to support* programmes that facilitate interconnectivity at continental and regional level." (COM 2006 p.7 emphasis added)

"The EU-AITF was created a decade ago *to promote* sustainable infrastructure investment across sub-Saharan Africa, *aiming to help* eradicate poverty and improve social and economic conditions." (AITF 2018 p.10 emphasis added)

While less prevalent, the other way that Africa can be identified as a victim is by passive sentiment structures:

"Africa *is in serious need* of infrastructure in all its facets: transport, energy, water, and telecommunications. Infrastructure plays a key role not only in promoting trade and growth but also in improving the everyday lives of African women, men and children." (AITF 2008 p.4 emphasis added)

Note the juxtaposition of European agency to African passivity in the following sentence:

"The Trust Fund is an innovative European response to the African *need* for infrastructure, which is a key element for sustainable development, economic growth and poverty reduction" (AITF 2009 p.4)

Yet, Africa's victim role is not completely clear due to some deviances. Africa can be identified both as character (the victim) and as the setting. The setting of the narrative is where the problem persists, and action is taken. Given the title of the communication "interconnecting Africa", the political and geographical setting is obvious: infrastructure in Africa. But at the same time, Africa can be identified as a character in sentiments such as 'need' or in the sense it is acted upon by the EU (as abovementioned). In this sense, Africa as a setting and a victim becomes indiscernible. Note the following passage:

"Africa *needs* an efficient transport and communications system to get its goods to national, regional and international markets. Moving goods in Africa is more difficult and costs almost twice as much as in other developing regions, especially so in landlocked countries." (COM 2006 p.3 emphasis added)

The sentiment 'needs' would identify Africa as a victim. The sentence right after details where a problem persists (the problem that goods are difficult to move) in Africa, which thus also is where action is needed, thus identifying Africa as the setting as well. Furthermore, note that this section appears under a header titled "development challenges" implying in an abstract sense that Africa is subject to those challenges which alludes to "development challenges", or more specifically underdeveloped infrastructure.

A second deviation is in the kind of victim Africa is. Rather than portraying Africa as a 'suffering' victim, the communication describes the situation as "Africa's ongoing struggle" (ibid. p.4). Struggle implies a degree of agency from Africa's side, but inability to succeed without external help as opposed to 'suffering' which does not imply that actions has been made. The communication thus references that "many African countries adopted new infrastructure policies,

leading to major institutional and financial reforms to deliver sustainable infrastructure" during the 1990s (ibid). Even going so far as stating that "[p]rogress over the past 10 years has been commendable, particularly given the fragile economy of many African countries" (ibid. p.15).

Recognising these efforts, the EU thus portrays its efforts as not the sole solution to the problems, but that only collective efforts will 'save' Africa. This pushes the narrative to adopt another kind of sentiment structure which calls for African action to help itself such as "Africa needs to invest more in infrastructure" and "Sub Saharan Africa needs to spend approximately 5% of its GDP on infrastructure investment and a further 4% on operations and maintenance…" (ibid. 5-6). European agency is then more about enabling African agency rather than just solving the problem for them.

4.1.3 European Altruism and Mobilization for Climate Action

As the EU can be identified as the hero, asking what motivates the EU to pursue the actions it takes will identify the plot. These communications are written while the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) dominated the development agenda, which is also referenced. It is stated that:

> "European and African research shows that tackling the challenges of infrastructure and the related services can effectively contribute to attaining and sustaining the 7% growth rates necessary for achieving the MDGs. The Partnership is designed to meet these challenges." (COM 2006 p.3)

This is the basic plot of the narrative. Development challenges, in this case challenges of infrastructure, upsets an equilibrium. The new equilibrium is the achieving of the MDGs with the partnership being the action that instigates that. But the causal relationship between the disruption of the initial equilibrium and the reason the EU chooses to pursue the partnership as an action is undisclosed. One could answer to achieve the MDGs, but unlike the SDGs, the MDGs are not global goals framed as benefitting everyone. They are exclusive the underdeveloped world. As such, the motivator should be understood as a reference to a need of Africa.

To thoroughly understand this, one should consider the inseparability of African victimhood and setting as it restricts the ability for the EU acknowledge the benefits of the development policy for itself. Development challenges are understood as inherent to Africa and thereby only something that Africa exclusively *struggles* with. Alleviating those thus has no benefit but to Africa. Throughout the communications there is no reference to how these measures can benefit the EU. While not directly observable in a phenomenological sense, the plot of the narrative is identified as sympathetically motivated as it consistently references African victimhood.

But over time some narrative changes can be observed. Most important of which is the introduction of climate change into development policy. By 2011, the AITF

had joined the UN-led Sustainable Energy for All initiative. While the AITF already funded energy infrastructure projects before 2011, by 2011 now climate change was added a new narrative dimension which slightly changes the narrative, particularly by changing the setting to a global level:

"During the past decade, it has become clear that climate change is a global problem, affecting and concerning all of us." (AITF 2013, p.10)

"As global warming and its effects will become one of the biggest challenges for the world in this century, it is necessary to address the world's carbon gluttony by promoting more sustainable sources of energy." (AITF 2014 p.10)

While the setting changes, primacy of EU agency and African victimhood remain:

"By funding and investing in infrastructure projects, the ITF assists and supports Africa with its adaption and mitigation efforts." (AITF 2013 p.11).

So does the portrayal of Africa as struggling rather than suffering:

"With its untapped natural resources, Africa is ideally placed to develop new technologies and renewable energy projects, while the ITF is well equipped to support capacity building and provide renewable energy and energy-efficiency technologies and assistance" (ibid.)

The global scale of climate change and the universal benefits of mitigation makes the interpretation sympathy as the sole motivator harder to justify. But while the annual reports are eager to make the point that climate change is a global problem, there is little reference to how helping Africa also benefits EU or to any sort of European victimhood. Rather, the narrative seems to perpetuate African victimhood further by referencing the vulnerability of Africa:

"In Africa, climate change may have a graver effect than any other continent according to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), while the continent itself contributes very little to global warming." (AITF 2014 p.10).

