LUISS

Department
of Political Science

Chair of International Relations

Italian foreign policy in West Africa. Between governmental and business action to fulfil opportunities and needs in the region

Prof.
Raffaele Marchetti

SUPERVISOR

081882
Rachele De Angelis

CANDIDATE

Academic Year 2018/2019

This page is intentionally left blank

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must express my gratitude to professor Raffaele Marchetti, who gave me the hint to expand my knowledge in Italian foreign policy, in particular with regards to the economic interests of our firms abroad. Also, it was a major chance for me to focus on Africa – a continent that is only hardly ever discussed during university lectures, but that has so much to offer and will bring surprises soon. I also have to be grateful to my professor for allowing me to link my analysis to the contribution that Italian private sector and organizations could bring to the needs of the inhabitants of the region, tackling the causes that induce people to leave the lands where they were born.

I must also thank his assistant, Manfredi Valeriani, for the invaluable support that he deserved to me during these months of research and analysis, going even much beyond the work that he was supposed to carry out.

However, all this work would have never seen the light of day without the personnel of the General Direction for Global Affairs' Office V at the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which deals with Western and Central Africa. Here I had the chance – and honour – to be enrolled in an internship, which represented a significant boost for my research. But mostly, I could get in touch with the reality of Italian foreign politics with the continent, thanks to several fruitful talks with experienced diplomats who served my country there for numerous years. This experience was an invaluable opportunity that significantly shaped the conduct of this research – and my future career.

Therefore, I have to personally thank the Principal Director for the Countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and Deputy Director General, Min. Plen. Giuseppe Mistretta; the Chief of Office V, Cons. Amb. Mauro Lorenzini, whose precious recommendations were fundamental for the conduct of my research; Segr. Leg. Fortunato Carlo Mangiola, my Tutor, for the material at my disposal and his valuable suggestions; and Segr. Leg. Simone Corsale, who involved me in the major work for Africa at the Ministry, giving me more trust that what I thought to deserve.

Thanks to my enrolment in the Office for Western and Central Africa, I had the chance to be in touch with people from inside the relationships of the Italian business sector operating in this continent. Thus, I must thank the availability of Alfredo Tombolini, Ruggero Aricò, Paolo De Vito, and Angela Giordano, for the interesting talks that they carried out with me during my research, and the material that they provided me.

Finally, my eternal gratitude goes to my parents, whose unconditional love has accompanied me during these months of work and research, giving me the support, trust, and encouragement that lie behind each line of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

After the 2009 financial crisis, the global scenario has gradually been assuming a different outlook. The shifting wealth process – the gradual rebalancing of the global wealth from OECD to non-OECD countries – entered its third phase: in the two previous ones (1990-2000 and 2001-08), this process had already increased output linkages between emerging economies and developing countries. But with the last one, the weight of emerging countries in the global economy surpassed the 50% mark: this affected the relative prices for goods, services, and wages, and also changed the terms of trade, bringing new sources of development finance. This was the moment when Africa had the chance to enter the scene: the process accelerated the continent's integration into the global economy, notably by diversifying its global partnerships (AUC/OECD 2018). Its Western region particularly benefitted from this good momentum: although their export still depends on their natural resources, the gainers were not only the West African economies counting on oil and natural gas. Non-resource rich countries, despite at a lower path, have seen more stable growths, which are now among the most attractive worldwide (IMF 2019).
While this growth accelerated in these emerging countries, foreign actors started looking at the continent with different eyes, for different reasons (*The Economist* 2019). Among the traditional French and American partners, and the massive presence of Chinese firms, Italy has only recently shown its interest in entering this soil. Despite being a relative latecomer to realizing that change was taking place on the continent, Italy started adopting new measures to benefit from this scenario (Carbone and Corda 2018). The outperforming growth of a continent crossed the way of a declining economy, belonging to one of those OECD countries more deeply wounded by the last financial crisis. Therefore, the way of internationalization towards Africa, including its Western region, became the chance of double-win cooperation between two interlocutors: one looking for foreign investments to maintain its economic boom; the other looking for a way out the economic stagnation (Carbone 2016). In the years after the financial crisis, Italy was still struggling to economic recovery, and major efforts were demanded to the "Farnesina", the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to give fuel to export and investments abroad. Several companies started looking at West Africa as a land of opportunities where to address their exports. This thesis will thus evaluate how the interests of the Italian private sector in West Africa combined with the **national strategy** of foreign politics. Italian governments have thus been indulging private investors in the continent, but with clear objectives in mind. First, to foster internationalization of firms, by implementing all their tools at disposal, since expanding market horizons results in a major impact on their levels of employment and productivity (Monducci and Zurlo 2017). But more importantly, Italian foreign politics in West Africa also involves managing the migration phenomenon, which is to be tackled from the roots that force people to flee their countries. It will emerge that the Italian approach in West Africa results to be **liberal**: despite involved in military missions, mainly peacekeeping operations with the UN and the EU, Italy has been pushing for a different, more holistic approach in West Africa. As it happened throughout Italian relations with other crises in the continent, governments have always preferred a multicentric approach where

the State, by definition, is not anymore the absolute and ultimate decision taker (Rosenau 1992), and other actors can play a major role in shaping a national strategy for foreign politics. This liberal approach may fulfil the needs of an entire region that is growing while struggling to maintain these patterns. **Chapter I** will indeed be dedicated to the opportunities (and criticalities) that this outstanding growth in the region is bringing about, and the reason why they are looking so appealing in the Italian business world. The sectors and initiatives where Italian firms are already present, or are planning to intervene soon, will then be deeply discussed in **Chapter II**. Here, the two major sectors in which Italian firms have intervened will come up with a division in two peculiarly Italian models: in the energy sector, the big firm model is traditionally more suitable, but in the newly-coming *agribusiness*, so appealing because of the demographic boom and the urbanization transition, there is space for small-and-medium-sized companies, too. In this context of lively interest, the Italy-Africa Initiative took place in 2013, and was followed by two major Italy-Africa Conferences in 2016 and 2018, which both witnessed the will by Italian institutions to follow this cooperative path. It was necessary to reorient those interested firms, in order to really bring support from the side of the ministry's network, structures and competences of foreign affairs to foster internationalization for Italian companies, after suffering several losses on the national scene (Carbone 2016). **Chapter III** will thus be dedicated to all those actions of Italian foreign policy, that has so far concentrated on a double-sided tool: facilitating and promoting the internationalization of its firms in Africa, while fostering the dialogue with African leaders in order to create a favourable context where to invest. The tools to sustain Italian business have been widely encouraged: from the active role of Italian Trade Agencies on field, to the facilitated access to credit by SACE; from the efforts to work as a team by the specialized Confindustria's subfield in Africa ("Assafrica e Mediterraneo"), until financing organizations, associations and projects aiming at fostering the know-how transfer and private-private dialogue (Carbone and Corda, 2018). The diplomatic network has expanded, too, with Italian embassies opening even in more highly risky countries, as Niger (2018) and Burkina Faso (2019). The reasons why foreign policy continues being aligned with Italian business is thus evident. Firstly, the ongoing efforts to increase the capabilities internationalization of national firms. Secondly, with the aid of the private sector on field, sustaining the growth of such a region also meant reducing the causes that induce migration. Italy, by being one of the most affected countries by this phenomenon, needs to cut for itself a strategic, protagonist role in managing these flows, which mostly came from the countries of West Africa (UNHCR 2018 and 2019). As a consequence, this role cannot be represented by a mere intervention in cases of emergency (Carbone et al., 2013). The recent trends of migrations from this region suggest a strong urgency for a sustainable and durable path of development for those countries, which need to drive foreign intervention in this direction. Only will sustained efforts in investments and economic cooperation for the long term create the durable conditions for regional growth, therefore limiting the structural causes that foster migration (de Simone, 2018). However, this nexus needs to be analysed to see what are the conditions for which it can really take place, far from the widespread belief that more development necessarily implies a drastic, immediate reduction of migrant flows (de Haas 2010). Thus, there is serious evidence that this shift in the approach to migration can hardly take place smoothly with other European interlocutors. But if this path towards shared sustainable development is the right one to be undertaken, Italy should try to push for this renovated approach, despite the several obstacles that might take place.

This thesis will thus **evaluate** the Italian approach to West Africa, which resulted in being **liberal** in its relations, both with the single countries and with ECOWAS (the economic and political organization that comprises the fifteen countries of the region). It proved to be much different from the French interventionism, as seen in the last involvement in Mali, but also from the massive intervention of Chinese firms (Carbone et al., 2013). Italy indeed has been able to maintain its degree of autonomy, when regarding the African continent. Throughout a brief history of Italian-African relations in Chapter III, this aspect will come across and will sometimes result in a widespread "shyness" in intervening in African affairs (Mantica 2017). Nonetheless, the Italian way of interventionism was a *unicum*, much appreciated by local authorities, which always deserved transparency and peer-to-peer treatment (Carbone et al., 2013). In spite of autonomous, Italian points of reference in international relations have been liberal values, perfectly suitable with the broader European framework, whose Italy has always been a supporter. This type of approach is being driven by its traditional interests in trade, which have been becoming relevant in this region too and can bring about more favourable cooperation, also by fostering the institutional dialogue. What results to take place in Italian foreign politics in West Africa thus resembles a context of a **complex interdependence** (Keohane and Nye, 1977). This theory indeed underestimates the priority of military security and highlights the prevalence of other actors in foreign affairs who, by putting less emphasis on it, have been looking for new proposals. Indeed, resorting to armed solutions has also been much avoided by the several Italian governments, who ended to agree only in cases of humanitarian needs (Carbone et al., 2013), thus highlighting very fable support to realist approaches. If it is true that also nowadays Italy is involved in UN and EU missions in Western Africa, it is also undeniable that this is not the only tool that has been deployed and, most importantly, it has to do with peacekeeping operations. A situation of complex interdependence thus implies the presence of other players on the scene that can decisively shape the conduct of international relations. NGOs, civil society organizations, opponent political parties, and transnational corporations have been absolute protagonists of Italian foreign affairs, particularly with the African environment, where the difficulties that had risen deserved several experts to shoulder specific responsibilities (Caracciolo and Noto, 2017). Italy thus showed a **multicentric** approach in its relations with African interlocutors: Chapter III will indeed draw on Italian history to see other examples in the past when other actors appeared on the scene to solve political crises, witnessing this liberal sphere of adherence even in those cases. Therefore, with more direct involvement of the private sector in the 2013 Initiative by the then-government in development aid, this liberal approach was even more accentuated. Increase in exchanging goods and services, no secret agendas, more foreign direct investments: these are all signs of a growing level of **economic interconnection**, as the figures of FDI stock and export orientation towards Africa will show in Chapter II. This is one of the aspects that economic globalization is bringing to Africa, too, that can be called "intensified interdependence" (Jackson and Sørensen, 2013).

This economic cooperation has been the keyword to sustain the development of the region, and so it has been linked to one of the priorities of Italian politics, namely managing **migrants from West Africa**. The involvement of the private sector in this phenomenon can thus result in an extremely strategic move to fulfil the interests of both parties. Indeed, when dealing with such a complex phenomenon, a mere focus on border controls and blocks on people flows could simply prove to be ineffective. If it is undeniable that the development-migration nexus needs decades in order to be fully experienced, it is also true that policies merely targeting flow restrictions cannot be effective for the long run (Venturi 2017). Italy can aim at playing a protagonist role in managing the migration phenomenon in the European context. Investing in sustaining a fast-accelerating growth will provide the useful tools for a region to start off its inclusive development. But if this path towards development is to be undertaken, Italy and the EU cannot expect to see the outcomes right now. While tackling the causes that induce to migrate, decades are needed to change people's intentions to flee their country. Nonetheless, a liberal approach based on a dual partnership, by involving public and private sector, will result in **win-win cooperation** between the two interlocutors. But only if Italy is able, as a State, to strategically lead all these partners involved towards a common goal, will this immense effort result in a real success. It will represent the most suitable formula for a region – and a continent – that has been longing for its momentum to grow for a long time.

To obtain a clear economic outlook of the region, my research was carried out by making use of data provided by the African institutions' reports, such as African Union Commission, ICA (the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa Secretariat) and the African Development Bank, as well as the data available from OECD, IMF, and World Bank's statistics. Italian firms interested in African markets have carried out reports developing their own strategy, including their sustainability projects, which all represented a significant support to analyse their type of intervention. Also, the reports by Italian institutions were available to be consulted and provided me a better outlook of the national strategy in the region: the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and for the Environment, as well as the Italian Trade Agency's reports, all provided a substantial tool to compare the interventions in the previous years. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs' available documents were particularly useful for the outcomes of the two Conferences held for the African continent, in 2016 and 2018, where I could find the major guidelines to understand Italian strategy. Thanks to my internship in the Office for Western and Central Africa at the General Direction for Global Affairs, I was daily in touch with the outcomes of the last Conference, the implications with African countries, and the commitments that Italy undertook in their regards. By attending every day this Ministry, I also had the chance to meet some experts from inside the Italian business sector and national institutions. The outline of Eni's action in Africa was the result of an interview with the company's personal expert at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. For Enel Green Power, I could talk with the institutional affairs expert, who deals with emerging countries and is also Vice-President in Confindustria "Assafrica & Mediterraneo". Within this same association, thanks to its responsible for Italian business development, I had access to several reports and documents of that association, but also of the Italian Trade Agency and SACE, which all showed the available instruments for firms abroad.

CHAPTER I

WHY WEST AFRICA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

1.1. Implications of a fast-accelerating economic growth

The African continent has experienced a steady growth since 2000, leading to a so-called "rising Africa" (AUC/OECD 2018). From a historical perspective, Africa's growth performance has much improved compared to the 1990s, when the per capita growth was negative. Between 2000 and 2016, Africa experienced strong economic growth rates (averaging 4.6% annually). Even after the global recession triggered by the 2008 financial crisis, Africa been successful but still ranked second on the leader board of the world's fastest-growing regions, behind the developing Asia (growing 7.2% annually) but ahead of Latin America and Caribbean (LAC), set at 2.8% (AUC/OECD 2018). This made Africa one of the most economically dynamic continents (Starace 2017). Governments have not always well responded to their favourable chances of economic uprisings, though. African patterns have indeed shown high volatility and difficulty in sustaining their dramatic growth. As a consequence, without durable conditions for it to continue this path, these appealing figures of growth hardly ever positively affected people's lives, making them more prone to look for opportunities abroad. The effects of this phenomenon have been perceived globally, given the global dimension that migration routes have achieved. But due to the undeniable closeness to Southern Europe, Mediterranean countries have been the most affected, in particular by the West Africa region. Indeed, economic recessions in 2015 and 2016 in resource-rich countries as Nigeria dramatically affected people's life, causing renovated interests to leave the country.

Africa is experiencing one of its most favourable momenta, but these encouraging numbers of growth do not necessarily imply development. And, if these rhythms of growth are not sustained, they will undeniably spill over the overall wellbeing of the population, causing a further increase in the migration phenomenon.

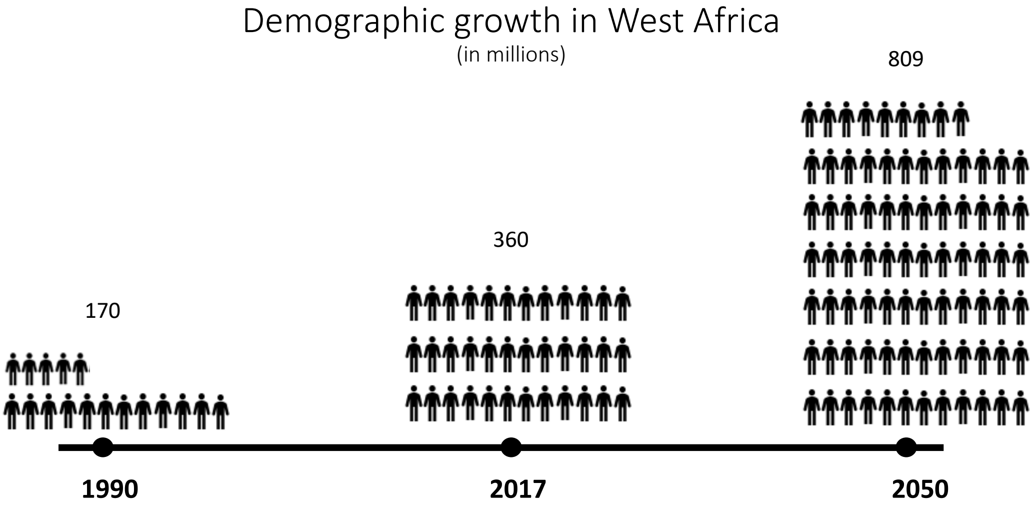
1.1(a) *The fastest-accelerating region in the continent*

While it is common practice to refer to it as "one", there is actually no single pattern in Africa for this growth. In fact, its several regions are characterized by a different average level of incomes, by specific economic assets with local features, by varying degrees of dependence on commodity exports and of political and social dynamics. In regard to economic growth, the leading regions are West and East Africa, followed by Central and Northern Africa – whose political instabilities have caused periods of recessions – and Southern Africa (Starace 2017).