Interestingly, while it in this setting would be possible for the EU elite to legitimise the partnership by reference to the benefits that the EU can reap by mitigating climate change in Africa, they choose not to do so – why? It might be because the AITF predates any narrative changes in development policy where there is no need to reference the EU's benefits. The goal of development policy is still sympathetically motivated and serves the purpose of atoning Europe's colonial past. Interpreting it through that lens reveals that if the EU were to reference its own gains from development, which are materially indisputable in relation to climate change, it would undermine the actual purpose of EU development policy as it is inconsistent with the narrative that the elite tries to construct. By referencing its

own gains, the EU risks unearthing its own traumatic past as a coloniser in pursuit of its own fortunes, which threatens the identity the EU is trying to establish.

This assertion challenges the narratives explanatory power in a sequential sense. Reading the communication relating to the AITF, there is little evidence for a narrative shift, yet the AITF could be described as a retroliberal instrument. So, if a narrative shift occurred, the blending facilities predated it. While it cannot be claimed that blended finance emerged in EU development policy solely because of a narrative shift, it does not exclude the possibility that it has had a constitutive effect beyond the AITF. The previous sections illustrate that the EU can frame blended finance in a way where its own benefits, while existent in a material sense, are omitted.

But if that is true, then what is the purpose of shifting the setting to a global level? This is further puzzling as it also seems to call for global action

> "This is a global challenge that requires a global response." (AITF 2014 p.10)

What one might observe is a slow emergence of a changing narrative. Indeed by 2016 the AITF was incorporated under the EIP which instigated a further narrative shift.

4.2 2011-2016: Towards the European External Investment Plan

The year 2011 saw the first year of operations for the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU's diplomatic service tasked with coordinating European efforts abroad for greater coherence. Thus, following the introduction of the EEAS, the EU made attempts to increase coherence in foreign policy, including development policy. The first High Representative, Lady Ashton, came to perceive EU development policy as a part of the wider external action toolbox, even going so far as stating that it is located "in the heart of the European Union's external action" (EEAS 2010). The introduction of the EEAS thus opened a new avenue for the EU to take advantage of its development policy to pursue other policy goals.

The following sections serves a twofold purpose. Firstly, the provide context to the adoption of the EIP in 2016, by illustrating the increasingly prominent role of the EEAS in constructing narratives. Secondly, it tracks the narrative change present in the communications relating to attempts at increasing foreign policy coherence between the period of 2011 and 2016.

4.2.1 The Agenda for Change

Coherence within development policy was introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 (see Article C). In 2011, it was reiterated in the Commission

communication 'Agenda for Change' to also include an attempt at wider coherence across sectors, hereunder conflict prevention, security and migration. In relation to this the document is interesting as it is the first time in the sample that the EU references its own gains in development policy. The second paragraph states that:

"As the Treaty of Lisbon states, supporting developing countries' efforts to eradicate poverty is the primary objective of development policy and a priority for EU external action in support of EU's interest for a stable prosperous world. Development policy also helps address other global challenges and contributes to the EU 2020-strategy." (COM 2011, p.3)

As will be shown later, the terminology "EU's interest for a stable prosperous world" is emblematic of the influence of the EEAS upon development policy.

What the above quote is telling of is that the EU's reason to pursue is no longer unstated and altruistic, for the first time, the EU uses a reference to its own interests to justify spending resources on development policy. It also illustrates the two-dimensional aspect of these interests. Namely that the EU's interests are both external, in the sense that it contributes to global stability as well as internal, in the sense it contributes to the EU 2020-strategy, which was a decade-long strategy to reach a set of targets in employment, research and development, climate change and energy, education, and poverty and social exclusion in Europe.

It should be noted that the quote references the Treaty of Lisbon. Thereby, one could argue that introduction of EU interests in development policy is not an ontological matter, but rather legal. Yet, this reference to the treaty is itself a legal interpretation and subject to the strategic will of elites. While this study has no basis to make a legal argument, the equation between eradicating poverty and promoting a stable prosperous world should be understood as an idea with its own *constitutive power*.

The communication continues with two interesting assertions. Firstly, by asserting "that the objectives of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security are intertwined" (ibid.). Thereby, not only promoting greater policy coherence within development policy, but also a new policy nexus between development and security. Secondly, it recognizes "the increased differentiation between developing countries. "Recently, several partner countries have become donors in their own right, while others are facing increasing fragility. The EU must now explore new ways of working with them…" (ibid.). In relation to this, it asserts that "[t]here is also scope for the EU to work more closely with the private sector…" (ibid.) and goes on to call for the further development of the blending mechanism for development, as a new way of engaging with the private sector (ibid. p.8).

This lends support to Mawdsley's claim that as new actors emerge on the global development policy stage, traditional donors, in this case the EU, has shifted their approach. By reference to the emergence of the South and the private sector as increasingly important players on the development stage, the Commission in this communication calls for a new approach to development, hereunder the development of blended finance. This means that the EU perceives a changing world and reacts accordingly. Yet this should not be overstated. Firstly, it does not

reflect a change in routine actions from the EU, it is rather just an acknowledgement of these changes. Secondly, the communication contains few narrative elements, barely referencing other actors but itself, and when it does so, it is combined with sentiments that we would identify the EU as a hero:

"The EU has already done much to help reduce poverty…" (ibid. p.3)

"The EU should support the decent work agenda…" (ibid. p.8).

Meanwhile, while the benefits of development policy may be global, this argument should not be confused with a change in the narrative setting as there is no reference to where the problems persists. As such, there is little evidence for a narrative shift, and thereby any real effect of this changing perceptive in the Agenda for Change.

4.2.2 A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries

Following the recognition of the increasing role of the private sector in development, the Commission published a communication on 'A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries' in 2014. Again, the narrativity of this document is limited. Yet it does emphasise EU agency in the development arena, which can be observed in sentiments:

"[The EU's] [p]rogrammes and partnerships have to be designed in ways that contribute to poverty reduction…" (COM 2014 p.4)

The communication does portray some victimhood, but it is not directed towards Africa or any global actors. Rather, it is directed towards the inhabitants of 'developing economies'.