Yet overall, the figures of growth over the last decade have been extremely positive. The whole Sub-Saharan area is finally recovering from its traditional backwardness that looked unappealing in the past. In this particular context, West Africa outperformed the rest of the Sub-Saharan regions, accounting for 24% of the

total GDP of the continent. Only behind North Africa (38%), it has overcome Southern Africa (17%), East Africa (17%) and Central Africa (4%) over the last few years (IMF, 2017a).
However, West Africa is even heterogeneous within its own borders. Despite the geographical collocation, indeed, the fifteen countries[1] that make up the West African region are culturally, linguistically, and even ecologically different among them, and this had a serious impact on the development of each of them. They range from the prosperous states of the Southern coast of the Gulf of Guinea, to the more critical Sahel region in the middle of Sahara Desert. But this region's diversity has presented both opportunities and challenges for the integration process. The desire to combine forces, politically and economically, has always been recognised as a step forward in the willingness to trigger common well-being in the region. For this reason, already in the 1970s, a first proposal for a union of West African States emerged, but only with the Treaty of Lagos in 1975 did the 15 countries that compose the region unite in a regional organization – **ECOWAS**. The Treaty was born originally as an economic initiative, but it shortly expanded its powers with the upcoming political events in 1993 (ECOWAS 2016). Despite the economy of ECOWAS is highly driven by the reliance on widespread underground resources, precious metal, and agricultural products, the variety among them, but even access to water, made the difference in clearing out tangible economic differences among countries. Ghana was ranked 120th by the World Bank *Doing business* 2018 and Cote d'Ivoire 139th, while Mali, Burkina Faso, and Togo still rank among the poorest in terms of GDP per inhabitant (AUC/OECD 2018). Nonetheless, despite some slightly different decimals, they all share a fast-accelerating economic growth. As a matter of fact, the growth of the area reached 5% on average between 2000 and 2014 – the strongest in the continent. At the same time, it met the same instability problems as the rest of the continent. In 2016, it suffered a short fall to 0.4%, immediately recovering the following year and projected to be valued 3.4% in 2018 (AUC/OECD 2018). The major drive for this tremendous growth has been the so-called **demographic *boom***. This massive phenomenon that is occurring in the whole continent has been the main contributor to this fast-accelerating growth, which looks appealing to foreign investors too. The African continent has indeed the world's fastest-growing population: from 2000 to 2015, it increased from 814 million to almost 1.2 billion. According to United Nations projections, the population will reach 1.7 billion in 2030 and 2.5 billion in 2050; Africa's share of the world population is predicted to increase from currently around 16% to almost 20% in 2030 and above 25% in 2050 (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2016). In West Africa, the figures are even more impressive: between 1990 and 2017, the population doubled, going from 170 to almost 360 million inhabitants. According to UN projection, in 2050 the West African population will reach 809 million units – 31.7% of the continent and 8.2% of the world (AUC/OECD 2018). In the following figure, we can see graphically what these figures mean in terms of real population:

[1] Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea- Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo



Africa's Development Dynamics 2018: Growth, Jobs and Inequalities © AUC/OECD 2018

This massive increase particularly regarded the middle-class[2], which since the turn of the century increased its private consumption and increased their purchasing power, representing the largest contributor to demand. Nonetheless, it is still concentrated in the region's major economies – namely, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal. However, maintaining the levels of this African model of middle-class has proven to be highly volatile, given the disruptive changes in economies occurring. As a consequence, the so-called intermediate class (between USD 2 and 10 per day) is also extremely vulnerable to return below the poverty line (AUC/OECD 2018).

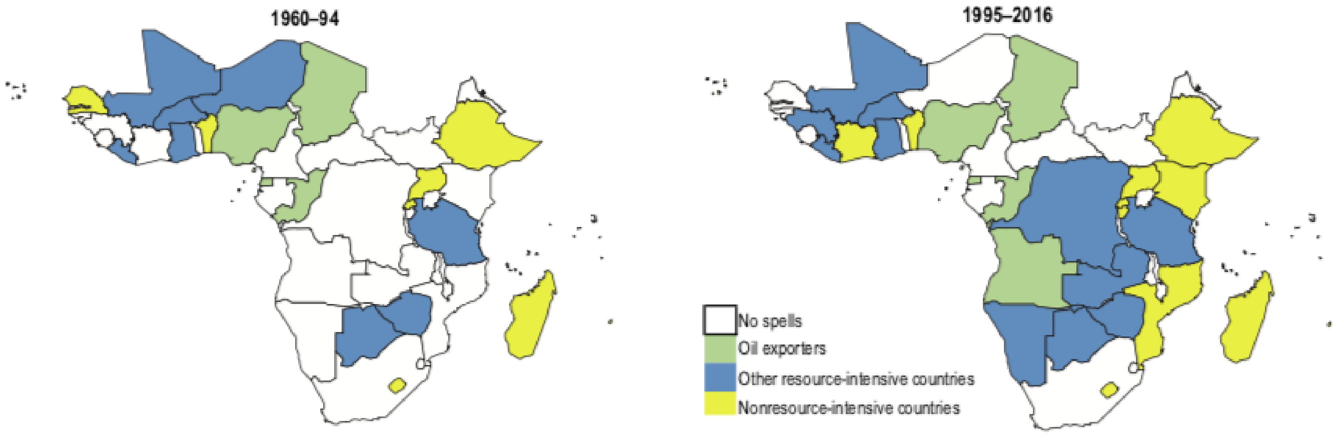
1.1(b) *Volatility and unpredictability: criticalities of West African growth*

Despite the undeniably appealing scenario of growth, the ECOWAS countries have shown a **serious difficulty** in stabilizing their patterns, as the recession in 2016 demonstrated. By drawing on the research by Berg, Ostry, and Zettelmeyer (2012), it is possible to identify two structural turning points in economic growth: *up-breaks* – periods of higher growth than before, or growth accelerations – and *down-breaks*, periods of growth decelerations. Growth up-breaks and down-breaks occur frequently at global level, but with substantial variation across time and income levels (IMF 2017b). And among the growth turning points took place in developing economies in the time range from 1950 to 2016, which were more than a half in the world, Sub-Saharan countries experienced the majority of these up- and down-breaks (IMF 2017b). Nevertheless, their capability of maintaining durable growth, or **growth "spells"** – defined as episodes where growth after up-breaks was sustained – was less solid than in the rest of the world. Indeed, data show that growth breaks in the region are sustained, but they are shorter than elsewhere and are hard to be converted into substantial changes in people's patterns of life. In West Africa, just a handful of countries as Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana were

[2] Middle-class is defined as households spending between USD 5 and USD 20 per day at purchasing power parity.

expected to maintain their growth at 5% or higher even in further years (IMF 2017b). But recently, the International Monetary Fund actually stated in its latest report for 2019 that Ghana will be the fastest-growing economy in the world this year (IMF 2019). The lender's growth forecasted 8.8% for the producer of cocoa, gold, and oil. Furthermore, among the fastest-growing economies, not only are there six Africans: of these six, half of them are in the West (Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, too). The following images highlight the change that has occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa in regard to the growth spells. It is clear that oil-exporter countries are not the only ones enjoying positive moments of growth, and in the West this data is particularly relevant, too:

Figure 2.5. Sub-Saharan Africa: Growth Spells, 1960–94 and 1995–2016



Source: International Monetary Fund 2017

Nonetheless, the records of past years have shown that "the median length of complete growth spells in the region has been six years for resource-intensive countries, and five years for non-resource-intensive countries, compared to 10 years for other developing economies and eight years for emerging market economies". Therefore, "these findings – shorter growth spells and larger swings in growth – point to specific **difficulties in the region in engineering and sustaining growth** over long periods" (IMF 2017b). Moreover, they highlight several differences among the countries that make up West Africa. If economic recovery stabilises at more moderate growth levels, it will also be due to heterogeneous paths of growth that affect the countries that will still struggle to achieve high growth rates over (Carbone 2018).

These strong variations among West African economic patterns for growth are due in part to external factors, such as the economic situation in main trade partners and fluctuations in prices of raw materials. Internal shocks as the Ebola virus and political crises still have significant repercussions on the regional economy. One of the endogenous variables relates to the presence of resources, since the difference in growth has been remarkable. Resource-rich countries are defined as those with at least five years between 2006 and 2015 in which resource rents (excluding forest rents) were at least 10% of GDP (AUC/OECD 2018). They have enjoyed stronger terms of trade and average growth since 2000 at more than 6% a year due to high commodity prices, especially for fuel (petroleum, natural gas and coal) and metals. But this dependence made them extremely fragile. As commodities prices dropped sharply between 2012 and 2016 (57% for fuels and almost a third for metals and minerals), domestic revenues in resource-rich countries decreased by 44%. In 2015, Africa's oil exports dropped by 41% from the previous year, the major such contraction since 2000 (AfDB, OECD, UNDP 2017). The economic shock in **Nigeria** in 2016 was a demonstration of that. On the other side, non-resource rich countries, such as Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Mali, have seen a more stable growth at a lower 4% a year since 2000. Governments have been more engaged in providing public programs to tackle social inequalities. In addition, net oil importers have benefited from lower fuel prices in recent years, hence reducing their import bills.

Moreover, African governments have faced serious problems in diversifying their economies. Many West African countries rely on just a handful of products to export, despite being highly demanded at global level: oil and bitumen represent 81% of Nigeria's exports, uranium accounts of 80% of Niger's exports, cotton almost 40% for Burkina Faso and Mali, and cashew almost the totality for Guinea-Bissau (92.9%) (OECD, 2016). As a matter of fact, West African countries have been facing troubles in processing natural products – a serious issue that regards both energy resources and food, too. Therefore, their possibility of being exported dramatically fell: in 2016, up to 75.3% of them remained **unprocessed**, representing a double loss. If the example of natural gas is taken – an important natural resource only recently discovered in these territories – disregarding its usage means both not fulfilling the energy lack that is occurring, while losing the chance of selling it (OECD 2016).

The difference between WAEMU and non-WAEMU countries is remarkable, too. The West African Economic and Monetary Union, formed in 1994, set up a program to limit the annual inflation rate below 3%. It is linked to the use of a common currency with the CEMAC countries[3] – the CFA Franc. This currency has so far been adopted by 14 countries and depends on French treasury: in return for guaranteeing the currency, France holds 50% of the foreign exchange reserves of the C.F.A. Franc countries in its Treasury. The 14 nations in the monetary unions decided to continue adopting the currency even after becoming independent in the different stages of time, highlighting its value for their economies (Specia 2019). Only seven countries of ECOWAS have not joined the Union yet (Cabo Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone). As a matter of fact, joining the currency made the difference. For example, although Nigeria experiences the most robust growth in the region, WAEMU countries had a more stable one. Together with Ghana and Sierra Leone, indeed, inflation rates reached values higher than 10% in 2016. This aspect made these economies much more dependent on internal and external shocks: they tended to respond more negatively to the economic situation of main trade partners and inflation/deflation of raw material price (AUC/OECD 2018).

[3] CEMAC (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa) countries are Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Republic of Congo.

1.1(c) *Tackling a radical inequality*

The overall standard of living has improved in West Africa, but the Human Development Index is still the lowest in the continent, together with Eastern Africa. While it showed signs of recovery in 2017, when Capo Verde reached a good 0.65 in the HDI scale, others as Niger are still well below these levels. Access to basic services has also improved, although progress remains to be made. Access to drinking water, sanitation, electricity and mobile telephones is rising. In a country as Liberia, which suffered a long civil war, between 2000-07 only 0.4% of the population had access to electricity, while now it raised 8.4% between 2008-17 (AUC/OECD 2018).

The distribution of wealth is concentrated around the middle and intermediary class, but thanks to ad-hoc programs by governments, as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiatives, poverty has seen a substantial reduction (AUC/OECD 2018). In Burkina Faso, for example, they face the same rate of reduction as the Chinese. However, the **number of poor people has increased**. This apparently contradictory face of poverty is due to the significant demographic growth, which regarded almost the lowest strata of population. Among the several dimensions of poverty, West Africa is the least educated region in the continent, which dramatically spills over economic conditions. It is referred to as "multidimensional" poverty: its index has remained at 0.4 on average for those countries for which data was available (AUC/OECD 2018). This level is the highest on the continent along with East Africa. Almost 67% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty and the intensity of deprivation among the poor reaches 56%. Only 35% of the population has no primary schooling, and in 38% of households, no one is educated (OPHI 2017). Another contradiction that the region faces is that in the largest economies, the gap of inequalities is greater. The unequal distribution of revenues and persistent reliance on informal economy is one of the major reasons for Ghana inequalities. Yet in Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Togo, efforts have been carried out in order to tackle poverty while reducing inequality (AUC/OECD 2018).

Improving **education** is one of the most demanding human development challenges that West African countries faces if this issue is to be seriously undertaken. According to the UNDP's report (2018) for human development, the fifteen countries that make up the region are still classified among the low-level ones. This is also due to short education careers and poor education quality, due to which pupils rarely acquire skills that go beyond literacy and numeracy (de Simone 2018). Only in Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire do mean years of schooling reach six; in the majority, they are around three, but they can reach only one or two years of schooling in Burkina Faso and Mali (UNDP/HCRO 2018).

Tackling inequality must first pass through education if labour force conditions want to be improved. Education policies should promote investment in human capital to increase productivity among informal workers. At the national level, states started investing in management-level training in small companies and offer certification for skills in the informal sector, as in the case in, Benin, Mali, and Senegal (AfDB/OECD 2008). In Ghana, for example, self-employed apprentices who have received training at a professional development and training institution earn 49% more than in a salaried position (AfDB/ OECD/UNDP, 2017).

However, the number of secondary students enrolled in vocational training programmes remains very low in Ghana (1.8%), followed by Senegal (4.5%), two of the countries with more economic potentialities. Informal apprenticeships are the primary method of skills acquisition in urban areas in West Africa, as in Ghana, where they represent almost the totality of basic training. But a structural transformation of labour market needs to start from education and training, where there is a major need to intervene if more people are to exit the poverty line, which is still too fable, as already shown (de Simone 2018).

1.1(d) *Labour figures: the "demographic dividend" challenge*

As far as employment is concerned, either formally or informally, a large part of the population is employed. The employment rate ranges from 51% in Senegal to even 80% in Burkina Faso. Due to the population growth described above, Africa has the second-largest workforce in the world after Asia, and its workforce will continue to grow. By looking at the trends of the continent, between 2015 and 2050, Africa's working age population will increase by 902 million people, about 69% of the total increase across the world (AUC/OECD, 2018). By 2030, the increase in labour supply could create a first "demographic dividend" and boost Africa's annual growth of GDP per capita by up to half a percentage point, assuming constant output per worker (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2016). This demographic dividend could contribute 10-15% of Africa's gross GDP volume growth by 2030 (Ahmed et al., 2014). Africa might enjoy a second demographic dividend by accumulating savings and investing more in physical and human capital, particularly children's health and education. However, these two demographic dividends highly depend on jobs and investment.

So far, in ECOWAS countries, the **agricultural sector** has been the leading source of employment (AUC/OECD, 2018). In 2000, it represented between 33% (Gambia) and 77% of jobs (Niger). While agriculture's share has either stagnated or declined in all countries, it still accounts for more than half of jobs. In contrast, the service sector's share has increased in almost all countries, with the sole exception of Mali and Senegal. The tertiary sector represents more than 40% of jobs in the Gambia, thanks to hotels and restaurants, as well as in Ghana due to tourism (UNCTAD, 2015). In Burkina Faso, the agricultural sector contracted to the benefit of services, particularly the manufacturing sector which accounted for 32% of jobs in 2017 versus 4% in 2000. Despite being one of the landlocked economies, the investment in the agricultural sector let Burkina Faso register one of the better performances in the continent, thanks to heavy investment in infrastructure and strong ODA (official development aid) flows in the country (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsal, Deiana 2018). The agro-food sector, which combines the agricultural productivity with its distribution on the market, offers good employment perspectives, with more than 66% of jobs created between 2012 and 2015 – or 82 million positions (Allen et al., 2018). It is the largest sector, with production representing USD 178 billion in 2010, or 36% of regional gross domestic product (GDP). The activities of transformation, logistics, and retail generate employment in transportation, packaging, and distribution to urban areas and are generally more productive than agricultural activities. According to Sahel Club and ECOWAS estimates, they represent 40% of the sector's value added and will continue to expand as the region urbanizes (Allen and Heinrigs, 2016).

However, **informal employment** is still expanding in the region. The secondary sector, in particular, suffers from this phenomenon, primarily in the mining activity in small-scale gold panning. In Senegal, 97% of companies formed part of the informal sector (ANSD, 2015). In Côte d'Ivoire, more than 80% of the labour force is in the informal sector, but it can exceed 90% in Mali and Burkina Faso. The most affected are usually the poorest strata of the population, but also women and young people. Although its **flexibility** may facilitate integration in the labour market, as it is the case for those usually stigmatized categories, it still reproduces inequality. In Côte d'Ivoire, 86% of young entrepreneurs between the ages of 15 and 29 years earn less on average than young salaried workers, while 43.9% of young people also create their own businesses (OECD, 2017). These informal companies in the services and trade sectors are often exposed to variations in the prices of raw materials, primarily oil and agricultural inputs. Furthermore, they provide lower incomes and a loss of taxes to the State.

By not being registered, these activities make it hard to provide explanatory data on West Africa employment rate, too. Therefore, also **unemployment** is hard to be well depicted. It is undeniable that those aged 15-25 are most affected by job insecurity. Unable to find better-salaried work, young people prefer self-employment in the informal sector, where they combine several insecure jobs. Unemployment among youth reached 12% in 2017 and has stagnated for 25 years, and this does not account for young people in the informal sector who are often less educated. The employment rate for youth reached 41% in 2017, despite having declined from 47% in 2000. Several structural factors explain youth unemployment: low levels of education and training and the mismatch between skills and labour market needs. But other factors exacerbate the situation, such as social (cronyism), political (nepotism), ethnic and religious (preferences) or specific networks of solidarity (AUC/OECD 2018).