"An estimated 60 to 80 per cent of enterprises in developing economies are informal firms." (ibid. p.8)

"Lack of access to capital and appropriate financial services is a major constraint in particular on the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises." (ibid.)

The second quote also asserts one of the problems described in this communication – that of lack of access to finance. This is a more well-defined problem than "challenges of development" or "challenges of infrastructure" which the AITF seeks to deal with. Both quotes also pertain that the setting is the developing world, which is characterised as being underdeveloped lacking the proper development of its financial infrastructure. In relation to this the Commission proposes EU blending as the solution, or moral of the story.

"Blending EU grants with other sources of development finance has already proved to be a successful way to increase access to finance…" (ibid. p.9).

The communication is an echo of the Agenda for Change in the sense that it promotes an expansion on the EU's use of blended finance instruments in developing countries. Yet, it does not reflect how the EU might benefit from this. Thus, the commission seems mostly to continue its old narrative parallel with that of the AITF. Blended finance is again related to a narrative that portrays the EU as a hero and Africa (the developing world in this case) as a victim. Furthermore, the setting remains the same.

The communication not only mirrors earlier narrative elements. It also reconfirms a mixing of climate action and development in its opening paragraph: "And through innovation and investment in low-carbon and resource-efficient solutions, it will have a major role to play in the transformation towards an inclusive green economy." (ibid. p.2). Yet again, there is no mentioning of how this benefits the EU.

What is important to note about this document is that the Commission had by 2014 proposed an expansion of its blending instruments with little regard for the changing global context described in the 2011 Agenda for Change. Yet, the EU were about to enter a tumultuous year.

4.2.3 The EEAS's Lead on the Narrative

In 2016 the EEAS released the EU 'Global Strategy for European Foreign and Security Policy', in which the assertion of an increasingly pluralistic world continues. The publishing of the strategy was dragged out until two years after Mogherini took office as the High Representative. This was due to two reasons. Firstly, the strategy was released after a tumultuous year for Europe. 2015 was marked by both the migration crisis, followed by increased support for Eurosceptic parties. Europe also underwent a number of terrorist attacks and the UK voted to leave the Union. Secondly, the strategy was an attempt to facilitate a common narrative on EU foreign policy, therefore, the EEAS went to great lengths to include consultations with the public, Member States and other EU institutions while drafting the strategy (Tocci, 2016). As Mälksoo (2016) has argued, the strategy served the purpose of narrating the EU as a more prominent external actors as a response to increasing anxiousness to prove its own relevance. Indeed, Mogherini's forewords frames the strategy up against the increasingly unstable wider region and the Brexit vote: "As these crises has come to affect its citizens' life, the Strategy aims to "deliver on our citizens' needs and make our partnerships work…" through uniting European external action. Due to the traumatic events that Europe underwent in 2015, there was a call for increasing collective action on the EU-level. The assertion is thus that the EU must act externally in order to meet its citizens' needs. Adding onto the changing perception of the world embodied in the Agenda

for Change, this strategy asserts that this world is also increasingly hostile, and that the EU thus must act more coherently.

One significant change compared to previous communications is the presence of the term "resilience". Wagner and Anholt (2016) argued that the shift towards using resilience was a compromise between liberal peacebuilding and the less ambitious alternative of 'stability'. Indeed, it is the idea of resilience that links the Europeans' interests to Africa. This is evident in the following quote:

"It is in the interests of our citizens to invest in the resilience of states and societies to the east stretching into Central Asia, and to the south down to Central Africa". (EEAS 2016 p.23).

It goes on to clarify what this entails for the developing world:

"States are resilient when societies feel they are becoming better off and have hope in the future. Echoing the Sustainable Development Goals, the EU will adopt a joined-up approach to its humanitarian, development, migration, trade, investment, infrastructure, health and research policies, as well as improve coherence between the EU and its Member States." (ibid. p.26)

Thus, the message from the Agenda for Change is echoed in the strategy. That the EU itself can benefit from promoting development in the developing world. One of the ways which this can be achieved, it is argued, is through the use of development funds that "catalyse strategic investments through public-private partnerships, driving sustainable growth, job creation and skills and technological transfers" (ibid.). With public-private partnerships being a reference to the blending facilities (among other instruments). Notably, there is an expansion of the policy set to include migration. Following these sections, the strategy goes on to describe a more effective migration policy, as a special focus in the work on resilience. In relation to this, there is an important quote to note:

"Through development, trust funds… we will work with countries of origin to address and prevent the root causes of displacement, manage migration, and fight trans-border crime." (ibid. p.27).

It was noted earlier that the EEAS recognised development policy as an essential part of the EU's toolbox in external action. Following the migration crisis, the EEAS came to perceive, through an idea that migrants fled because of the lack of economic opportunity, that development could be a tool to reach its goals on this issue. This leads the strategy to adopt some extravagant rhetoric on Africa:

"Finally, we will invest in African peace and development as an investment in our own security and prosperity… We must enhance our efforts to stimulate growth and jobs in Africa… We will build stronger links between our trade, development and security policies in Africa, and blend development efforts with work on migration, health education, energy and climate, science and technology, notably to improve food security. (ibid. p.36).

As referenced under section 4.2.1., the terminology that the EU has an interest in a stable and prosperous world noted as particularly emblematic of the EEAS. It refers to a mixture of development policy, a field that is mostly economical, with security policy, a field with high politicisation. This notion was promoted by renowned scholar and former World Bank employee, Paul Collier, in his book 'The Bottom Billion'. The assertion is that countries are trapped in poor development by internal instability, which in turn is fuelled by lack of prosperity - 'the conflict trap' As such, Collier promotes a mixture of the economics expert-field of development with politics, hereunder using military intervention, trade policy and increasing coordination by 'elevating' the object of development above a 'development ministry' and it very much seems that the EEAS has adopted Collier's perspective to promote an expansion of its own competences (cf. Merket, 2012). This gives rise to a certain understanding of the problem among EU officials and offers a logical reasoning to the EEAS to push for further policy coherence between security and development. From Collier's understanding, it is logical to shift a focus on economic development as a means to meet the internal needs of the EU, in particular a need not to re-experience the events of the 2015 refugee crisis. This underpins the plot of the narrative under which blended finance instruments, aimed at infrastructure and job creation thus becomes preferred tools, alongside trade expansion, in EU development policy, as they serve the larger interests of the EU in the world and greater EU coherence.

To accommodate the changing paradigm on development, the narrative changes accordingly. There is a clear change in setting, as there no longer only is a reference to the benefits of development policy, but a recognition of the global ramifications of a lack of it, most notably in relation to migration. While migration may be prevented by expanding job opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa, there is also a call for action in transition countries and in the EU to in a more humane way manage the flow of people. The problem, and its solutions thus exists on a global scale.

The predecessor to the Global Strategy was the European Security Strategy from 2003. In a reference to the inclusion of the word 'global' Mogherini states.

> ""Global" is not just intended in a geographical sense: it also refers to the wide array of policies and instruments the Strategy promotes." (ibid. p.4)

With a reference to the shift in the setting, Mogherini thus also promotes the increased coherence between EU policies. The logic is thus, as problems are perceived on a global level, rather as isolated incidents in Africa as previous narratives have, there is something to gain from coordinating external action. Especially in the increasing instability of the world. The moral of the strategy thus that increased coherence in external action will solve the problems that the EU faces. This is not only a shift in action, but the goal of development policy. Now development policy serves the EU's other interests. This means that the narrative is less compatible with the atonement purpose suggested by Nicolaïdis as it no longer pertains an image of an altruistically motivated EU. Therefore, the plot changes as the EU is no longer motivated by sympathy. Instead, it seems not that the EU is

motivated by what it could gain from its increased coherence. Rather it references its own citizens' victimhood:

> "This Global Strategy will guide us in our daily work towards a Union that truly meets its citizens' needs, hopes and aspirations…" (ibid. p.4)

The focus on its own citizens could be interpreted as a move towards a narrative of a security union, that is a vision of the EU with a responsibility usually associated with nation states, that of protecting its citizens. As argued, anxieties over the failure to protect its citizens evident in the migrant crisis and terrorist attacks of 2015, drove the EEAS to expand its competences and adopt a new perspective on development. Complementary to this was a repurposing of foreign policy instruments to serve its own citizens' (security) needs.

This does although not mean that it has entirely abandoned the victimhood of Africa. The strategy refers to emerging conflict on the continent and slow economic growth in relation to demographic changes (ibid. p.3, 34). Although, this passage seems more to serve the purpose of setting the scene rather to better fit a Collierian view on development.

Meanwhile, there is no reference to direct African agency. Although, the inclusion of resilience can be interpreted as a move in this direction as it shifts the attention to the role of local resources and practices (Wagner and Anholt 2016), there are no sentiment structures which would identify African agency.

The Global Strategy accommodates some of the first major narrative changes and thereby also illustrates the relationship between *contingency* and narratives. It shows how these narrative changes occur at a seminal time for EU foreign policy, wherein the perspective on the world changes. In these new circumstances, where the previous routines of foreign policy have failed, the EU reinvent itself to better deal with the traumas from 2015, by positioning itself as a more prominent global actor. As the EU adopts new routines for self-identification, it simultaneously changes the narrative to accommodate them within a new normative trajectory. The setting is therefore global, rather than local, to better cover the breath of the EU's potential foreign policy instruments. The victim of the narrative is its own citizens rather than itself or Africa to better fit a prioritisation of security in foreign policy, which also repositions the EU as a hero in relation to its own citizens simultaneously with the as it maintains its hero sentiments towards Africa.

As this is a strategy, the EU was yet to act accordingly to it. This is therefore not an expression of the narratives *constitutive powers* for EU development policy. The following sections on the EIP aim to illustrate how the EU establish new routine actions to come full circle with its new narration post Global Strategy to illustrate the *constitutiveness* of the narrative.

4.3 2016-2020: The External Investment Plan

The immediate effects of the Global Strategy were evident in the EIP. One proposed measure of the Strategy was limiting redundancy by focusing on quality rather than quantity in foreign policy instruments. The EIP is a good example of this in practice. It served the purpose of increasing coherence among the EU's blending facilities, even going so far as assimilating the AITF in 2018.

Furthermore, in June 2016, the European Council adopted a Commission proposal on a new Partnership Framework for Third Countries given the goal of addressing migration challenges a central role to partnerships (COM 2016(385), whereunder much of blended finance is located.

4.3.1 2016: Shared Ailments, Shared Medicine

The EIP was initially announced during President of the Commission Juncker's 2016 State of the Union speech. This is significant as Juncker brings a somewhat obscure policy instrument, like blended finance, into the public attention by referencing some of the key tenants of the Global Strategy.

> "This [an ambitious investment plan for Africa and the neighbourhood] will complement our development aid and help address one of the root causes of migration. With economic growth in developing countries at its lowest level since 2003, this is crucial. The new plan will offer lifelines for those who would otherwise be pushed to take dangerous journeys in search of a better life." (State of the Union 2016 p.15)

Juncker thus reaffirms some aspects from the Global Strategy. Firstly, that development aid is a tool that serves the EU's interests by referencing the 'root causes of migration' mantra introduced in the global strategy. Secondly, it also echoes the Collierian notion that politics and development goes hand in hand.

Beyond reaffirming, the statement also expands on the EU's strategy towards dealing with migration by narrowing the focus towards economic growth and job creation. By enforcing a narrative whereby lacking economic prospects for the population of the developing world is the main driver that leads to migratory flows, it narrows the available options to a degree that renders the EU's blending facilities most preferential. Exploring these narrative elements can thereby contribute to an understanding of the constitutive effect of the narrative shift.

One key aspect to consider is the context that the above quote is presented in. It is not part of a section on foreign policy. Instead it is presented after a section on the Investment Plan for Europe (also called the Juncker plan) and before a section on job creation for youths. The speech even goes so far as contrasting the internal investment plan with the external:

"The logic is the same that worked well for the internal investment plan: we will be using public funding as a guarantee to attract public and private investment to create real jobs." (ibid.)