1.1(e) *Macro and microlevel factors for migration*

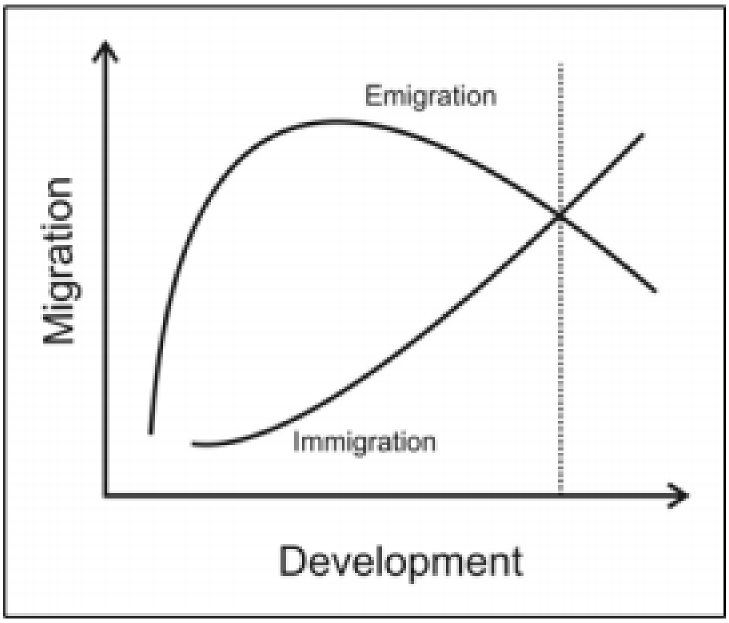
Youth unemployment has been undeniably one of the most significant causes of migration from West African countries (UNCTAD 2018a). But it is not the sole cause for people to leave their country. Staying in the labour context, also the bad quality of working conditions is a particularly spread plague in West African economies. The trend that occurred was that the most impoverished countries have very low unemployment rates, but large strata of the population are employed in the informal sector, which arrives at 90% of the working age population in some cases (AUC/OECD 2018). Many African more solid economies, on the other hand, suffer from very high youth unemployment rates. Their formal sectors are more prominent than those in the poorest countries and employ a large share of the population, but at the same time, their informal sectors are relatively smaller and are not able to absorb young workers, contrarily to what happens in poor countries (AfDB, OEDC, UNDP 2012). As a consequence, there is a major need to tackle employment lacks in the job market in both directions – quantitatively and qualitatively. Without this massive intervention, this favourable momentum of growth, a "spell", as Berg, Ostry, and Zettelmeyer used to refer to (2012), will hardly be exploited. Inequalities will be severely be repeated, and people will try to look for different countries where to spend their lives.

As a matter of fact, the figures of growth described so far have not been automatically translated into the labour market's needs. If Africa's economic growth rates in 2004–2014 were undeniably high, at above 5% per year, but that then the average job growth rate was 0.2% per year in the same lapse of time, the consequences are clear. With these present conditions, it is thus unlikely that sufficient jobs will be generated to absorb this additional labour under the current scenario (UNCTAD 2018a). With the current patterns of **demographic growth**, this aspect will be more acerbated; population growth is indeed an essential aspect of migration dynamics on the continent. What is structurally changing is the "rural" Africa: in the past, the labour market could count on a large share of low-productivity agriculture, but as now population densities rise and land farmers are shifting towards the cultivation of more ecologically fragile land, both revenues and agricultural productivity may remain extremely low in the future. As a consequence, rural inhabitants are slowing reaching towns, and the rate of **urbanization** in Africa is foreseen to rise to 56% in 2050 (UNCTAD 2018a).

The fact that sustainable economic growth and decent conditions in the labour market are strictly connected to migration was also stated in the **Sustainable Development Goals** (UNCTAD 2018a). Fixed in 2015 for a 15-year period of time, the United Nations set 17 points in order to tackle the enormous inequality spread that exists between – and within – countries. Indeed, Goal 8 on economic growth and decent work explicitly refers to migration, acknowledging the economic value of migrant labour. Yet while official development assistance has been an important instrument of longer-term migration management, there is also a major need to address it into a structural transformation in the continent, especially in infrastructure and the manufacturing, transportation, and electricity supply sectors, and could generate the best return in terms of jobs and investment in origin countries, given that employment seeking is one of the key-drivers of migration (UNCTAD 2018a).

Though there exist several theories to analyse the migration phenomenon, what is occurring in the West African context may be better explained as an interaction between **structural and institutional factors** on one side, and **household and community** circumstances on the other. However, the decisions of migrants are also affected by broader trends not only in national but also global trends of political economies. The link between structural transformation and rising international migration may indeed be conceived as "how microlevel action is linked to macrolevel structures and vice versa" (UNCTAD 2018a). Despite the simplicity of its form, it can be affirmed that the social condition (macrolevel), often brings about high levels of rural underemployment and poverty among persons (microlevel), which induces to migrate from a rural to an urban agglomeration or to move abroad (microlevel). As a consequence, by intervening at the roots of the problem, the effects on migration will be immediately felt and durable in the long term, too. Among the several macrolevel factors analysed by UNCTAD, macroeconomic instability given by labour market conditions and international linkages have had the strongest impact on individual decisions to escape. But it is also true that those linkages, such as trade, tourism, and foreign direct investment, both determine and are affected by migration (Gheasi and Nijkamp, 2017). Indeed, since 2016, improving global conditions, particularly slowly rising commodity prices, have helped curtail current account deficits. In 2017, there was a resumption of growth in capital inflows, in particular foreign direct investment, which helped to finance current account deficits and cushion foreign reserves (World Bank and Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development, 2017). The macro and microlevel analysis thus explain how economic, structural factors strongly undermines people's decisions to migrate. As a consequence, a structural reformation of the area, one of the most affected by this phenomenon, calls into account several partners to intervene – local and foreign institutions, public and private sectors.

However, by being such a hotly debated issue, the reality of migration patterns is usually underestimated, since it is less straightforward and requires a more nuanced analysis (Venturi 2017). Economists have indeed demonstrated that higher levels of economic and human development do not automatically result in a reduction of migration flows. Rather, they are associated with higher overall levels of them. What result to occur is a "U-curve effect" on emigration, that starts decreasing only after a long period of sustained growth (de Haas 2010):



From de Haas, H. (2010), *Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration* in IMI Working Papers, no. 24

As the figure above shows graphically, in order for emigration to lower, a long commitment of sustained economic growth is needed to see these effects. Paradoxically, there is not Burkina Faso, nor Mali (both at the bottom of the Human Development Index), among the countries with the largest proportions of migrants to Europe. Rather, there are Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, those with better performing levels of growth in the region, compared to the other two above (UNHCR 2018). Therefore, despite the European collective imagination, the Africans arriving on their coasts are not the starving poorest, but the **unemployed middle-class**. In the following sections, this element will be better analysed to see its trends in the future. But more importantly, further chapters will then deal with the solutions of employment, inclusiveness, and development that can be brought by private investors in the region, and the tools of Italian foreign politics to favour this type of sustained development in the long term.

1.2. The trends of the West African economy

The structural transformation of the region is acknowledged by governments as a primary challenge to sustainable, inclusive growth that creates jobs (AUC/OECD, 2018). In effect, it is crucial to boost the **productivity** of local activities to create jobs for young people entering the labour market. Accelerating structural transformation will allow the informal sector, which is dominant in the region, to be reabsorbed. At the same time, reforms should provide for the redistribution of wealth and combatting poverty, to correct the effects economic structural transformation has on multiple forms of inequality (AUC/OECD, 2018). Indeed, there are interesting trends that are taking place in West African countries and that have been attracting international attention: the mobility towards towns, the technological revolution, the need for processed food. All of them represent a major challenge of a favourable momentum of growth. Yet if the latter is not consolidated, it will risk falling into recession again. Therefore, national governments have thus put several development plans in place, helped by the international community and foreign actors eager to invest in the continent.

1.2(a) *The rapid urbanization*

Not only has the population increased, but it is also massively moving from rural areas to towns. West Africa has experienced the **most explosive urban growth** in the Sub-Saharan area: since 1950, the number of urban residents increased from 5 million to 150 million in 2015, with 43% of its population living in cities (Allen and Heinrigs, 2016). The large majority of these people live in a town that did not exist in 1950 or which was only a small village (Moriconi-Ebrard, Harre and Heinrigs, 2016). Urban growth translates into a higher concentration of people in the largest cities, but also into the development of a network of small and medium-sized cities. In 1950, the region had 152 urban agglomerations with more than 10 000 inhabitants; in 2010, the region reached nearly two thousand urban agglomerations, including 22 with more than one million inhabitants (Moriconi-Ebrard, Harre and Heinrigs, 2016).

The regional level of urbanisation increased from 36% in 2000 to 41% in 2010. In the middle of the 20th century, urban areas were concentrated along the Gulf of Guinea, and in particular in the Yoruba area of Nigeria. Today, West Africa’s urban network is much denser and expanded throughout the entire region including the Sahara Desert: here, around twenty towns have appeared (Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Chad) despite an overall low population density. Seven countries have an urbanisation rate close to 50%: Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Cabo Verde, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, and Ghana. At only 18%, Niger remained one of the least urbanised countries in the world, comparable with Ethiopia and Burundi (Moriconi-Ebrard, Harre and Heinrigs, 2016). In Senegal, the expansion of the Dakar agglomeration exceeding its limits to the north and

south should be considered, within the development context as the Dakar-Touba "development corridor", one of the more striking examples of how West African urban networks are becoming linear.
Also, the patterns of urbanization are less homogeneous today than they were sixty years ago. Imbalances of demographic and economic growth, the development of some coastal metropolises that approached the global economy, and differences in territorial and land planning policies: they have all made a cumulative impact on the imbalances of cities and town in the region (Moriconi-Ebrard, Harre and Heinrigs, 2016). Thanks to transportation and communications networks, these cities and towns act as nodes for the spatial organisation of trade and market and it is a symptom of a more plausible **internal displacement** in the region – the first step of migration. Cities and their inhabitants are thus increasingly shaping the region's economic, political and social framework. The expanded capability of mobility is contributing to the migration phenomenon and has been affected by the increased possibilities of communicating. Mobile phones finally entered the country and have become a major source of information for people, affecting their will to displace. On the other hand, however, this technological revolution might be able to foster the internal capabilities of economies, more capable of diversifying themselves and of providing alternative opportunities.

1.2(b) *The technological innovation*

Despite lagging behind advanced and other emerging countries, Africa is finding its own ways of benefitting from the technology revolution, which is now taking place worldwide. It is proving to be a fundamental tool to skip inefficient or costly solutions and directly adopt the more technologically advanced ones (Carbone 2018). Alongside the many challenges, the new technological transitions are also showing unforeseen and massive potential as positive game changers for Africa's economic and social development. Indeed, the rapid spread of mobile phones showed an unforeseeable capacity of bypassing old and dysfunctional landlines, giving hundreds of Africans their access to communication networks (Carbone 2018). Similarly, the introduction of "mobile money" allowed Africans to perform financial transactions and services without waiting for the development of physical infrastructures. Therefore, if on one side this major shift demonstrated a substantial lack of infrastructure that affects the whole continent, it also presented a solution which gave millions of citizens the chance to deliver their own services earlier. Mobile communication is the only ICT where Africa has been closing the gap with the rest of the world. The speed of mobile evolution, policy reforms and the ways of financing investment are unique among other infrastructure sectors in Africa (Williams, Mayer, Minger 2011).
Taken collectively, these technological innovations can revolutionise global production networks. This **new production revolution**, commonly called "Industry 4.0", presents opportunities for African countries to find new development paths, since African entrepreneurs and SMEs can enjoy better access to new modes of production and to global networks, which they could not access before (AUC/OECD, 2018). However, the gains from the new production revolution are not automatic but call for specific policy objectives. First, not did every country provide Internet access, even if the latter, alone, is not even sufficient to benefit from ICT

(Minges 2018). Most importantly, digital revolutions can bring about labour automation, which is a continent characterized by mainly low-skilled workers is not always a positive-effect leaver. Indeed, it may reduce Africa's attractiveness as a destination for manufacturing investment. In a recent survey of Chinese manufacturing firms, most would respond to labour shortages by investing more in capital equipment rather than by moving production out of China. When they do, African economies face stiff competition from other actors such as countries from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The ASEAN countries enjoy several advantages over Africa in attracting Chinese FDI: established global production networks, physical and cultural proximity to China, and better competitiveness especially in infrastructure and human capital (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsat, Deiana 2018).

In order to ensure quality skills for the labour force to meet the market needs of a digital economy, **education policies** should prioritise quality education with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Governments should encourage technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training institutions to deliver targeted quality training with private sector engagement (AUC/OECD, 2018). Since 2014, local incubators have encouraged the creation of high value-added technological companies. There have been several projects to boost investments for young enterprises in the technological sector. The largest, launched by Partech Africa in January 2018, has been able to mobilise so far 125 million euro, thanks to the support of the African Bank of Development, the European Bank of Investment and the IFC (the World Bank's branch for private investments). Like the Kenyan investment in Savannah Valley, West African states could collectively define a digital strategy and create competitive regional hubs. In Nigeria, the start-up ecosystem in Lagos benefitted from the organic growth of small companies and it is now the third largest African incubator, followed in the region by Senegal (seventh in the continent's rank and first French-speaking country), but there are other interesting examples in Benin, Gambia, Sierra Leone, and even in the least-economically-performing countries as Burkina Faso and Mali.

1.2(c) *The challenge of agribusiness: energy, food & employment*

Technological improvements have certainly affected more the urban than the rural areas, which still suffer from substantial backwardness. Urban growth contributes to the integration of rural areas into the market economy and is a major driving force in transforming agri-food production systems, which must include a structural reformation of the way infrastructure and energy are provided.

The recent trends indeed show that the new habits of city-dwellers cannot include subsistence farming anymore. The increase in demographic growth, in particular of the middle-class located in cities and towns, made **private consumption as the major contributor to demand**. However, local provision of consumer goods and services remains limited, which might result in the demand for more import, if local production does not suffice – weakening the trade balance. In fact, the agro-food products industry has proven more dynamic in West Africa than the global average (OECD 2016). Therefore, West-African governments are pushing for better production in the local supply: if the offer of goods and services does not improve via a dual

process of industrialisation and local transformation of raw materials, an important driver of growth could be lost. Without local supply, indeed, demographic growth may result in increased imports of food stuffs and other consumer goods, to the detriment of the trade balance.
The challenge of the agro-industry is thus one of the most demanding, since it requires a structural transformation of the region for sustainable and inclusive growth. Yet productivity boost is urgently called and might be capable solving two demands: the one in the labour market – tackling unemployment – and the demand of processed food and services from cities. With a strong intervention through governmental policies, the informal sector might be reabsorbed in these new activities created. The link between rural and urban areas is a challenge to face but that can meet the needs of the whole population. Firstly, industrial activities are particularly tough to carry out because of energy lacks in the continent – not only in the West African region. Indeed, while Africa has energy resources more than sufficient to meet their domestic needs, more than two people over three in its population still lacks access to electricity and cooks with primitive means (Cozzi 2017). However, major shifts have taken place: more than 150 million people have gained access since 2000, mainly in the Sub-Saharan area. The majority of these lacks usually occur in rural areas, being one of the factors contributing to the mobility to towns. And this incredible shift, which is expected to grow, needs substantial efforts in defining an alternative way to provide **energy** for this population, if new economic activities want to be started off. The recent discoveries of natural gas, together with the slow – but steady – green transition can become the source of energy to reach the fulfilment needed for a proper environment of new investments. Boosting the agro-food industry will thus be able to tackle the energy lacks that are now needed, if substantial efforts will be put in its providing. This path, together with investments in infrastructure, will be a major incentive for foreign investors to enter the region of the ECOWAS countries. But without their willingness to carrying it out, it will be much more difficult to intervene. And fortunately, signs of hope are on the horizon.

1.3. West Africa reacting: the old backwardness and the will to go forward

1.3(a) *Infrastructure projects: international players for domestic needs*

Infrastructure have always been a major obstacle to Africa's development, from transportation to energy, but also water distribution systems to ICT grids. The deficits of the entire continent are still severe, and the gap is still persistent not only with advanced economies but with the rest of the developing world too (Carbone 2018). Road density is lower than in the 1990s, for example. But the most striking data regards electricity access: the whole area of Sub-Saharan Africa's is still below 40% and it is the only one in the world with fewer people with access in the future. However, several commitments have been carried out to tackle this significant deficiency. The Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (**ICA**) was inaugurated on the occasion of the G8 Gleneagles summit in 2005 and enlarged to G20 in 2011. The other members are the Republic of South Africa, the World Bank Group (WBG), the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), the European Commission, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA). African institutions such as the African Union (AU), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) all participate as observers in the meetings of the consortium (ICA 2018).

According to its last report (2018), ICA declared that overall commitments to Africa's infrastructure from all sources increased to 81.6 in 2017 from 66.9 billion dollars in 2016, and these levels are the highest reported since 2010. The difference, equivalent to a **22% rise**, was primarily due to the increase in Chinese investments, which went from 6.4 to 19.4 billion dollars, but also to a 3.7 billion increase in African national and some subnational governments (ICA 2018). African state spending on infrastructure, which for the first time in this report includes subnational state spending where it can be identified, increased of almost 4 billion dollars in 2017. The members of ICA committed almost 20 billion dollars in 2017, with an increase of nearly one billion from 2016. **West Africa was the most targeted region**, accounting for about 27% of all infrastructure investments in Africa. The region's leading position is largely due to Chinese funding of 11.5 billion (fivefold their investments in 2016), of which nearly half is for the Mambilla hydroelectric power project in Nigeria. ICA member funding for the region increased to 4.9 billion dollars, actually only 3 million more than 2016. However, private sector investment commitment declined in West Africa to just 704 million dollars in 2017, compared the 2013, when they reached 5.4 billion. In order to re-foster an international commitment, in a temporary stage of shyness, during 2018 and 2019 West African countries have been giving a major increase in national plans, that are going to have an impact on their economies and on regional growth (ICA 2018).

1.3(b) *The upcoming African Free Trade Area and the existing regional economic ones*

States' efforts to boost their productivity have come alongside regional and continental cooperation, which have both increased their capabilities of the exploiting internal market (AUC/OECD, 2018). Indeed, the lack of uniformity in development paths has had an impact on regional and continental efforts to enhance economic and political integration. Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs), range from one in the East, one in the West and a least-performing one in the Centre. The WAEMU, the above-mentioned economic integration in the West, has been able to increase the volume of exchanges by 3 times, despite still lower than the 5 times achieved in the East African Community (AUC/OECD, 2018: 50). In 1994, when ECOWAS was already created, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) succeeded and improved the former WAMU (founded in 1962). The use of common currency among the eight states, the already mentioned CFA franc, did make the difference in facilitating the intra-commercial relations. In 2000, six additional countries (Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone) joined together in a new entity called the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ). Between 2015 and 2017, they represented approximately 83% of ECOWAS. The creation of a single monetary zone is envisaged, but the introduction of a single currency scheduled for 2015 was postponed to 2020 (Barlaam 2018).