In relation to internal youth unemployment, Juncker connects the sections by stating:

"As much as we invest in improving conditions abroad, we also need to invest in responding to humanitarian crises back home. And, more than anything, we need to invest in our young people."

In this narrative that Juncker constructs, the EU's and Africa's ailments, as well as medicine, are the same. What can be observed in this and relating communications is a shared European and African victimhood. As much as Africa is suffering from lack of economic prospects, the EU is undergoing a 'humanitarian crises' in relation to unemployment back home as well. Interestingly, the victim roles that the EU and Africa portray are different from those of the Global Strategy in the sense that they are not distinct from each other, but rather the same.

In September of 2016, the Commission released a combined communication on a phase two of the Investment Plan for Europe alongside the EIP, entitled 'Strengthening European Investments for jobs and growth: Towards a second phase of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and a new European External Investment Plan'. In this narrative, the Commission further expands on the narrative elements that can be observed in Juncker's speech. Note the following passages:

"Smart and sustainable investment is required to boost jobs and growth, both in Europe and globally." (COM 2016(581) p.1)

"Outside the EU, this new approach [the investment plan for Europe] will also be useful to address the multiple challenges both in the EU Neighbourhood and in Africa." (ibid.)

These quotes echo much of what Juncker expressed in his speech. Europe and Africa both have a need for jobs and growth and the solution for both continents are much the same. But it is not only in economic factors that Europe and Africa share victimhood. This communication adds a new as migration challenges also are seen as a shared challenge:

"The combination of high numbers of displaced people and weak economic prospects is a shared challenge for the Union and its partner countries." (ibid. p.7)

There thus seem to be a clear change in the narrative's victimhood in 2016. As for how these narrative shifts should be interpreted. One should think about the curious detail that the Commission elected to combine the Strategic Investment Plan with the EIP. It is odd, since one of them is an internal instrument, while the other is an external instrument. The reason to do this, might have been to make the instruments mutually legitimising.

Juncker might have had his own personal stakes in this narrative shift, as it works as a way for him to legitimise his self-titled investment plan by repurposing it for the developing world. But in as much as that may be true, it serves the purpose of legitimising a shift towards *retroliberalism* in the development agenda. By breaking down the distinct victim roles of EU and Africa, Juncker also undermines the specific structural needs of Africa by instead focusing on similarities. As the EU and Africa share a similar narrative of suffering, the narrative trajectory is narrowed and thus also further specifies the moral of the story. Now, development policy comes more to resemble stimulus packages as a new logic emerges: Because European unemployment was addressed through blended finance, and because there is no difference between African and European victimhood, a focus on economic growth and job creation through blended finance must also work for Africa.

What thus can be observed is the constitutive power of a narrative shift. In a moment of contingency, the EU adopted a new understanding of the world and its role in it, expressed in the changing setting of the narrative present in the Global Strategy. By changing the setting to the global level, problems might be understood as transnational, rather than exclusive to the developing world and as they do so, distinct victimhood can be broken down. Then, 'logic' dictates that for the same ailments, the same medicine must be prescribed.

But to maintain its ontological security, the EU must establish new routine actions with other actors. While EU victimhood merges with African, agency is maintained as an exclusive feature of the EU both in the communication and in Juncker's speech. Note the following section:

> "This new targeted approach [The External Investment Plan] will help support sustainable development in partner countries, which in turn will become the growth markets of the future. It will also provide opportunities for private enterprises through trade and investment, including from Europe, thus also supporting European Economic Diplomacy and contributing to European economic growth." (ibid p.8)

This section identifies the EU as a hero in the first sentence both in the sentiment and its direction towards partner countries (including sub-Saharan Africa). So, distinctiveness from Africa is maintained through the exclusivity of EU agency. But it is not necessarily an entirely heroic EU that is portrayed as the latter part of the quote reveal, there is something for the EU to gain as well. It seems as if the EU has moved beyond the atoning purpose of the narrative on development policy, and has as become more comfortable with speaking of its own gains, both in terms of avoiding a new migrant crisis, as a respond to the traumatic experiences of 2015, and as pure economic gains, something that beforehand might have evoked traumatic experiences of colonial misdeeds. Thereby, blended finance is increasingly positioning itself to become a routine action to the south taking more space in EU development policy. The following years would see just that.

4.3.2 2016-2018: Acting on the Global Strategy

2016-2018 was big years for blended finance in the EU. It saw the establishment of the EIP and the adoption of the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), the investment arm of the EIP. It also saw the beginning of the negotiations for the next Multiannual Investment Framework, whereunder the Neighbourhood, development and international cooperation instrument (NDICI) was proposed, which will set the course for the EU development policy between 2021-2027. It was proposed to better streamline EU external action, enable more flexibility and gives blending a central role, hereunder by expanding the EFSD.

Juncker would continue to reference the blending facilities in his state of the union speeches and undermine African-European character distinctions. In 2018 Africa took an even bigger role in Juncker's rhetoric. Following a section on migration, Juncker sets the scene for his section on a renewed EU-AU partnership, which the EIP would function under, by calling Africa '*Europe's Twin Continent*' (State of the Union 2018 p.8). Following this, Juncker again confirms the shared victimhood of Europe and Africa:

> "Africa does not need charity, it needs true and fair partnerships. And Europe needs this partnership just as much." (ibid.)

It is in relation to this partnership that African agency for the first time can be observed in the narrative. In a relating factsheet on the new partnership released with the speech, Juncker is quoted from his 2017 address at the AU-EU summit in Abidjan.

> "What happens in Africa matters for Europe, and what happens in Europe matters for Africa. Our partnership is an investment in our shared future. It is a partnership of equals in which we support each other, help each other to prosper and make the world a safer, more stable and more sustainable place to live." (COM 2018).

This rhetoric stands out especially in relation to what was observed in the previous partnership. In this narrative, the partnership is not an EU initiative, but more clearly defined as a shared endeavour. Also, the sentiments, "support each other" and "help each other" denotes both victimhood and heroism for both parties as the direction of the agency is directed towards each other. This contrast the rhetoric from just a year before where it was the EU's actions that would solve their mutual problems. This means, that the way that the term 'partnership' should be understood in the narrative post-2017 is as a joint action, and not only an extrapolation of European character. When Juncker then says that 'Africa needs true and fair partnerships', he is actually calling for action from both Africa and Europe.

Alongside the 2018 speech, the Commission released the 'Communication on a new Africa – Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs', which further details what the partnership will entail. One interesting development which can be noted in this communication is the way Europe and Africa appear to occupy the

same subject/object positionings in the syntax in the beginning of the communication, where it aims to describe the goals of the partnership:

"Europe and Africa have much to gain from increased economic and political ties." (COM 2018 p.1)

"It is an economic strategy that puts the respective strengths of Europe and Africa to work, taking the ambition of the External Investment Plan to the next level." (ibid)

On one hand, this can be perceived as an expression of a continuation of Juncker's attempts to undermine character distinctions in the narrative. Building on that, it also further emphasises the abovementioned point that the partnership in this new narrative context is a shared endeavour. What then can be observed for the first time is an expression of African agency.

With two characters now both occupying victim and hero roles, the plot changes to accommodate these. With agency comes the need for a motivation, therefore, "addressing root causes of irregular migration" now references "a shared responsibility for" (ibid p,2). But since there are no immediate perceivable benefits for the African economies to stop migration to Europe, as there is for Europe, the motivator is a sense of responsibility, essentially a empathetically motivated plot, which is distinct from what appears to drive EU to act post-Global Strategy.

Yet, while these elements represent some narrative changes, they seem to coexist with some of the old narrative elements found in the communication relating to the AITF. For one, while the communication starts out by stating that "[i]n a rapidly changing global landscape, Europe and Africa have much to gain from increased economic and political ties". It also depicts Africa as a setting where problems persist, and solutions must be pursued:

"The Alliance is about unlocking private investment and exploring the huge opportunities that can yield benefits for African and European economies alike, with a specific focus on jobs or youth, responding also to Africa's demographic patterns". (ibid. p.1)

"Demographic projections for Africa make it clear that it is also necessary to generate millions of new jobs, especially for youth entering the labour market." (ibid p.3)

Along the new EU interest in using development policy as a tool for addressing migration, the problem is Africa's changing demographic with the solution being investments and job creation in Africa. The specific reference to African demographic is something that, given the context, would evoke strong emotions in Europeans as it brings back the memories of the 2015 migration crisis. Juncker also references these changes in his 2018 speech:

"Africa is the future: By 2050, Africa's population will number 2.5 billion. One in four people on earth will be African." (State of the Union 2018 p.8)

It should be noted that Juncker tries to give this statement a positive spin by beginning it with "Africa is the future". But this is logical given the goals of the partnership to attract investments as it might be an attempt to paint a picture of Africa as a continent with good financial prospects. But in as much as it does so, the setting in this case is the telling of an EU of the past, that did not manage the migrant crisis well. Therefore, while this is not an expression of a narrative shift, it is consistent with the EU's newly adopted understanding of the world as it reaffirms why the EU should act.

Other parts of the communication go on to connect the problem and the solution:

"The private sector holds the largest potential for generating jobs and growth and it is therefore essential to boost responsible private – domestic and foreign – investments in Africa." (COM 2018. p.2)

As for character identifiers, at times, the communication seems to showcase the old narrative. As for education the following sentences should be highlighted:

"Between 2014 and 2020, the EU is supporting bilateral education programmes in Africa with approximately EUR 1.34 Billion." (ibid p.6)

"... the EU is massively supporting economic development programmes aimed at addressing skills gaps at improving employability through vocational training, and at supporting job creation and self-employment opportunities." (ibid.)

Here, the EU can be identified as a hero by the identifier 'supporting' while Africa in a broad sense can be identified as a victim by the direction of this sentiment. As for the section specific on blended finance this sentence can be highlighted:

"Support to Africa to crowd in investments will be further boosted by using increasingly substantial amount via blending and guarantees in order to leverage resources from capital markets with international, European and national financial institutions, to de-risk investments and to facilitate access to finance." (ibid p.3)

The section then clarifies that 'the support' is an EU action. So, even though the both Juncker and the communication tries to in some regards build African agency, it is not representative for the entire communication. Instead, the old narrative can also be identified at times in this communication as EU agency and African victimhood is contrasted within sentence structures. There is although a point in considering where the different elements appear.

Although, while the old narrative is present, the point could be made that it appears in significantly less important parts of the EU's communicative efforts, that is not in Juncker State of the Union speech and not the introduction of the communication where much of the more expressive rhetoric is found. Thereby, while the narratives co-exist in the text, the narrative shift seems to be pushed more into public consciousness than the old seems to be.

4.3.3 Back to Routine

Looking at the communicative efforts that the EIP has produced gives a more varied picture of the narrative shift that has been observed so far. Reading through the brochure entitled "Your Guide to the EU External Investment Plan", indicates a move back to the old narrative. For one, the setting is again the developing world, while the distinct focus on migration is maintained. The previous introductions of EU victimhood and African agency are also omitted. This is evident in the following sections:

> "The EIP will also address specific socioeconomic root causes of migration, including irregular migration, and contribute to the sustainable reintegration of migrants returning to their countries of origin and to the strengthening of transit and host communities." (Secretariat of the External Investment Plan, 2017 p.1)

> "This demand for jobs is a big challenge for the African continent but also offers huge opportunities as those entering the labour force are more educated and skilled than ever before." (ibid p.2)

Interestingly, while the Global Strategy depicted problems of increased instability to persist on a global level. These communicative efforts instead portray these problems to be inherent to the targeted countries while maintaining blended finance as the solution:

> "Instability and conflicts in Africa and the EU Neighbourhood have been aggravated by the global economic crisis, reducing access to finance for much needed investment. Instability and conflict have also exacerbated the ongoing migration crisis with more people than ever on the move in Africa and in the Neighbourhood." (Secretariat of the External Investment Plan N.D.)