The biggest step that the continent is about to take is the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Signed on March 21, 2018 in Kigali (Rwanda), the treaty finally galvanizes the liberalization of intra-continental trade. The head of 44 African countries signed the treaty, which is now the world's largest free trade area after the creation of the WTO (Mangeni 2018). At the moment, thanks to The Gambia's ratification, the treaty is effectively going to be applicable (Monnet 2019). It has received the greetings from the major investment and governmental institutions. In the occasion of the Africa CEO forum in March 2019, the CEO of IFC spoke of a major chance to assist the expanding private sector, develop the formal sector, especially in agriculture and manufacture, infrastructure and digital economy. As a matter of fact, the IFC gave a great contribution to the long-term, by financing from $163 million in 2003 to $6.2 billion in 2018 (Caslin 2019). However, some relevant economies as Nigeria highlight some critical issues and look still reluctant to sign the treaty (Monnet 2019). Instead of granting protection, the labour unions and local entrepreneurs worry that small-and-medium-sized companies may not be not competitive enough to face the huge multinationals that would take advantage of the trade deal if there is not a sufficiently reliable set of rules for foreign investors (Lopes 2018). Moreover, if it is undeniable that this treaty will give a unique voice to speak through at global level, the continent's share in world trade is still too low, despite the major strength of its one billion inhabitants: competences, productivity, and economic activity are still too weak compared to the rest of the world's economies (Lopes 2018). As a consequence, the mere establishment of a continental free trade area cannot be enough, if not aligned with a proper structural transformation. Nonetheless, despite the criticisms, a large unified internal market is more appealing both to foreign investors and small and medium enterprises, which can all enter regional value chains, protected from foreign concurrence and provided of a larger – and extremely appealing – internal market (Lopes 2018). Regional value chains and emerging markets offer sizable opportunities for small exporters as standards are lower and growth rates higher. In Africa, intra-regional trade in intermediate goods stands at only 4.1% of GDP, while in Asia and in the EU, figures show a different scenario (24.2% and 16.6% respectively) (AUC/OECD, 2018). However, access to intermediate inputs from regional and global markets positively impacts export competitiveness and domestic value addition, as data coming from 152 countries over a 15-year lapse of time confirmed (Kowalski et al., 2015).

Furthermore, several cross-border corridors have been implemented to enhance regional value chains. It has already happened with the **Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobo Dioulasso co-operation**, which dramatically enhanced agricultural production and growth of profitability and trade. This project now involves Cote d'Ivoire together with Mali and Burkina Faso – two of the most vulnerable countries of the area, in the middle of the Sahelian crisis. The creation of this special economic zone, signed in Sikasso on May 14, 2018, was an important step to "harmonise regional cooperation" for a common path towards sustainable development and fight against terrorism[4]. Signed in the ECOWAS and WAEMU framework, this Zone represents the political will to link three vulnerable cities (Sikasso, Bobo-Dioulasso and Korhogo), which actually form a natural geographical

---

[4] From the Declaration of Engagement, signed on 14 May 2018. Available at: https://www.fratmat.info/index.php/economie/zone-economique-sikasso-korhogo-bobodioulasso-ce-que-dit-la-declaration-d-engagement

triangle with a particular economic potential to be exploited. The first aim was indeed to foster investments for enterprises in **agribusiness**, given the increasing demand for food that the area is experiencing. Developing a value chain in place in this sector will tackle the population's needs, while being a major opportunity for investments.

The **Dakar-Abidjan-Lagos corridor** is another interesting regional economic cooperation. It is approximately 1,100 km long and links some of the largest and most economically dynamic cities in Africa, (Abidjan, Accra, Cotonou, Lomé and Lagos), while covering a large proportion of the population. It also connects economically dynamics ports in West Africa and will serve all the landlocked countries of the region, like Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. By linking some of Africa's largest and prosperous cities, the road will foster cross-border trade and integrate fast-growing economies within the region (ECOWAS 2019). This is expected to contribute to reducing the poverty levels of the population that are affected by trade with the rest of the region for their livelihood (ECOWAS 2019). The EU is one of the major partners of the African Development Bank, commissioner of the project. The latter highlighted indeed that intra-regional trade accounts for just 11 percent in West Africa, a far cry from its immense potential for the region. It welcomed the participation of other prestigious stakeholders in the project: the Japan International Development Agency (JICA), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), as well as the World Bank (ECOWAS 2019).

1.3(c) *Will of recovery: national plans of actions*

Helped by the international community's interventions, several countries have been facilized – and encouraged – to carry out more ambitious national plans than the previous years. Between 2000 and 2014 African countries were able to accelerate growth through expanding investment, especially in non-resource rich countries. Gross fixed capital investment expanded fast, and its contribution to non-resource-rich African countries' growth reached 1.9% per year over the 2000-08 period before slowing to 0.9% per year in the period from 2009-14. Similarly, in resource-rich African countries, investment's contribution to growth reached 1.1% per year before decreasing to 0.6% per year. Many African governments took advantage of their fiscal buffer and of available liquidities to invest in large infrastructure projects, as it is occurring in Cote d'Ivoire. These policies notably aimed to fill the infrastructure gap and counter the negative cycle of the global economic crisis. Nevertheless, maintaining the current level of investment is challenging. Lower economic growth and natural resource rents, but also natural disasters such as the Ebola epidemic and civil conflict have reduced public revenues in many resource-rich countries (Carbone 2018). Nonetheless, the efforts to react to this appealing economic growth have been consistent and witness the general will to consolidate this momentum. The examples that follow range from economic diversification to major development plans, all having dramatic repercussions on their economies.

States have been considering a **diversification in production** also at a regional level using the subsidiarity principle more effectively. Diversifying into products with larger spill-overs and a strong influence on other sectors can help create formal jobs and encourage local informal firms to their path towards formalisation (AUC/OECD, 2018: 49). This economic diversification of the area, even at a regional level, will be able to reduce the impact of further economic shocks and, contemporaneously, to find new sources to boost the growth. A good example of economic diversification is **Senegal**, which has successfully begun diversifying its exports through an agricultural value-chain approach. Senegal started approaching to trade openness (defined as total imports and exports of goods and services), which between 2011 and 2015 was about 75% of GDP, but the economy negatively reflected to exogenous shocks of energy, food and financial crises between 2007 and 2009. As a consequence, the government began supporting selected agricultural chains, such as rice, onions and fruits, helping the country improve food security and diversify its export basket. However, by focusing on the production side only, it missed the post-production support, which includes processing, storage and marketing. Yet lack of services as electricity generation and access to small equipment are only some of the obstacles for development that are being improved to exploit the dynamism of local economies and develop post-harvest activities, such as food processing, logistics or retail. For those targeted investments, as in transportation, warehousing or distribution capacities, a dual-strategy has proven to be strategic – the development of national plans and the collaboration with foreign investors (AUC/OECD 2018).

Reducing poverty and inequalities has been the rounding principle of the new plan launched in March in **Togo**. President Gnassingbé launched his government's plan of development, with a value of nearly 7 billion euros. The plan comes after a less-performing 2017, year in which the economic suffering caused even social uprisings. Yet immediately afterwards, the average growth rose to 5.6% against the 3.9 in 2007-2013. This new plan comes after a period of optimism and will allow growth at 7.6% within 2022, according to official national statistics (Coulibaly 2019). It mainly aims at improving the infrastructure system by attracting foreign partners: the country is indeed becoming a regional hub, thanks to the new airport in Lomé, inaugurated in 2016. Also, it forecasts the creation of more than half a million jobs in the three principal sectors – agriculture, manufactural and the extractive one. The government grants its contribution of 35% of the total, leaving the rest to private investors. The realization of the plan will be fundamental for the development of the country, with a remarkable decrease of incidence of income poverty at 44.6% - able to let the country gain 14 points in Human Index Development (Coulibaly 2019).

In **Cote d'Ivoire**, the spirit of the government is of a renewed optimism, too. It has recently approved its national plan of development for the 2016-2020 period, which is involving investments worth of 60 billion dollars. Here the transformation of the infrastructure system has played a significant role: in March 2018, a 5.7-billion-dollar plan was approved for the construction of new bridges, hydraulic infrastructures and transportation. The African Bank of Development also trusted this plan and has recently granted a pledge of more than 400 million euros for infrastructure projects, ranging from the rural to urban areas (*JeuneAfrique* 2019). This called for major demand for energy: the 2000 MW certified in 2017 are aimed to be increased to 4000 within the end of the plan. One of the major problems that West African countries all share is the lack of access to electricity. Today, 630 million people in the whole continent live without electricity access. It is the only continent in which fewer people will have access by 2030, when the population is expected to grow by over 40% in the meantime, reaching 1.7 billion by that year. Sub-Saharan will be the worst, accounting for 80% if the people in the world without access to electricity (Starace 2017). Therefore, many countries are also looking for new forms of energy to provide electrification as soon as possible, and renewable energies proved to be among of the most efficient types – and not only for non-resource-rich countries. The national plans are thus needed in order to provide the legal and political outlook where investors can intervene, resulting in double-win cooperation. The example of the Italian company Eni's massive investment in Ghana will be matter of next chapter: it will show the impact of a foreign intervention in an energy-demanding country, which is now even capable of exporting its electricity, after reaching total autonomy. In Ghana, energy access has been mainly favoured by the use of oil and gas, but other forms of energy are being deployed to grant overall access to electricity. In March, **The Gambia** inaugurated a project that will generate 20MW of energy photovoltaic and electricity available for more than one thousand schools and health centres across the country. Thanks to the involvement of partners such as the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, and the European Union, the programme will enable a 430 km new power distribution infrastructure and will be able to increase access to energy also in rural areas (*NewsCentral* 2019).

International attention has thus moved on energy provision for Africa. Four out of nine projects approved for funding at a recent meeting of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) will support the expansion of solar in Africa, including utility-scale photovoltaic system in **Nigeria**, called the Solar Intervention Program (Martín 2019). Therefore, despite many of West African countries are famously known oil-rich countries, the use of renewables is being implemented in order to combine many resources at disposition in this area to better fulfil the energy demand. The GCF, the African Development Bank and the Africa Finance Corporation will each loan 100 million dollars to scheme worth almost 500, set to build a major solar plant in the middle of the Gulf of Guinea. Moreover, GCF representatives gave close to 70 million dollars in loan and granted money for a scheme that is looking to foster private investments in photovoltaic across Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, and Togo. The West African Development Bank will be involved, by co-financing the West African initiative, providing funds comprised in the 70-million-dollar pledge, and another programme for the **Sahel**, supported by the African Development Bank, has been recently opened (Martín 2019).

1.4. A S.W.O.T. analysis of West African economy

This Chapter has been dedicated to the economic opportunities and criticalities that the Western region of Africa has been witnessing over the last few years. The implementation of sectoral policies is not sufficient to bring about the transformation of economies, but it is undeniable that major transformation, as the Africa Free Trade Area, will give fruitful outcomes in the future. The recent achievement of this agreement also witnesses the will showed by national governments to emerge at a global level. International cooperation is thus needed in order to sustain those effort-demanding national plans. Most of all, they represent chances of investment in a favourable momentum for West African economies. The following table, in the form of a S.W.O.T. analysis, summarizes, in the first row, the structural strengths and weaknesses that are currently visible in the region; the second row instead shows the opportunities and treats associated with them, respectively, for the future. This table will result particularly useful during the next chapter, where there will emerge the intentions showed by the Italian firms in investing in the region.

STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESSES**
Sustained growth forecasted for 2019-2021 Middle-class expansion Demographic expansion Youth population	Geographic distance Limited access to local credit Political instability
Urbanization process	Limited development of local private sector Insufficient access to energy Low-skilled local labour force
Reliable presence of natural resources Solar and wind energy still underdeveloped	Insufficient expansion of domestic internal demand Competition with newer and traditional foreign competitors
Presence of foreign direct investments (FDI) Infrastructure sector in development	

OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
Bigger market share Internal demand in expansion Increase of consumption goods	Reduced interest by private investors in intervening
High demand for processed food and services	Disincentives in cooperating with locals
Energy sector to be developed	Insufficient burden in strength to negotiate with African partners
Lively environment for investment and cooperation with other actors	

Next chapter will indeed be dedicated to the opportunities that Italian firms are grasping in West African growth, together with those that are planning to do so. Also, the global interest towards the region will be illustrated, since Italian investors are not the sole in the area. Italy is indeed one of the most affected countries in regard to the negative effects that might result from an improper management of the current growth. Next chapters will indeed draw on the structural causes that induce migration, analysed above, to see plausible solutions by involving the different stakeholders available. Therefore, the private sector has also been called to intervene in providing the tools from which West African countries can start off their development path and reducing the macrolevel causes that brings about migration.

CHAPTER II

ITALIAN BUSINESS IN WEST AFRICA: TRADITION AND FUTURE

2.1. A global renovated interest

West Africa has only recently become an area of potentiality in the eyes of Italian firms: the outstanding features of growth, described and analysed in the previous chapter, started appealing to the Italian private sector too, both for investments and as an export destination. The increasing volume of the West African middle-class triggered indeed two primary necessities: energy access and processed food. The need to provide them represented the major hint to reach this challenging – but attractive – land of opportunities. To intervene in these two major sectors, African governments have been calling for foreign investments in their countries. Their relaunched national plants, as well as economic diversification and regional integration, mentioned in the previous chapter, called for a **trade openness** to be included in the global economy. As a consequence of this profitable economic scenario, many other countries have decided to enter the West African soil.

Foreign partners have thus diversified, and African leaders can now count on win-win cooperation, without necessarily depend on one single country. In a speech in December 2018, John Bolton, President Donald **Trump**'s national security adviser, spoke of it as the site for a new era of "great power competition"[5]. However, it is not supposed to be a zero-sum game, since by definition, infrastructure investments might benefit all future comers and, most of all, Africans. However, the way through which local countries decide to play this card will be a decisive factor in how well the continent meets the expectations that foreign outsiders find in it (*The Economist* 2019).

The scenario is now much different if compared to the previous years. The combination that seems to work to sustain this African growth will involve aid, but with more precise targets; liberal policies, but through a gradual implementatio; and reforms, but managed autonomously. But most of all, there is a strong need for foreign investments, in particular in energy and technology, to let the continent start its way towards industrialization. Drawing on the words of an eminent Africa expert, Vice-Minister for Italian Foreign Affairs in 2011 and 2013, Marta Dassù wrote that after the colonial phase ("let us take care of everything"), the post-colonial phase ("it's all the West's fault"), and the post-post-colonial phase ("it's all the corrupt Africans' fault"), we have finally reached a "normal" one, in which "the focus is less on blame and more on shared responsibilities – between Africans and Europeans, governments and private-sector players" (Dassù 2017). In this context, the Italian contribution might be crucial and will spill over national soil: sustaining a sustainable growth also implies reducing the structural causes that bring about migration, starting from providing employment and means of sustainment.

[5] Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton on the Trump Administration's New Africa Strategy, delivered on December 13, 2018. Available online at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/

2.1(a) *Foreign direct investment and capital flows: the commitments to trigger West African growth*

Not only has Africa managed to increase its trade but also to diversify the partners to trade with (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsat, Deiana 2018). Since the turn of the century, the continent's trade with the rest of the world rose threefold, from US$276 billion in 2000 to US$806 billion in 2016. Over the same period, Africa also diversified its trading partners, moving from the traditional ones to engaging with countries such as China, India, and other emerging partners as the Gulf States and Russia. This is true both for African exports (51% of the total in 2016) and imports (46% of the total in 2016) (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsat, Deiana 2018). Meanwhile, the continent has boosted attractiveness for new investment, although they remain too low when compared to the potentialities that it might present (Leke et al. 2010). Overall, foreign direct investment has been the largest source of external finance for developing economies over the past decade, and the most reliable tool since they proved resilient to economic and financial shocks. But "developing economies can draw on a range of external sources of finance, which include not only FDI, but portfolio equity, long-term and short-term loans (private and public), official development assistance (ODA), remittances and other official flows" (UNCTAD 2018b). On average, between 2013 and 2017, FDI accounted for nearly 40% of external finance for them. For the less developing countries, however, ODA represents the most consistent source of finance from abroad, accounting 36% of external finance over the same period, while FDI reached 21% only. The latter ones, nonetheless, represent the most reliable source of financing nowadays since they exhibit lower volatility than most other sources and prove to be the most efficient in triggering a long-term sustainable growth (UNCTAD 2018b). For this reason, their flow should be strengthened.

Africa's business opportunities are now attracting foreign investors far beyond the continent's endowment in natural resources: the potential of domestic and regional markets motivated about 53.4% of new FDI projects to Africa in 2013-17[6]. This share is similar to Asia's level (55.7%), and ten points higher than in LAC (44.8%). **Special Economic Zones** (SEZs)[7] have been used by many African governments, capable of concentrating there the concentration of FDI. Unlike Doing Business's broad-based agenda, cluster policy allows governments to coordinate their investments for private enterprise growth by tackling multiple binding constraints simultaneously and concentrating resources (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsat, Deiana 2018). For budget-constrained countries, clusters can help focus resources into "pockets of infrastructure" or "islands of excellence" where economies of scale can be reaped (AfDB, OECD, UNDP 2017). In West Africa, there used to be only a handful of countries capable of exploiting this tool s effective to attract new investments. Nigeria case is probably the most striking one, helped by the Chinese intervention and the country's reliance on oil as an export product, though. But now, also Ghana and Senegal have been able, over the last few years, to exploit this tool and attract foreign partners. However, while such islands of excellence can bring many benefits,

[6] Author's re-elaboration of FDI markets database

[7] The term "SEZ" here covers a broad range of zones, such as free trade zones, export-processing zones, industrial parks, economic and technology development zones, high-tech zones, science and innovation parks, free ports, enterprise zones, and others.

relying solely on SEZs cannot provide enough jobs and productivity spill-overs. Without appropriate economic diversification, trade openness alone cannot help boosting productivity.
Indeed, the large role of mining and hydrocarbon products in exports undermines a shift in production towards strategic activities such as manufacturing, construction, and transportation. But as it has been shown in the previous chapter, the African continent, and the West in particular, still relies on raw minerals and agricultural commodities as its main export, struggling to diversify its products. Dependence on resource-extraction means that export baskets for some African countries mainly concentrate around a capital-intensive sector that employs relatively few workers, while productivity growth in agricultural exports remains low. Nonetheless, **capital concentration** has also been a valuable resource for African countries. The supply side composition of growth shows that capital has become the main contributor to foster Africa's economic growth. Capital service has overtaken labour as the major driving force behind GDP growth. Its contribution to GDP growth has been increasing since the early 2000s. For instance, capital increases contributed significantly to the rapid growth of several countries such as Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Senegal (IMF 2017a). Interestingly, the contribution of capital to annual growth was more striking for non-resource-rich countries, where it increased from 2.4% in the 2000-08 period to 3.1% between 2009-14, while in resource-rich countries declined from 3.1% to 2.6% for the same periods. This significant contribution of capital to local GDP can also be observed from a global perspective: capital flows reached 6.9% of global GDP in 2017, above the post-crisis low of 4.7% of GDP of two years before (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsat, Deiana 2018). Global capital flows nevertheless remain well below pre-crisis levels and needs to be recovered, if the proper investment environment is to be reconstructed (UNCTAD 2018b). This recent recovery has been predominantly driven by capital flows other than FDI. Therefore, the two financial instruments should go together: while through FDI, firms can enter a foreign soil and start a new activity there, capital flows give the incentive and shape a proper scenario where to invest even for the future.
Nonetheless, while it is true that capital deepening has boosted labour productivity (by 2.1% a year between 2000 and 2010), the recent growth in **total factor productivity** (TFP)[8] is weak in both resource-rich and non-resource-rich countries (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsat, Deiana 2018). For the 2009-16 period, TFP growth contributed 0.2% to GDP growth in the rich and nothing to GDP growth in non-resource-rich countries. This average even hid the high volatility and diversity in TFP growth. Where resources are present, TFP proliferated during the 2000-08 period when commodity prices skyrocketed, especially among oil exporters as Nigeria. As average energy commodity prices more than halved between 2012 and 2016 and the production of the extractive sector dropped, TFP growth negatively contributed to annual growth between the years of recession (2015 and 2016). In many non-resource-rich countries and especially in agriculture-based economies, TFP growth is dependent on agricultural commodity prices and climatic conditions (IMF 2017a). Without a proper intervention through investments to sustain productivity, the already-mentioned figures of growth meet serious

[8] Total factor productivity measures how efficiently the economy uses capital and labour. It is calculated as the gain in output that is not accounted for by the change in the stock of capital and labour.

difficulties to be translated into people's living conditions and in national economies. Therefore, the investments that are needed are not merely quantitative: they strongly need to address the structural transformation of the African economy qualitatively, urgently demanded to sustain the growth. The weak total factor productivity growth, despite capital deepening, suggests **investment inefficiency** (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsat, Deiana 2018). If it is undeniable that the trade openness of governments contributed to this more appealing environment where to invest, free trade alone is not enough to galvanize foreign actors to enter. Governments have put in place other elements to push foreign partners in their countries. Recent progress in **reducing administrative procedures** and the cost of starting and doing business has made the business environment more attractive: 29.5% of foreign investors cite this improvement among the main motivations to invest in Africa, compared to 12% in 2003-2007 (Nguyen-Quoc, Minsat, Deiana 2018). Sub-Saharan Africa has been the region with the highest number of reforms each year since 2012, since one-third of all business regulatory reforms took place in this area of the world (Doing Business 2019). This year, the report captured a record 107 reforms across 40 nations in this area, with direct, positive consequences on the region's private sector. The average time and cost to register a business, for example, has declined from less than 60 days. Now, two of the top-10 countries that have been registered are placed in West Africa (Togo and Cote d'Ivoire), showing outstanding progress of the region at a global level, capable of attracting global attention too (Doing Business 2019).

2.1(b) *A new "Scramble for Africa"? Competition and declining commitment by foreign actors*

Several partners from all around the world have been benefiting from this scenario – and not always the traditional or the less distant countries. Despite the undeniable closeness to this region, which would make investment easily plausible, Italian firms have not traditionally been the most involved in the West African region (Raffaelli 2017). And even nowadays that former colonies have slightly alleviated their ties, they have to compete with newly emerging actors. China and the United Arab Emirates are now on the top of the committers' list, being the real competitors to the African markets. In its first number in March, The Economist titled "The new scramble for Africa" (2019), recalling what Western powers used to carry out during the XIX century and onwards. But if it is undeniable that this scramble is taking place right now, we cannot say that it is *new* – and therefore it is not even *news* (Carbone 2019). This interest towards Africa is already at least one-decade old. Already in 2004 did *Le Monde Diplomatique* titled "United States: the new scramble for Africa" and in 2010, the *Financial Times* came out with its "China's new scramble for Africa" (Carbone 2019). Investors from the United States, the United Kingdom and France still hold the largest direct investment stakes in Africa (UNCTAD 2018b). The same report also mentions that Italy has also emerged as a major source of investment, particularly in the **energy** sector. At the same time, investors from developing countries are growing: China, followed by South Africa, Singapore, and India, lie among the "top 10" of investors in Africa. China's FDI, measured in stock, reached 40 billion dollars in 2016, two-and-a-half-times their commitment in

2011. Thus, the path was already paved some years ago, but what is true is that foreign powers do not look to decrease their commitment – or at least, not all of them.

Indeed, FDI to West Africa replicates the global scenario of a small **decline**. The World Investment Report by UNCTAD (2018b) depicts a precise situation for the trends of the region. It states that FDI fell by 11% to 11.3 billion dollars, but they were partly due to **Nigeria**'s economy remaining largely depressed. The reduction of 21% of FDI to that country was due to a dramatically declined domestic demand, but the recovery in oil production and the general economy in 2017 be able to let companies return to Nigeria soon (UNCTAD 2018b). The Nigerian soil is fertile and the new technology start-ups in this country, already mentioned in the previous chapter, have been a substantial help to diversify FDI inflows and will be a useful tool for the future. The Report indeed indicates inflows from United States firms, including Uber, Facebook, Emergent Payments and Meltwater Group, while Chinese investments in the country targets the textile, automotive and aerospace industries (UNCTAD 2018b).

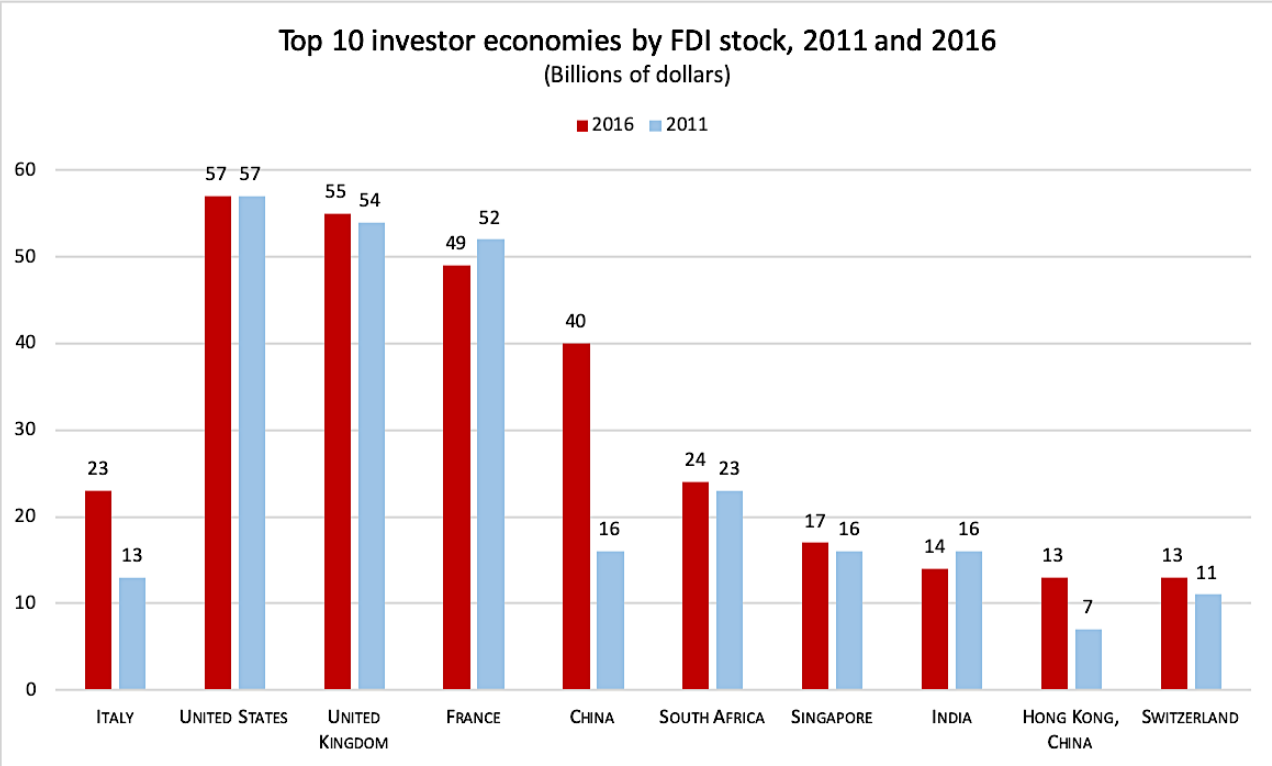
In contrast, there are some positive figures of FDI in the region already. **Ghana** attracted 3.3 billion dollars in FDI flows, capable of counting on a recent fiscal consolidation and clearer legal framework that boosted international attention. The UNCTAD's report also identified the importance of the ongoing investment from Italy's Eni to develop the large Sankofa gas field, which will be deeply discussed in the following section, an investment that could further encourage FDI in 2018. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, FDI increased of 17% and in Senegal of 13%, thanks to the supportive public investments by their government and the renewed plans for economic diversification (UNCTAD 2018b).

Even though the flow of FDI is partly declining, the projections for African recovery look positive and are not discouraged from these figures, bringing a 21% recovery for the following year. The projection is fostered by the expectations of a continued improvement in commodity prices and macroeconomic fundamentals: the above-mentioned steps of interregional cooperation could encourage stronger FDI flows in 2018, but the impact of foreign-financed infrastructure projects will be crucial to help boost economic growth. This should "help generate FDI inflows into the region and, for this reason, should not be seen as a further occasion for competition" (UNCTAD 2018b). It then adds that "the major shift that is occurring in Africa right now largely depends on their **leadership**, who look eager to exploit this foreign presence consciously: unless government policy actively works to foster linkages and diversify inflows, Africa's commodity dependence will continue to direct FDI into commodity enclaves, causing FDI to remain cyclical, with fewer spill-overs" (UNCTAD 2018b). But the signs for this consciousness are visible, and the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area (**AfCFTA**) agreement demonstrates. Cooperation among African states and with foreign partners will represent a major incentive for the whole continent to sustain its growth. And, as a consequence, the attitude of foreign partners is changing: from the ancient years of zero-sum games, typical of the Cold War, now Africa is a land of opportunities and challenges where a good growth can only but be a positive-sum one, with both locals and foreign investors benefiting from this scenario. Therefore, companies already operating in Africa should consider their expansion. Entry in emerging economies can provide chances to create new markets, establish brands, industrialize the area, influence customer preferences, and establish long-term relationships for the years to come. This type of approach implies that business, if well sustained by looking at the local dimension, can help build the "Africa of the future": business, governments, and civil society can all be involved in a common goal to meet the continent's numerous challenges and improve the living conditions of its inhabitants (Leke et al., 2010).

2.2. Italian firms in the African continent

Italian presence in the continent is affirmed both in investment and trade activities and has historically reflected this type of approach, through which the local impact has never been underestimated. However, despite the undeniable geographical closeness, there have traditionally been more reluctance shown by Italian firms to approach the African context (Carbone et al. 2013). Much of the investment activity used to take place in the North, where countries were perceived as safer: the incidence of a more transparent legal outlook, which was a direct consequence of their governments, perceived as more stable partners, represented a more appealing chance where to stay for longer lapses of time. Moreover, the limited access to local credit was seen as a strong disincentive for smaller enterprises with less capital to count on. As a consequence, the initiatives that have been undertaken so far regarded single companies that had the capacities to take the risk to expand their market even towards less safe areas. Thus, Italian multinational companies were traditionally more cable of building international trajectories in this area, in all their autonomy. Small and medium enterprises, on the other hand, suffered much more the deficiency in structural strengths – from limited access to credit, given their more modest amount of capital, to less enhanced managerial capacities. Their "sunk costs" were usually higher than predictable return and this proved to be a strong disincentive to make them prone to face the risks (Carbone et al. 2013).

Nonetheless, over the last decade, Italian commitment to the continent has significantly increased. Greenfield investment jumped to third position in 2016, only behind the powerful, newly emerging partners as China and the United Arab Emirates (ITA 2017). This boost was mostly given thanks to Eni's investment in the Zohr plant in Egypt – the largest gas reserve in the Mediterranean Sea. But if looking at the overall stock of FDI, China is not the largest investor in Africa. As previously mentioned, the United States are still the most committed (with a 57-billion-dollar stock), followed by United Kingdom (55) and France (49). Italy, despite staying still behind with its 23-billion-dollar-worth total stock, saw a significant increase in its involvement though, given that in 2011 they almost doubled (UNCTAD 2018b). In the following graph illustrates the Italian commitment, compared to the other actors in Africa, calculated in FDI stock:



Source: **Author**'s re-elaboration from UNCTAD, "World Investment report", New York and Geneva: United Nations, 2018

Still, much of Italian FDI flow still reaches the countries of the North, with the sole exception of Angola and Nigeria (ITA 2017). Yet by looking at the trend of foreign subsidiary companies where Italy participates, between 2005 and 2015, the Italian Trade Agency reports an increase of 110.1% in Sub-Saharan Africa, which followed a rise of 150% of revenue over the same lapse of time (but in Northern Africa, the latter registered a +355,3%). Nonetheless, there are now numerous opportunities that other African markets present, and they are coming across in a very favourable momentum for Italian firms' internationalization. Over the last few years, indeed, as a consequence of the expressed interest by new firms in the area, several strategies have been put in practice in order to meet the demand for market expansion abroad risen by national firms. The efforts and tools deployed by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as the agencies involved in this process of promotion, will be part of discussion of the third chapter. There, it will be shown that the Italian firms' economic interests, described in this section, do meet the prerogatives of the national plan of foreign policy for West Africa.

West Africa is indeed looking attractive in two fields in which Italian excellence is globally recognized: providing **energy and processed food**. These sectors that are coming out as the most demanded by Italian firms' investments show enormous potentialities for the future. Firstly, given the richness of resources, but a substantial deficiency in energy, enterprises engaged in extractive, gas supplying and renewable resources are called into account to provide sustainable and durable forms of its delivery. The development of an infrastructure network is thus strictly connected to it: in order to better develop the energy capacities of a country, there is a major need for enhancing the infrastructure network that urges both to deliver electricity and to build the whole plant. Indeed, the big companies usually involved in the energy sector have also been capable of creating the proper structure needed to sustain their commitment to that plant durably. The first Italian firm which landed on the African soil was the major national provider of energy from oil and gas industry. Eni, headed by its then-brilliant CEO Enrico Mattei, entered the continent in the 1950s and shortly after seized the huge potentiality of the Gulf of Guinea. The recent discoveries of natural gas in those countries had a tremendous impact on their economies, finally capable of counting on their own natural resources. These discoveries did not exclude the use of renewable resources, too, paving the way to other companies that have shown a genuine interest in committing their effort almost exclusively to this sector. Enel Green Power is now globally recognized as a leader in providing electricity from renewable resources – namely, exploiting solar and wind energy. Its commitment is now also known in Africa and the company is currently showing its interest in entering the West African soil. Its role as a big, globally famous enterprise also lies in their capacity to suggest local institutions the proper legal framework through which energy transition towards green economy can finally take place.

Access to energy is strictly linked to any other type of investment. If some areas of the region, as some rural ones, are still totally isolated, firms find it hard to start any new economic activity. On the other hand, it is undeniable that certain sectors present themselves as so appealing for future investments that they can even galvanize other investors to take part in the same scene. It is the case of the emerging interest in the previously-mentioned ***agribusiness*** sector, in which Italian firms can easily be involved both as regards investment and their export capabilities. Not only does this emerging sector encourage energy access, but it will also be able to include a wide range of other enterprises in the industrial sector: from the first steps before planting, providing the right fertilizers for stable growth, until the packaging and marketing of the product. Moreover, the Italian manufacture is well appreciated in Africa, representing a favourable opportunity to export machinery for industries (Carbone et al. 2013). If industrialization starts within one of the most required fields – food security, a huge spillover will take place: from the reduction of poverty to the creation of employment, Africa can only benefit from this cooperation.