Not only does this quote reposition the problem to the target countries. It also omits the EU motivations, thereby portraying the EU as sympathetically motivated once more. A way to understand this would be to regard which parts of the policy-making cycle in which the communication appears.

Evidence for a narrative shift have been identified in what could be described as agenda-setting communicative efforts, that is, any communication that pre-goes decision-making. The communicative efforts produced by the EIP are post decision-making, as the EIP and the EFSD has been adopted and established. These communications are thus written in an implementing context. This distinction helps one to better understand the function and underlying drivers of narrative changes. As the shift only is observed in the agenda-setting communicative efforts, this suggests that they are devised by the Commission to gather support among the Member States. While the communications relating to implementation are devised to engage with the most immediate stakeholders - it being private investors and Civil society.

To put it into the terminology of ontological security scholars, Mitzen and Larson (2017 p.18-19) has suggested that one might think about ontological security in terms of discursive and practical consciousness. Discursive consciousness focuses on the way elite's role in construct narratives, either as a means to shape policy, or themselves to avoid feelings of shame. On practical consciousness, they quotes Giddens: "On a day-to-day basis identity is not 'held in mind'; actors concentrate on the 'task at hand' and the need to stabilize one's ends is cognitively set aside (Giddens 1991, p. 36). They thereby suggest that ontological security (read: narratives) are attached to routine actions so profoundly that one will not see it play out in everyday life (ibid.). It is thereby only in seminal times, such as 2015, where the EU found itself in a need to find a place in a radically new world. In routine actions, elites might then think less about their and the EU's place in the world, as they use their routine actions to distance themselves.

But this explanation is not entirely satisfactory. Narratives seem to be present throughout most of the EU's communicative efforts and serves an important role of making sense of the reasoning behind the EU's actions in relation their self-identity. But what dictates which narrative elites elect to use in communicative efforts relating to implementation, and why does the EIP seem to default to the old narrative? This study is unable to answer these questions, but it can suggest some possible explanations:

One possible explanation is that elites deliberately think about the audience of their texts. Documents such as the Global Strategy and Juncker's State of the Union Speeches are more likely to be read by the public than a factsheet on the EIP. Such documents might instead be scrutinized by immediate stakeholders such as investors, civil society and experts. Mawdsley (2017 p.178) noted that NGO's has resisted the narrative shift accompanied with the retroliberal shift, and preferred a discourse pertaining that development aid is given by needs for the South. Suggestively, elites might be less inclined to apply the narrative shift to these communications, as it will spark criticism from NGO's, but will need to do so to gather real political decision-making power in other phases of policymaking.

A second possible explanation, which is less consistent with this study, is that elites might not always be as conscious about these choices assumed theretofore. The idea then is that narratives are imbedded in the unconsciousness of elites through discourse which they act on unconsciously (Mitzen and Larson 2017 p.12 see Cash 2004). Yet, such a notion is inconsistent with both the agency perspective of this study as well as it phenomenological approach as it pertain that agents does not act deliberately. An assessment of an interpretation's feasibility based on phenomenological experiences would therefore not be consistent with such an assumption.

It is up to further research to determine which of these explanations is most viable. To this end, ontological security scholarship must continue the endeavours of this study, by expanding upon its methodological approaches that can incorporate a larger variance of factors. Most importantly, the scholarship must device more prudent approaches to data selection in order to engage with the material in terms of audiences and determine whether explanatory powers rest on discursive or practical, conscious or unconscious levels.

4.4 The 2020's: a Retroliberal Decade?

As means to contextualize this study in the present and give it further societal value, this section will discuss the joint communication of the Commission and the EEAS: 'Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa', released in March 2020. Much as 2015 was a seminal year for EU development policy, so will 2020 be. Alongside unprecedented global instability in this century, this year the EU will decide on the next Multiannual Framework and sign a new post-Cotonou agreement with the ACP, both of which will shape EU development policy for the next decade.

Applying the methodological framework once more, the strategy reveals some interesting narrative particularities. Firstly, this communication features African agency in the shape of syntax-pairings with the EU:

"The EU and Africa can work together to seize the opportunities and address these challenges and develop actions that ensure stability, peace, security, human rights..." (JOIN 2020 p.1)

In this communication, individual victimhood is generally absent in the sense that the characters are suffering from something with some few exceptions. For the EU it can be observed once in relation to migration:

"Migration also represent challenges and opportunities for EU Member States" (ibid p.13).

African victimhood is somewhat more present, but restricted to the introduction and sections on climate change:

"Thirty-six of the world's most fragile countries are in Africa, often weakened by conflicts" (ibid p.1)

"African countries are particularly vulnerable to climate change as it risks jeopardizing ongoing progress on sustainable development." (ibid p.2)

But while individual victimhood is absent, a need for joint EU-African action is referenced extensively, also in joint syntax-pairings:

"This reliable, long-term, multi-faceted partnership should now also translate into a strong political alliance. Stronger political, economic and cultural ties between Europe and Africa are crucial in a multipolar world where collective action is sorely needed." (ibid.)

"To address such challenges (migration in African and across the Mediterranean) Africa and the EU need a balanced, coherent and comprehensive approach to migration and mobility, guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility and based on the respect for human rights and international law." (ibid p.14)

The setting is somewhat unclear. While the problems are portrayed as persisting in Africa, and sometimes in Europe (see quote above), the solutions proposed, such as increased join-action are not situated in a certain space. Sometimes the communication references shared sectors or policy areas, but rarely the continents or any global level.

Yet, what seems most important in this communication is the plot. For both Africa and the EU, what drives them are interests, not ethics. The partnership this strategy envisions, should benefit both continents with "a clear understanding of... mutual interest and responsibilities, reflection the comprehensiveness and maturity of [the] relationship" (ibid p.1).

Building upon this, the strategy describes the future and potential of Africa in great lengths:

"Africa's young people have the potential to transform their continent's political, economic and social prospects..." (ibid.)

"The continent's (Africa's) economic expansion has the potential to accelerate and drive broader social and human development with new opportunities arising from the digital transformation, the demographic dividend, low-cost renewable energy, the green transition and a low-carbon, blue and circular economy" (ibid.)