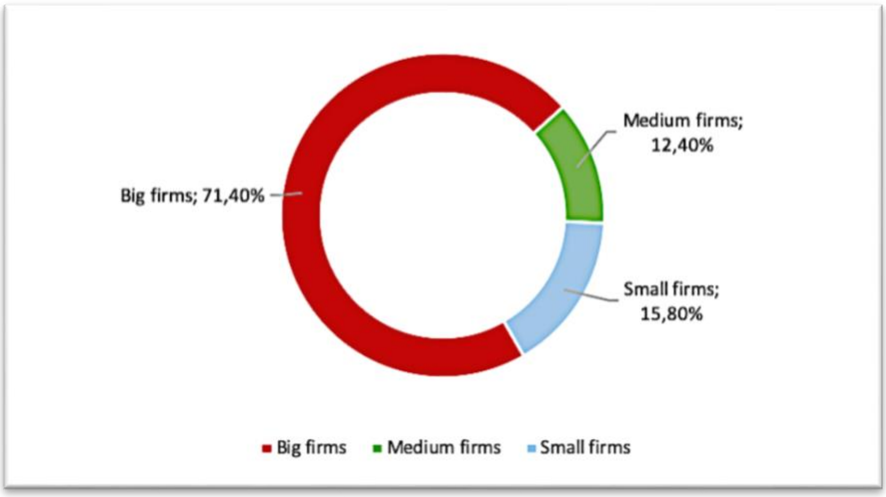
2.2(a) *Characteristics of Italian firms investing abroad and in Africa*

The two sectors above mentioned also present two different models of firms investing in foreign soil. Indeed, the capabilities to build plants for extracting oil and gas, or to provide electricity, demand large capital available from the beginning. The two companies which will be dealt with throughout the following section are thus among the **big** ones, in the category of firms' dimension[9]. Indeed, Italian commitment in FDI outflows has been mainly characterized by the contribution of this type of groups, which were able to carry out several kinds of measures: from pacts for supplying materials and trade and technical-productive licenses, until joining franchising and joint ventures. In the last Italian Trade Agency report (2018), it emerges that over the last five

[9] Big firms are those that employ more than 250 workers, according to the ITA classification that has been used by the author here.

years the number of Italian participations in foreign companies abroad has increased with an average of 4% during the considered period (with the sole decrease in 2016). In 2017, the share of small and medium enterprises[10] dwarfed, while the weight of bigger enterprises came back. Still, they maintain their significant role in European states and even in North Africa, where there is a substantial number of small and medium ones. Still, when dealing with more distant areas, as Sub-Saharan Africa is perceived, the burden largely hangs towards enterprises with more than 250 workers. In the last survey available by Istat (the national institution that provides official statistics), in 2015 there were more than 22 thousand foreign companies controlled by Italian multinational companies, meaning 408 more than the previous year (Blankenburg 2018). However, in this category Italy ranks only fourth in Europe, behind France, the United Kingdom, and Germany, while it is followed by Spain. The number of employees in Italian companies that own foreign ones is also much smaller than in Germany or France (79 in Italy, versus 198 in the former and 151 in the latter). Yet this figure of average employees is still higher when compared to other Italian firms operating only in the domestic market (counting on an average of 3.7 workers). This element shows a structural characteristic of Italian companies that may look unsuitable when dealing with their internationalization. The dimension of the firm has indeed proved crucial, firstly when dealing with more distant areas (Blankenburg 2018). The geographical distance looks like one of the main contributors to SME's reluctance of investment, and usually settling for export intentions. Indeed, in Sub-Saharan Africa the presence of Italian firms' investments looks divided in this way: the largest share (71.4%) is owned by big companies, followed by small (15.8%) and medium (12.4%) (ITA 2018):

- **COMPOSITION OF ITALIAN FIRMS INVESTING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**



Source: **Author**'s re-elaboration of data from Italian Trade Agency, 2018

By looking at the distribution of firms in sectors, both in the extractive industry and in electricity and gas suppliers, the presence of big companies is almost total (around 95% in both of them) (ITA 2018). To meet the demand for energy of a country, there is a strong incentive to deliver technology and know-how, capital

[10] Small enterprises are considered those with less than 50 employees; medium enterprises with a range from 50 to 249 employees.

capacities and infrastructure projects, which are not always available for smaller enterprises. Therefore, investment capacity has largely undermined the small-and-medium enterprises' presence, at least so far. The following table, in a handful of bullet points, grasps some of the major characteristics of Italian enterprises according to their dimension, that can undermine their activities of investments abroad:

- **FEATURES OF ITALIAN FIRMS, CLASSIFIED BY THEIR DIMENSION**

	BIG	SMALL AND MEDIUM
Capital capacity	Reliance of the company on large and diversified amount of capital	Limited; need for more defined instruments for access to credit
Geographical diversification	More capacity to diversify their activity of investment	Difficult to reach more than one or 2 countries (for medium) of destination
Personnel	Wide range of experts for institutional relations and foreign market characteristics	Cannot rely on skilled experts on international sphere, but count on the strategy of a restricted number of managers
Product diversification	Capacity to deliver several goods and services; in energy sector, they can also provide infrastructures	Usually inserted in a value chain in which they produce one type of product
Main sectors	Extractive industry; electricity, gas and water delivery; metallurgy; technological and electronic tools; infrastructure; communication services	Agriculture and food processing (whole value chain associated to agro-food); textile and leatherwear, typical of "made in Italy" brand (mostly medium).
Revenue share	Larger, even in sectors where they do not enjoy majority of market	Suffer to turn their productivity into higher revenues

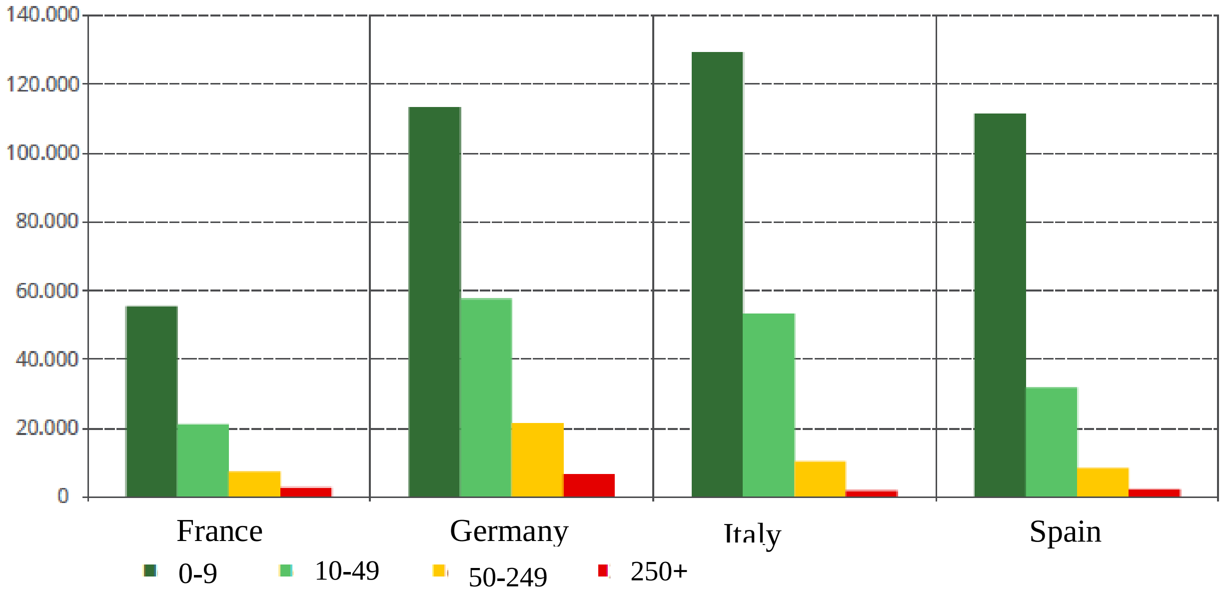
Source: **Author**'s elaboration of data from ITA (2018)

Nonetheless, the activities of big companies have also been able to pave the way for other ones, of smaller dimensions even, eager to invest in those countries, as the example of Eni in Ghana will represent. Given the positive image that this company has given of Italy, African leaders look very welcoming to other national firms eager to invest in the country. The Italian Trade Agency, which will be later mentioned again in Chapter III, recently opened a new agency rightly in Ghana, a country that has been attracting Italian firms' attention given the performances that this country was having. Political stabilization, more economic diversification, but also the achievement of access to energy thanks to Eni's plants, proved significant in determining the choice of many investors to reach this foreign soil. These figures of investments are then slightly changing with the horizon of opportunities that the West African environment is presenting. Those countries, now not anymore known for their richness of resources, are attracting other sectors where even those structural limits of SMEs can be overcome, or at least bettered off. So, while in the extractive and electricity industry, the prevalence of big model is predominant, the other sector that will be analysed in this chapter paved the way also to small-and-medium-sized enterprises.

2.2(b) *Italian export figures: the trends of internationalization*

This section deals with the other side of internationalization. If the presence of big companies is undeniably superior in data of investments abroad, the trends in exports show a different picture. Small and medium enterprises are the most numerous that reach foreign markets and outperform other European partners (ITA 2018), as the following graph shows:

- **NUMBER OF EXPORTING ENTERPRISES, CLASSIFIED BY THEIR DIMENSION (2015)**



Source: ITA 2018, elaboration on Eurostat data

The reliance of export is of utmost importance in this context of renovated interest towards Africa. Indeed, it comes across as the first way for initially less suitable firms to approach the continent. Italy can also exploit its role in this peculiar model of business: in several occasions, leaders of both private and public sectors have referred to Italian excellence in this model, which can be replicated in their local context (Carbone et al. 2013). Still, this would demand further commitments by those companies, including more capabilities of investing. And, as analysed above, smaller enterprises present some structural weaknesses that make them less competitive when meeting companies with greater capabilities. But the trends of internationalization, starting with their commitments first through exports, can be the beginning of tracing a different path, that can prove crucial in their first steps towards **economic recovery**. In the African context, it will result in a fruitful collaboration with the local industries too, as the sector of *agribusiness* will later show as an irrefutable proof.

By looking at the overall data regarding export of Italian products, the trends have indeed looked positive over the last few years. With the sole exception of Asia, in all geographical destination of Italian export, Istat registered the best-performing result in 2017, with a +7.2% compared to the previous year. The implementation of the "**4.0 Industry**" plan by the then-government increased investments, in particular for firms eager to deliver their commitments abroad (ITA 2018). In 2018, however, the figures look still paler: a modest +3.1% compared to the outstanding performances registered in 2017[11]. Several factors have affected this substantial decrease, which let the import overcome the export share in the economy; for instance, the Russian embargo harshly affected some Italian exporters, who are now eager to find new markets where to deliver their products.

The opportunities of exporting are felt both on the firms' side and on national economy, too. Since 2010, Italian exports have significantly supported the aggregate national growth, in a context of weak internal demand. According to the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, "exporting firms have proved capable of adjusting to the shifting external environment more effectively than before" and "have also succeeded in marking a significant, albeit still incomplete, reduction in their export growth differential with respect to their main competitors", namely German enterprises (Bugamelli et al. 2018a). Several effects are visible in their economic performance immediately after entering a foreign scenario. With a comparison between export-oriented and only domestic-oriented markets, the ITA report (2018) observed a +1.8% of **employment** in the former, since internationalization also implies more labour force to be hired, in particular the high-skilled one. The **characteristics** of Italian exporting firms look similar to other countries. The most numerous are the big enterprises, but they are still fewer than the German and French counterparts, enjoining also a minor export value when compared to the two latter. Moreover, as it is a globally recognized as an Italian peculiarity, many of them are small or even *micro* enterprises. Indeed, their share in the type of exporting firms increased from 2012, with an 3.7% increase of the micro and 4.2% of the small ones present abroad (ITA 2018). While this is undeniably a national characteristic that has to be also defended outside the national soil, small firms face many more difficulties than bigger groups when dealing with foreign scenarios. The presence of high fixed entry costs on foreign markets determines access conditions that require higher levels of productivity and efficiency. On the other hand, presence on foreign markets generates a **dynamic context** that stimulates superior performance, made of competitive context, learning by exporting and scale effects (Moducci and Zurlo 2017). There is thus a major push for even smaller enterprises to expand beyond domestic markets, but many efforts must be done in order to implement this significant economic shift.

The evidence by size of company and productivity confirms that a structural strengthening of the international competitiveness of the Italian economy requires removing obstacles, internal and external to companies, which limit the capacity and propensity of those already internationalized to increase company perimeter and the level of efficiency (Bugamelli, Lotti et al., 2018). The re-composition over the last 15-20 years within the population of exporters already consolidated towards medium-large companies has indeed already provided

[11] Source: Italian Ministry for Economic Development drawing on data by Istat. Yet, data for 2018 are still provisional.

significant support to the recovery of Italian exports recorded since 2010 (Bugamelli et al., 2018b). Greater **geographical diversification** on the part of the numerous medium-sized companies could provide a further boost to Italy's foreign sales, above all if it takes the form of expansion into more dynamic markets, such as those outside Europe. Between 2012 and 2016 (the last available data), target markets raised in number, and for 2017, the outlook was already forecasted as positive (ITA 2018). Several studies have indeed proved that with the increase in the number of export areas, there is a definite improvement in the state of economic and financial health, while this relationship is less marked considering the increase in exported products (Boselli 2017). Eager to go out their economic stagnation (Carbone 2016), also small and medium enterprises are currently committing themselves to expand their horizons to markets that used to be avoided for the high risk associated, mostly misinterpreting their real data. The following table better summarises the opportunities related to internationalization, which are shaping the trends of Italian companies abroad. The table sums up the numerous studies conducted by ITA when dealing with the latest developments of Italian firms expanding abroad and, more interestingly, they involve all sizes of firms:

- **OPPORTUNITIES OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF FIRMS**

Reliance on high-skilled labour force	More employment
Incentive to further investments	Added value per worker
More competition with other foreign partners	Incentive to more digitalisation
Geographical diversification increases economic and financial health	More products delivered
Increase in total output	Increase in total productivity

Source: **Author**'s re-elaboration of ITA studies, mainly those by Blankenburg (2017), Monducci and Zurlo (2017), Boselli (2017).

For all these characteristics, both firm models – big and medium-and-small sized – are approaching, with different commitments, the West African soil. The two following sections have been thus divided in the sectors that they deal with: energy and *agribusiness*.

2.3. Tackling energy lack: the role of Italian firms in West Africa

Italian presence in Africa starts during the 1950s, when the first CEO of Eni, Enrico Mattei, reached the Egyptian soil and from there established the presence of his company in the whole continent reaching the current days, always continuing increasing its commitment. The case that will be dealt in this section takes place in Ghana, where the major plant recently built is delivering the energy supplying that the country is demanding, following in a spiral of growth for the country.

However, Eni is not the sole Italian firm providing energy to the continent nowadays. Enel Green Power's long-established experience at a global level has made its entrance in the continent with reliability and confidentiality, too. This other major Italian company has recently delivered striking examples of electricity supplying through solar and wind power, with a solid presence in South Africa, Zambia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Morocco. Given that the wide electricity gap that affects Sub-Saharan Africa harshly hits also the Western part of the continent, Enel Green Power too is considering its expansion in some of its countries, which look willing to undertake a transition towards green energy.

2.3(a) *Eni's action in Africa*

The traditional presence of Italian firms in Africa begins with Eni, the big oil and gas company which entered the African continent already in the 1950s. In a moment when Africa, despite so close to the Italian peninsula, was surely not among national priorities, its then-CEO Enrico Mattei already saw the potentialities of market and resources that the continent could bring (Pistelli 2017). Africa is the **main geographical area** of Eni's portfolio, with over 50% of oil and natural gas production for 1 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (boe/d) and almost half of proven hydrocarbon reserves (3 billion boe). From the first steps taken in the Egyptian desert in 1954, Eni has steadily increased its presence on the continent, and it has now become the first international oil company in Africa for the production of hydrocarbons, which represents almost 10% of the total production in the area. Today Eni is present in 15 African countries, with its most recent entry into the waters of the Moroccan Atlantic. Over the next four years, the main project start-ups are in Africa, with an expected incremental output of over 350,000 boe/d (Eni 2017a)

In an interview carried out with one of the company's experts working in the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, several elements have been touched in order to contextualize the activity of Eni in the continent better. From the beginning, Eni adopted an innovative and collaborative approach with producing countries, which translates into a continually increasing integration between the company's development projects and the growth opportunities for Eni's areas of presence. This development model has always allowed Eni to combine its long-term investment vision with **attention to local development**, in particular with initiatives to access energy and drinking water, vocational training projects, health protection, and the environment and agricultural development programmes. This was particularly true for Africa, where, in addition to its strong presence in North African countries, Eni holds important productive assets in the western area: Ghana and Nigeria are the main ones in the area, but the Italian firm's activity of extraction is also relevant in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire (Eni 2017a).

In sub-Saharan Africa, Eni has invested in energy generation using **associated gas** – which was originally burned in flares – and today is the main energy producer among all international oil companies. This new technique of using the already-present natural gas resource without burning it represents a major chance of gain for the producing country. As it emerged several times during the interview at the Ministry, this method through which the gas is not be immediately exploited, provides a resource to be sold, as both Ghana and

Nigeria are planning to do for the near future. Therefore, natural gas can become another product to be easily traded, representing a further development of economic **diversification**, strongly needed by West African countries. Thanks to this method, Eni has managed to improve access to energy in areas where energy supply was scarce and unreliable while **reducing gas flaring**, which has been particularly detrimental for this area (World Bank 2017). Together with over-exploitation of natural resources, gas flaring has been incriminated in biodiversity loss and environmental pollutions in the Niger Delta. Studies and reports implicating different oil and gas exploration and production activities in the Niger Delta to overall biodiversity depletion abound (Ito and Ugbome 2017). In total in the sub-Saharan region Eni has installed electrical systems to supply energy to over 18 million people, in a peculiar energy mix that involves renewables, too. This model is replicated in Angola, where Eni has already signed an agreement for the development of new projects (for the installation of solar photovoltaic systems at the health centre of Kilunda), as well as in **Ghana**. Here, in November 2016, Eni and The Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) signed a cooperation agreement for the joint assessment of development opportunities in the renewable energy sector and, in particular, to assess the technical and economic feasibility of a solar plant from 20 to 50 MW.