"With its huge renewable energy and biodiversity potential, Africa is extremely well placed to develop and implement sustainable solutions as its economy grows." (ibid p.6)

What is observed is not only a continuation of the break-down of character distinctions under the von der Leyen Commission, but also a framing of Africa as a new growth market:

"Africa has been recording steady economic growth. In 2018, six of the then fastest growing economies in the world were African" (ibid p.1)

Going into the next decade, with references to mutual benefits, especially in economic terminology and the framing of Africa as a potential growth market, the von der Leyen Commission is representing the discourse of retroliberalism stronger than ever before. This is the contemporary narrative that the EU is going into two seminal negotiations with. While it is impossible to predict the future, it is indicative that retroliberalism will play an important part for these negotiations and that development policy increasingly will take the shape of a gift, rather than a donation. Thus, the Commission and EEAS is headed towards a cementation of retroliberalism as a foundational aspect of EU development policy for the next decade.

5 Conclusion

The following section serves the purpose of summarising the analysis and make a clear distinction between phenomenological evidence, and which parts were attempts to position these observations within a context through interpretation. The sections thereafter serve to explicate the theoretical outlook of this study.

5.1 Summary

In summary, evidence for a narrative shift was provided, but elements remain of the old narrative. Furthermore, the study has illustrated the constitutive role it played in the emergence of blended finance in EU development policy. Throughout the analysis, evidence for an emerging shift has been provided. While some changes were identifiable in the early 2010s, the material highlights 2015 as an especially important year, where after much of the narrative elements shifted.

While a narrative shift can be observed, it is not entirely one-sided, as elements indicative of both the old narrative and a shift coexist at the same time and within the same texts. A narrative shift was although entirely absent from communications relating to the EIP's routine actions. This study was unable to explain why this variance was observed.

The features of the narrative shift varied across time. Particularly important were the shift in setting to the global level in the 2016 Global Strategy as well as a new emphasis on European victimhood and an undermining of character distinctions in Juncker's State of the Union speeches.

These observations were then put into a context through interpretation. It was argued that 2015 represented a moment for *contingency* for the EU. The migrant crisis combined with increased instability in the world created a sense of ontological insecurity as the EU's previous sense of place in the world was challenged as its old routine actions corroded. As a response, the EU abandoned the old purpose for atonement in development policy to wield it as a foreign policy tool to assure that the anxieties of 2015 did not repeat themselves. To maintain biographical continuity, as a result, the EU simultaneously constructed a new narrative by shifting the setting to the global level and emphasising European victimhood and potential gains.

The *constitutive* power of the narrative shift to introduce blended finance and retroliberalism in EU development policy was observed in communications relating to the EIP. By undermining distinct victim roles between the EU and Africa, the EU also undermined the specific needs of Africa. Given the now deconstructed distinctions between Europe and Africa, the aliments of both continents logically

would require the same medicine, which in turn narrowed the sensible policy options to exporting European solutions, the European Investment Strategy, to Africa in the shape of the External Investment Plan.

Based on an analysis of the 'Strategy with Africa' communication, going into the next decade, the new von der Leyen Commission too showcase a narrative shift with a strong resemblance to retroliberalism. Indicating that the EU is heading towards cementing it in development policy for the next decade.

Interestingly, while Mawdsley suggests that a narrative shift and new centrality of blended finance is an expression of an ontological need for Northern donors to regain an identity in global development policy, as new Southern actors emerge. This study contends that a European sense of self was challenged by perceived broader changes to the global order, in particular an increased sense of instability post-2015 with regard to migratory flows. It does although not discredit Mawdsley's assertion. The phenomenological aspects of the narrative shift lend support to such an interpretation. Furthermore, the EU itself acknowledged the need to rethink development policy as a response to the rise of the South in the Agenda for Change. Yet, these factors appear to be secondary.

5.2 Theoretical Outlook

This study illustrated the constitutive power of narratives for development policy. What it did not deal with was the relative explanatory power of ontological security compared to other theories of international relations. Yet, it did highlight its promise. It thereby encourages the scholarship to explore the ontological dimensions of development policy further.

A distinct feature of retroliberalism, is that it does not resemble a conventional conceptualisation of development policy, but rather North-North economic cooperation. While it is useful for understanding a shift in prioritisation, these developments could also describe a trend where aid loses relevance in relation to other external endeavours, a transformation known as 'beyond aid' (Janus, Klingebiel & Paulo 2014). Another way of understanding this study then is that EU development policy is increasingly being assimilated by other policy areas in the pursuit of other interests (ontological or not). Hence the increased role of the EEAS in development policy and the proposed NDICI instrument. In this sense, development as a distinct policy area is corroding.

As McMichael (2017) noted, development policy is a comparative constructive exercise with its roots in the perceived difference between North and South. This is important to ontological security as it depends on intersubjective relationships. Yet, as the distinct qualities and routines of development policy appears to corrode as it is being assimilated into other foreign policy areas, how then does actors on the development stage maintain their ontological security, and what policies will follow? While this study explores this topic, it invites the ontological security scholarship to explore these developments further, both for the EU and its development partners.

Furthermore, by highlighting 2015 as an important year for the observed narrative changes, this study draws attention to how increased insecurity and migration has led to changes in development policy, notably driving the assimilation into other policy area. Thereby, it is also encouraging the scholarship to explore the internal and societal dynamics of ontological security in Europe, and how it affects the EU's external actions.

Finally, two mechanism that appeared to play an important role for the constitutive role of the narrative should be highlighted: The changing setting and undermining of character distinctions. To understand this in a more abstract sense, the quality of the constitutive power of the narrative appear to be determined by the degree an actor sees themselves in others. Such notions are carried out through the issues emerging with globalisation. As policies more often sets out to deal with global issues, narrative characters come to share victim roles more often. Thereby, as character distinctions are undermined, policy responses might come to resemble each other as illustrated in the way the European Strategic Investment Plan was exported as the External Investment Plan. Suggestively, much can be learned by exploring these dynamics further, especially in an increasingly globalised world.

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7 Annex

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