2.3(b) *Eni's vision in Ghana: electricity, sustainability and development*

The discovery of **oil and gas** in Ghana was a major finding for this country and Eni was the undeniable protagonist contributing at this aim. Indeed, the above-mentioned World Investment Report by UNCTAD (2018) mentioned the large Sankofa gas field, which might be able to boost FDI to country and, as a consequence, dramatically favour its growth. A growth that, as recently predicted by the International Monetary Fund (2019), looks to be the most attractive in the world. The discovery of oil and gas deposits in 2011 allowed the country to pass from "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries" to "Lower Middle-Income Country" group in the World Bank classification (World Bank 2011). Oil and gas developments significantly complement the country's efforts to move now even further, reaching the middle-income status. Ghana's economy is expected to sustain its growth over the medium term, galvanized by improved oil and gas production, increased level of investment by the private sector, and political stability, which favoured an ongoing public infrastructure development (World Bank 2017). Indeed, broader access to energy has been able to give a substantial boost to the national economy, which is now one of the most diversified in the region: Ghana is now a global producer of cocoa, coffee, and gold, but it is also rich in timber, bauxite, manganese, and diamonds for industrial usage. Now, thanks to these findings, the country will also be able not only to reach energy independence but to become an electricity exporter, too. The commencement of local gas production in 2015 is expected to reduce the cost of electricity generation and oil imports. Thanks to this second phase of the project, in which the Eni's commitment reached almost 8billion, the Italian company will carry out the **largest private investment** ever taken place in Ghana (World Bank 2017).

Eni's presence in the country dates back to 1960, when Ghana Oil Company Limited (GOIL) was created. The first oil research activities took place between 1978 and 1985. This long-lasting presence witness the company’s willingness to stay in a country, leaving an indelible imprint on a country’s development. Eni has returned to the country with exploration and oil production activities since 2009, with the subsidiary Eni Ghana (which is 100% Eni). The major project in which the company is involved right now and represents this incredible boost to Ghana’s economy is the Offshore Cape Three Points (OCTP) oil block, whose operator is Eni Ghana. In the OCTP license, important discoveries were made both of oil (Sankofa East in 2012) and of non-associated gas (Sankofa in 2009 and Gye Nyame in 2011). OCTP is a joint venture set up by Eni Ghana with 44.44%, Vitol (from Switzerland) with 35.56% and GNPC (Ghana National Petroleum Corporation) with a 20% stake (World Bank 2017). The peak of production is forecasted in 2020 and it will amount to 83 thousand barrels of oil equivalent per day. In June 2018 Eni started the production of gas from the Sankofa field, which will produce 180 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmscf/d) for at least 20 years (Eni 2017a). These figures are of utmost importance for a country as Ghana, since they amount to a quantity sufficient to convert half of the power generation capacity to gas electricity of Ghana – a *unicum* in the Sub-Saharan whole region. Deliveries to the local gas distribution network started in August 2018 and in the same year production net to Eni amounted to 19 kboe/d (of which 15 kboe/d liquid). Only in February 2019, Sankofa gas sales remained at around 70 mmscf/d, below potential, due to delays on the part of national buyers in completing the preparatory activities for receiving gas in the Ghana network. In March 2016, Eni Ghana also obtained a new exploration license, called Cape Three Points Block 4 (Eni operator, 42.47%), in the prolific Tano basin, further strengthening the company's position in the Ghanaian offshore. The new block, which covers an area of 1,127 km^2 in a water depth between 100 and 1,200 meters, is located adjacent to the OCTP block and, in the case of exploratory success, will benefit from the existing OCTP project infrastructures. During the interview with the Eni expert at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was already known that the drilling of the first exploration well is expected in the first half of 2019, in continuity with the drilling campaign for the development wells of the OCTP block.

Eni Ghana is actively involved in defining development opportunities in the field of **renewable energies** and in particular of a 5 MW floating photovoltaic plant (expandable up to 40 MW) to be realized in synergy with VRA (Volta River Authority), installed on the lake Vault in the basin upstream of the Kpong dam (Eni 2017b). This is part of a broader scope developed by the Italian company when dealing with African markets. In an effort to contribute to the transition towards a low-carbon energy future, Eni has recently developed an integrated strategy that combines with its low-carbon portfolio (where gas accounts for over 50%) and reduction and compensation of GHG emissions, a commitment for renewables in countries of operations (Eni 2017a). Eni is investing in renewable energy to include various energy solutions that are customized according to the needs of the countries, generating energy from renewable sources together with the production of existing oil and gas using existing plants (brownfield projects) or through off-grid plants (greenfield projects[12]). Therefore, renewable energies are used as a further tool in order to better sustain the country's growth, while providing a broader national strategy for energy supplying (Eni 2017b).

The cooperation with local authorities is extremely productive and Eni is now one of Ghana's main economic partners, thanks to the major involvement of the company in the country's sustainable growth. Already in 2015, the predictable effects of the oil and gas discoveries were so optimistic that the company decided to move Sub-Saharan African headquarters in this country (Eni 2015). In October 2018, the President of the Republic of Ghana Nana Addo-Dankwa Akufo-Addo and the CEO of Eni Claudio Descalzi met in Accra to discuss Eni's operational activities in the country, and the leading role that Ghana can play in the partnership recently signed between Eni and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the development of renewable energy, energy efficiency, reforestation, and clean cooking initiatives in Africa. In the press release, the CEO affirmed that the partnership strategically aims at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular the SDG 7 (providing access to sustainable and clean energy), SDG 13 (combatting climate change), and SDG 15 (for the sustainable use of the ecosystem terrestrial) (Eni 2018a). The company's commitment made common the skills, the ability to innovate and the networks in the territory with UNDP. With the latter, Eni signed a Memorandum of Understanding in September 2018, when the UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner, highlighted the contribution of the private sector, that with the UN agency can "combine expertise, ability to innovate, and on-the-ground networks" to "enable better access to sustainable energy sources in Africa" (Eni 2018b).

As a consequence, the reasons for this benevolent welcome by local authorities do not include the mere impact on the national economy. Figures of growth alone do not represent development, if not accompanied by a proper plan of a sustainable path. And the effect that the company is making on the local communities is already visible, and the original approach inaugurated by Enrico Mattei, once profoundly criticized for its bold position, is now a successful tool widely appreciated in hosting countries. The flags of Eni and Ghana wave together both in operational fields and in areas where socio-economic development projects have been carried out for local communities, with particular attention to access to energy. Participation of inhabitants and local companies promotion of their development is considered an added value for the socio-economic tissue of a host territory, enabling the transfer of skills and knowledge and the strengthening of heritage and community capacity (Eni 2017a). The list of suppliers for goods and services available on the Ghanaian market is composed of **local companies**, while as regards contracts that provide for a high level of complexity and specialization, in the absence of availability on the local market, Eni applies one in the allocation calls scoring model that includes the commitment to maximize the so-called "local content" among the criteria. The **local procurement** quota rose from 29% in 2012 to 50% in 2014 (Eni 2015).

[12] Brownfield and greenfield are two types of foreign direct investment. A brownfield project occurs when a company or government entity purchases or leases already existing production facilities to launch a new production activity. Alternatively, in greenfield investments a new plant is constructed; in addition to the construction of new production facilities, these projects can also include the building of new distribution hubs, offices and living quarters (*Investopedia 2019)*.

Moreover, to support the families impacted by Eni’s activities, a Livelihood Restoration Plan was launched for the 2016-2020 period. The objective is to reconstruct and sustainably improve the living conditions of the families involved through projects appropriate to the socio-economic context. This recovery plan aims to implement a series of sustainable interventions in the fields of agriculture, livestock, fishing and micro-entrepreneurship, to restore and improve the living conditions of the populations in the operational area. Temporary support such as food supply and medical assistance are provided to impacted families until the sustenance interventions reach full development, thus generating benefits for families, at the time 150 tons of food have been distributed to about 300 families in order to avoid the impoverishment of the communities during the transition period (Eni 2017b). Not only there have been aimed projects to meet some local urgencies, when the company had provided support for food needs; there have also been training initiatives and specific plans to increase agro-livestock production and fishing activities, providing long-term food security. In order to sustain its presence in the territory, Eni's commitment is continuing in the implementation of projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the population in the Western region of the country, near the operational area of the OCTP project. In the context of the above-mentioned economic diversification, Eni is also carrying out interventions that promote **micro-entrepreneurial activities** and vocational training programs: this effort has particularly been appreciated by local and Italian political institutions, fostering the dialogue on a double-win growth. Eni’s projects have also improved access to drinking water and waste management. One of the company’s primary efforts is also in education and healthcare: the restructuring of the primary school infrastructures of Sanzule and the activities with the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service to promote the training are continuing, as is access to maternal and child health services (Eni 2017b).

What is interesting is that the major impact of Eni’s investments in a foreign county does not merely affect its social wellbeing. On the contrary, it can create a favourable spiral of other committers, spurred by the investments of a big firm. As UNCTAD indeed reported (2018), this substantial FDI by Eni will be definitively able to carry out other investments and thus contribute sustaining Ghana’s growth in the long term. And the effects of this commitment are already visible. Eni’s intervention encouraged the participation of other **Italian firms**, which have been involved in the construction of a proper environment for the development of the area. In March 2016, the Micoperi Group was awarded of an international tender to build import plants, storage, regasification and liquefied natural gas delivery in the context of a 500-million-dollar worth project issued by Quantum Power (a pan-African investment company specialized in infrastructure for energy production) and by the Ghana National Petroleum Company. In this project, the Italian group was responsible of the building of a floating installation for storage and regasification at 12 kilometers off the Tema’s coast. This platform is of huge importance to deliver the liquefied gas to national industries and thermal power stations to produce electricity. Indeed, during the press conference, the then-Vice President Claudio Bartolotti stated that the project was of strategic importance “not only for Ghana but also the wider West Africa region”. Indeed, the company has an established experience in Ghana, but it is also delivering similar projects in other markets and ensures execution to the highest international standards (MarketWatch 2016)

The major plant built by Eni also involved engineering consultancy companies, such as D'Apollonia, which gained a contract worth more than 30 million dollars. And the Fiorentini Ghana Ltd (owned by Pietro Fiorentini SpA, with its headquarters in Lombardy), was awarded of a contract by Ghana Gas (a subsidiary company of Ghana National Petroleum Company) to deliver a study for the extension of an establishment for natural gas treatment in the town of Atuabo. This lively environment has been possible thanks to the major involvement of one big firm, which as first saw the potentiality of a country and also had the means to exploit it. However, it is undeniable that the impact that one big company can have on a territory heavily depends on its way to commit itself in the territory. The example of Eni in Ghana suits the Italian model of business in Africa that has been shaped over the last decades. Financial returns cannot be the only aim pursued the company: in order to stay in a country, the keywords of sustainability and durability of a project must always be kept in mind during the whole commitment. For this reason, Eni's projects have always been welcomed by Italian governments, which left the company its autonomy of intervention but also provide the company of the national guidelines where to intervene. The growth of the country, through long-term commitments from industrialization to employment and professional training, are among the principal. And Eni looks eager to continue carrying them out.

2.3(c) *The powerful impact of renewables*

As it has already been described in the first chapter, West Africa enjoys a much-diversified territory, which brings about different effects on national economies. The presence of **natural resources** had an impact in the development of many of them. Despite the cases of recent recession for the fall of raw material price, Nigeria is still the second economy in the continent, and it is a country which still counts on oil export. However, not do all West African countries enjoy the same resources as this country, which overlooks the fertile Gulf of Guinea. Non-resource-rich economies, in fact, as the previous chapter already showed, even resulted less volatile, by being less dependent on inflation on raw material price. But it is undeniable that they enjoyed less availability of raw materials from which to provide energy – at least in the more traditional way. Therefore, it occurred mainly in these non-resource-rich countries that renewable energy projects found their major appeal among national authorities. The latter, eager to look for more sustainable and less costly ways to deliver electricity, found in photovoltaic projects proposed by multinational companies their chance to finally supply the engine for their growth. The historical model of economic development seen over the last few centuries in Europe, the United States, and now in China and India, has followed the path of industrialization, powered by the use of coal and fossil fuels. Africa, thanks to natural resources, may finally offer a different model of development, combining renewable energy – wind, solar, hydropower, biomass – with the use of natural gas (Cozzi 2017). Given the dramatic decrease in costs in providing energy from renewables, many global energy companies are shifting towards these new ways of providing electricity. Since 2009, the cost of wind power has declined by 66%, and the cost of utility-scale solar power by 85%, with a further reduction expected by 2020 (IEA/OECD/IIASA 2016). Given these figures of economic return, also the Italian company Enel decided to dedicate much of its efforts towards sustainable resources for electrical energy: Enel Green Power, which is still a branch of the company, is now its leading sector, and resulted as a global leader in building photovoltaic (PV) and wind power plants. Its CEO, Francesco Starace, declared in 2016 that global prospects are good enough to warrant a major strategy shift for Italy's energy giant: in the period 2016-2019, Enel will invest in growth for some 17 billion euro, of which almost 90% will go to renewables and grids (Harris 2017). In the West African context, the usage of this type of energy supply represents a major chance for investment. For those countries, insight into challenges facing the adoption of local clean electricity can be gained at a granular level and does depend on the legal framework adopted by their governments. The share of hydropower generation, once one of most used resource outside fossil fuels, is now decreasing (from 22% of production in 2015 to 15% in 2030), while the increasingly competitive solar PV, wind and biomass capacity is also deployed to meet demand growth and replace retired capacity in the mid-2020s (IRENA 2018). Regional electricity production observes a general trend of new renewable and gas generation displacing generation from existing oil-fuelled capacity, even though less utilised oil-fuelled capacity remains online to fulfil reserve margin requirements and meet certain instances of peak demand. Therefore, renewable energies can easily be inserted in a context where oil and gas represent a major opportunity of energy supply – and export capabilities, too. Yet, they can be used to implement further electricity lacks that still affect the West African context.

During a fruitful conversation with one of Enel Green Power's institutional affairs' delegates, an expert in relations with emerging markets, several criticalities that explain this delate in intervening in the region emerged. Indeed, without a proper **legislative framework**, it is still too early to invest in countries which are still insufficiently prepared to commit international tenders for solar or wind energy projects. Thus, Enel GP has been particularly active in providing the proper outlook that is needed if an efficient green energy revolution is to be carried out. This model can be first achieved through the usage of off-grid plants, that deliver electricity to remote areas of the countries in order to engine rural communities of farmers and small enterprises, giving them the chance to survive. But at the same time, there is also a major need for commitment for national or even regional plans that involve the massive use of solar and wind resources to deliver electricity. This has occurred in Eastern Africa, where an "electricity highway" has been built between Ethiopia and Kenya. Following an official request from both the local governments, sign of conscious cooperation, the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the Agence Francaise de Développement, together with other partners, gave their support to the project. It now consists of 1,068 km of advanced technology High Voltage Direct Current transmission line, able to provide the most cost-efficient way of electricity between the two countries (Codazzi 2017).

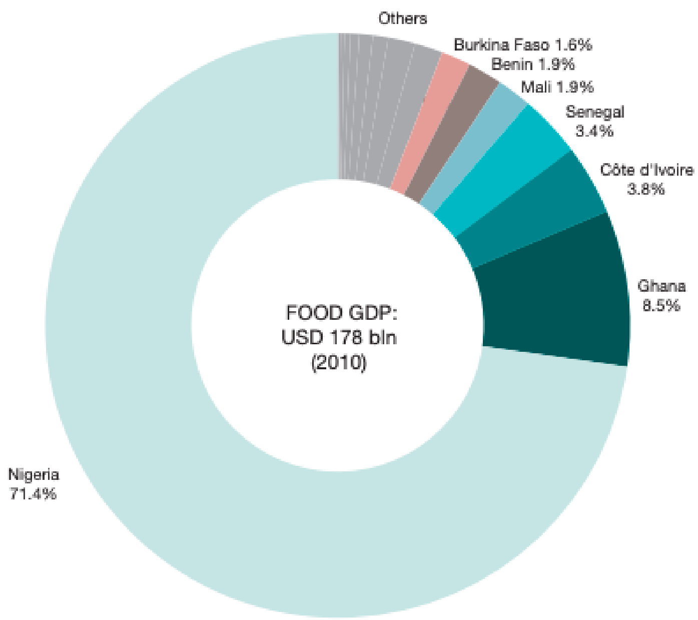
In West African countries, some signs of improvement are already visible. In particular, the economic opportunities that are figuring out in **Senegal** looks the most attractive in the region for solar photovoltaic and wind power projects (IRENA 2018). Enel GP has already started the negotiations with local authorities and is eager to enter international competitions that are regularly held by the government when dealing with energy supplying (Pagni 2017). The State of Senegal had indeed defined a development plan for 2013-2017 based on an energy mix policy involving coal, natural gas, hydroelectricity, and renewable energies, and this programme is still going on. The first Government's Letter on the Energy Sector Development Policy was adopted in October 2012 and stated a target of 15% of primary energy produced from renewable sources (excluding biomass) by 2025. This figure would correspond to having more than 25% of the projected electricity mix being of renewable origin in 2025, while only ten years before, in 2014, Senegalese electricity production mix was dominated by oil, coal, and gas sources, approximately 88% of the total (DLA Piper 2018). In this context, the country has launched several tendering programs in renewable energies, opening its gates to many foreign companies that have been already operating in this field for decades, as Enel GP. This company, after the successful ongoing experience in South America and other African cases, is on its way to become the first green energy supplier in the whole African continent. The chances of development in vast West Africa are extremely profitable and will represent a further way to give power to economic activities in the region, always with a look at the future (Harris 2017). The sustainability of solar PV and wind power plants is a promise for the future: the two represent a way to light up Africa, without compromising its future.

2.4. Responding to the demand for process food: fulfilling potentiality of agribusiness

While the first sector analysed, devoted to energy, was better suited by a big firm model for investment, the West African market has not closed its gates to small-and-medium-sized Italian enterprises. In fact, this peculiar model has been largely appreciated, and has boosted the cooperative dialogue between local institutions and Italian investors in their field (Carbone et al. 2013). The huge sector of agribusiness, indeed, has also attracted those smaller firms that, even on national soil, are organized in value chains and cooperatives. It is for this reason that they have been appealing to the African private sector, too: they provide a valid example to be replicated also by using their own means, thus enabling a *leapfrogging* of know-how between the two interlocutors.

As it has been deeply discussed in chapter I, the demand for processed food has dramatically increased in West Africa over the last decades – fivefold, since 1960. In 2010 it represented 178 billion dollars, or 36% of the regional GDP. Furthermore, the share of total household income spent on food was estimated at 52% in 2010 (Allen and Heinrigs 2016). Higher value-added products, especially processed products, account for a significant and growing share of the demand. The demographic increase and, in particular, the phenomenon of urbanisation are two driving factors of these fast-paced and profound changes. At the moment, the concentration of food demand lies around Nigeria (more than 70% of the regional demand) (World Bank 2015). The share of food expenditure on GDP by West African countries can be observed in the following figure:

Share of regional food GDP by country* (2010)



Note : *exprimé en parité de pouvoir d'achat.

Sources: World Bank, 2015; UNSD, 2015 and authors'calculations

But the urban diaspora does not merely imply the demand for process food. Indeed, a shift in the quality of consumption has also taken place. With higher incomes, as the middle-class is growing, people are also more prone to diversify their food market. Dietary diversity is improving and foods higher in protein, such as meat, are making inroads (Allen and Heinrigs 2016). The reduction in consumption of grains and especially tropical roots and tubers does not necessarily indicate that these foods are losing importance in agricultural production systems. Instead, it reflects a transition towards new uses. Although direct consumption has declined, these crops are being converted into higher value-added foods, such as meat, or processed products (like attiéké, gari or pasta) (Allen and Heinrigs 2016).

This scenario shows that the opportunities for foreign investors in this field are extremely fruitful. First of all, given that West African countries alone cannot yet provide the all amount of processed food demanded, foreign firms can enter these markets by delivering their own exports. But furthermore, the agribusiness can be one of the leading sectors in triggering **industrialization**, so urgently needed by West African governments. They are indeed looking for several investments in providing a practical path to obtain food security autonomously for the future. When speaking of "agribusiness", we mean all the stages of food production: from the growing field to the supplying of fertilizers, until the techniques of storage and packaging. Therefore, the development of this sector will be fundamental in order to sustain the growth of the West African region, and Italian firms have already seen this enormous opportunity.

2.4(a) *The prospects of agribusiness in West Africa*

The African market, and the West African in particular, could well fit into these intentions of firms, looking for emerging markets. While the total export share of exports to Sub-Saharan Africa was still among the smaller ones in 2017 (1.1%) (ITA 2018), the following year saw an increase of 7.2% in that area, overcoming 5.6 billion euros. This rate is much higher when compared to the above-mentioned figure of a more modest 3% for the same year in the other geographical areas. Between 2000 and 2014, Italian export to Sub-Saharan Africa almost **doubled** (from 3.1 to 5.7 billion). The generally positive tendency was only interrupted between 2015 and 2016 when the fall of raw material price affected the whole economy, but immediately recovered the following year. These positive figures of past years have boosted firms' intentions of further investments in the region. And, contrary to the general tendencies, small and medium enterprises are looking as the protagonist in the Sub-Saharan scenario (ITA 2018).

Indeed, the shared perception in Africa in regard to Italy is the cradle of a competitive network of small and medium enterprises, a distinctive characteristic of Italian manufacture, thanks to which the country has been able, throughout its history, to become an international leader notwithstanding the unavailability of raw materials within its borders (Carbone et al. 2013). Following this picture, African leaders have been prone to welcome cooperative models with Italian SMEs, similar to those that the country has already experienced, for example, in the producers' cooperatives. For this reason, the Italian presence in the *agribusiness* development in Africa suits perfectly in this context. The African leaders' dream of building their manufacture sector can start from this field, capable of boosting several demands – for food and employment as first. With targeted policies, industrialization in Africa would increase productivity, having repercussions on the overall economy. First, fostering technological progress and innovation will need higher-skill jobs in the formal sector, with the consequence of higher average incomes and domestic consumption. Also, avoiding prices of manufactured exports being more susceptible to deterioration than those of primary goods in the long term, industrialization would help countries escape dependence on commodity exports (Monga 2017). The *agribusiness* sector development could thus represent an essential step towards this industrialization, and Italy might well be a strategic partner for this. African leaders have their reasons to trust Italian investors in the food production system. Indeed, by looking at the whole value chain associated to it (from production to packaging), Italy is globally recognized as a leader. The export value from this sector was worth more than 60 billion euros only last year (ITA 2019). But in order to intervene in a market such as the West African one, cooperatives and major firms need to show their effort to collaborate, if the path towards internationalization is to be undertaken. Other countries are indeed proving more efficient in letting their firms work together: a leading example is Spain, whose productive part of the processing food value chain (where it is the undiscussable leader) reached 13-billion-worth export, compared to 4.6 of Italian firms (ITA 2019).

2.4(b) *Macfrut 2019: an occasion of interest convergence*

The large gap that exists between Italian fruit and vegetable exports and the Spanish neighbours' ones has been one of the main encouragements to the Italian agro-food sector to collaborate together in the aim of the whole sector's internationalization. This was the first aspect which the President of "Cenesa Fiere" opened with the press conference to inaugurate Macfruit 2019. Held in April at the Italian Trade Agency headquarters in Rome, it was the occasion to present the opportunity that this international exposition would bring about with a renovated team working spirit. As a matter of fact, the entrepreneurial attitude of a widespread competition within the same sector had traditionally prevailed, making it harder to expand market barriers in less safe area. But in a sector as the agro-food, where the potentialities of a value chain have to be exploited in each of its components, there is utmost importance that all firms involved collaborate together to boost their productivity. This aspect of team working is particularly accentuated for a sector in which many of the operating firms enjoy small or medium dimensions and, as it has been shown in the above-mentioned studies (Boselli 2017, Bugamelli et al. 2018a), this creates more reluctance in reaching foreign soils. And when dealing with more risky territories as the African ones, the chances of investment eagerness could be even fewer.

Yet the outstanding appeal of the continent has also reached this particular sector of Italian industry. For this reason, one of the most important events that involve the agro-food sector decided, for this year, to entirely dedicate this edition to the Sub-Saharan market. Organized by "Cesena Fiere", Macfruit 2019 was held in Rimini from 8th to 10th May 2019. It is the only international exposition encompassing operators from all the stages of the fruit and vegetable supply chain and represents a distinguished hub of professionals coming from all over the world. In 2018, it hosted more than 43,000 visitors and about 150 buyers. During the press conference that was held in April, mentioned above, what emerged was a solid relation with institutions, both from Italy and from African countries. In collaboration with the Italian Trade Agency and Confindustria-Assafrica (two organizations whose contribution will be better described in the third chapter), the organizers carried out a series of missions in 11 African countries in order to promote the expo. In that occasion, the Cesena Fiere's President, Renzo Piraccini, underlined the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs' efforts to obtain these contacts and collaboration. Indeed, what stroke the President and the whole Italian agro-food chain's attention was, most of all, that more than 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land is situated in the African continent and that Africa still imports food to the value of 35 billion dollars every year. In particular, imports of meat and beverages have risen by more than 300% during the last ten years.

For this reason, the African Development Bank considers the agro-food sector as one of the strategic assets for the whole continent's growth, given its high development potentiality. The African market is thus both a chance to invest and to deliver the high-quality products that the Italian agro-food sector has always been producing. The incentives to aim at this sector also come from the European Union: thanks to the newly launched European Plan for External Investments, the EU adopted a new financial tool to strengthen private investments in Africa, whose ultimate goal is to mobilize up to 44 billion euros – with a substantial part likely devoted to agro-industry. These funds can be the first, major step to overcome the limited access to local credit that affects the region, fostering foreign intervention.

During the international exposition in May, a roundtable was set up in order for the speakers to analyse potential partnerships between Italian institutions and private sector and the African partners, with the aim to foster the path to agro-industry development in the continent – both at a bilateral level and in collaboration with the UN, the EU and the regional organizations. The leading principles of the discussions were the equal cooperation approach and the shared development. A particular focus was devoted to funds to access to **new technologies** and to fruit and vegetables sector. Piraccini indeed highlighted the utmost responsibility that also the private sector must have in order to sustain the growth of such an important continent for our country. Macfrut 2019 was only the first chance needed to foster the dialogue between the private sectors, outside the institutional framework but with many institutions involved. Delegations from Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda promptly confirmed their participation in the event, which marked the utmost importance that African leaders are giving to this exposition and to Italy. On the opening day, an Italian government's representative chaired the Ministerial roundtable on African horticultural and agro-industrial development, where also African Ministers of Agriculture and high-level representatives from the UN food agencies, AU and EU were present.

2.4(c) *Towards governmental and business cooperation*

A type of event as Macfruit perfectly shows the collaboration that is currently being built between the government and the private sector. The means which a Ministry for Foreign Affairs disposes of range from contacts with embassies on the national field to those in Africa. And in order to engage the wider audience possible, given the outstanding number of other foreign actors that are interested in the same region, this collaboration should even be strengthened. The next chapter will indeed be dedicated to the efforts that Italian governments have shown over the last decade, comparing it with previous years of more reluctance. The proper path to be paved should be that "normal" phase, in which both Africans and Europeans, governments and private-sector players, commit themselves in an environment where to share responsibilities and benefit from this fruitful scenario (Dassù 2017). The expressed collaboration by the Italian government, mainly the Ministries for Economic Development and for Foreign Affairs, remarks the political effort to strengthen the dialogue with Sub-Saharan Africa, whose Western region represents a valuable resource. The next chapter will deal with the political efforts of Italian foreign policy to cope with this renovated interest of national firms in the area. Most of all, it will show how the benefits of the private sector can suit with the national foreign policy's interest in fostering West African growth also for national reasons: tackling the migration phenomenon from its roots, giving life to Africa.

CHAPTER III

ITALIAN MODEL OF FOREIGN POLICY IN WEST AFRICA

3.1. A brief history of Italian relations with Africa

Italy has only recently changed its approach with the continent, and this evolution was of utmost importance. By looking at the past of Italian ties with African crises, the difference with other foreign actors entering the continent was already evident. But the chance that occurred in 2013, the year of the first Italy-Africa Initiative, was remarkable. The initial effort of intervening merely through development assistance, which was actually declining from the 1980s, was finally replaced with the first Italy-Africa initiative, a comprehensive framework within which a variety of actions took place (Carbone and Corda, 2018). In 2014, the overhaul of the country's development aid system got underway with the passing of an overdue reform that finally established an independent aid agency, called AICS ("*Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo")*. Indeed, the trends that are characterizing Sub-Saharan Africa, and its West region in particular, urgently called for a different approach from foreign intervention. The prominent figures of growth, deeply analysed in Chapter I, started being attractive also to the eyes of firms, willing to expand their markets. And, as it has been seen throughout the second chapter, also Italian business moved attention to this region. Therefore, the change in the mindset of foreign policy was primarily driven by this undeniable evidence: a whole continent that is growing, and despite its "multi-speed" patterns (Carbone and Corda, 2018), these volatile figures need to be sustained. Africa's recent economic dynamism thus appeared to offer plenty of opportunities for Italian businesses, but Italy too has a lot to offer to Africa.

In the first part of this Chapter, throughout the history of Italian relations with Africa, it will emerge that, despite a less accentuated traditional intervention, Italy has always maintained an autonomous role in dealing with African affairs (Raffaelli 2017). Even during the Cold War, when the continent divided into spheres of influence, Italy was able to maintain some level of autonomy in its approach, by deserving an equal, peer-to-peer treatment with African leaders, also thanks to the action of Eni (Carbone et al., 2013). During the democratization period, too, newly-independent countries deserved no secret agendas by Italy, which underlined its commitment to transparency. But a comprehensive strategy arrived later than other countries: the year 2013 was the moment to realize the urgency of sustaining a sustainable path towards development for the African continent, but, at the same time, finding new ways of going out the economic stagnation suffered by Italian firms (Carbone 2016).

As it has emerged throughout the previous chapter, the commitments of Italian firms in the continent, with their investment and export orientation, demanded efforts to increase the capabilities of **internationalization**. Thus, within a post-global-crisis and increasingly competitive economic context, two successive Prime minister trips in 2014 and 2017 were carried out in the region, and this trend did not change with the new government (Cecinini 2019). The intervention of the business sector in this emerging region was also strategic

for another aspect, of utmost importance even for domestic politics. Italy needs to cut for itself a decisive, protagonist role in **managing the migration phenomenon**, which is particularly relevant in this region. The recent trends of migration from West Africa suggest an intense urgency for a sustainable and durable path of development for those countries, which need to drive foreign intervention in this direction. Therefore, this intervention has now assumed more importance to tackle this other issue, one of the most sensitive not only at the Italian but also at the European level. However, despite the commitment that the Italian government can deploy from now onwards, the effects of development over the reasons that induce to flee a country need years to change (de Haas 2010). Nonetheless, Italy should make use of its particular level of independent thinking in considering that this is the only way to tackle this phenomenon and, almost, give this chance of recovery to West Africa – and the whole continent. European partners, with which Italy has always collaborated, should thus embrace a different approach to managing migration from this region.
The following paragraph thus retraces the first steps of Italian governments on the African soil. The reluctance of use of force, the involvement of other players in managing crises, such as NGOs or the Catholic Church, and its faith in multilateral institutions, all induce to think about a liberal approach in its relations with Africa. With the change that occurred in 2013 and the inclusive strategy launched, this aspect will only but accentuated: firms do play a major role and are involved in win-win cooperation for their recovery and for the countries in which they invest. This multi-centric approach, carried out by Italian foreign policy, will then be discussed in further paragraphs, and finally evaluated and commented.

3.1(a) *The years from Cold War to 1990s*

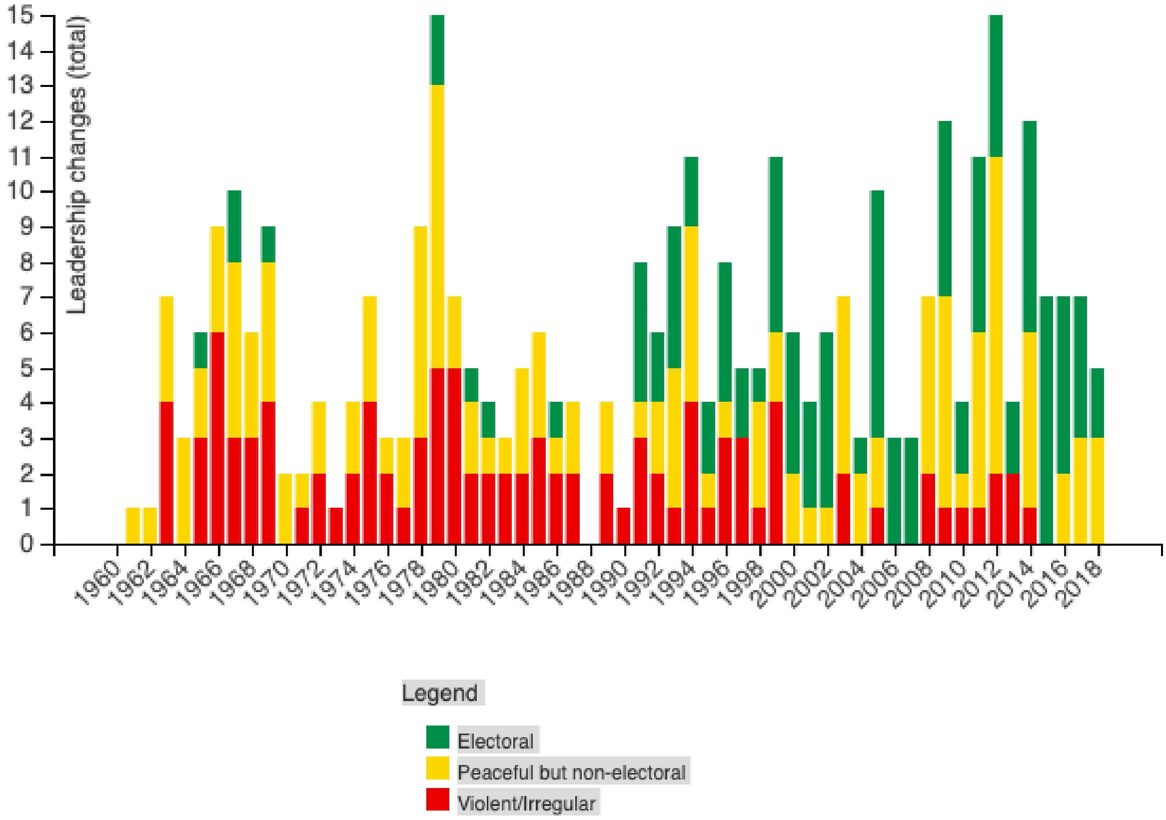
The aftermaths of World War II saw the involvement of Italian foreign policy in Africa mainly in a reconstruction of relationships with the Mediterranean countries, but still hardly looking at the Sub-Saharan region as an area of potential interest (Raffaelli 2017). The most critical voices also talk of an initial "shyness" of foreign policy, considering the countries below the Maghreb as its mere appendix (Mantica 2017). Nonetheless, the years during Cold War also saw a discrete autonomous margin of manoeuvre enjoyed by Italy in regard to the African continent when facing its interlocutors (Carbone et al., 2013). The governments of those times, by trying to interpret **third-world vocations** that put together political forces and multinational firms, were able to cut for themselves an independent space in the reference political line-up where Italy belonged – mainly, the US line. The multinational company Eni, as already mentioned in Chapter II, was an absolute protagonist in this field, even by foreseeing or encouraging national foreign politics (Carbone et al., 2013). This third-world vocation, born out of the need to defend the so-called "third-world" countries, suited with the Italian way of interventionism: Christian solidarity and communist liberation, two prevailing ideologies on national soil after World War II (Ranzoni 1987).
Several factors brought the positive image associated with the Italian interlocutor by African states throughout the last decades, in which the Italian approach has evolved but it has also been able to maintain some of its peculiarities, that made the difference with other Western countries (Carbone et al., 2013). Both Italian

business and political actions indeed converged in deserving dignity and autonomy to the African interlocutors, from local to national higher institutions (Carbone et al., 2013). As it has been deeply analysed in the preceding chapter, the activity of Eni has always taken into account the local dimension. The employment of local labour force occurred as an absolute *unicum* for a multinational company operating in Africa, where other "giant" groups could even count on a status of colonial power (Pistelli 2017). Moreover, as the Livelihood Restoration Plan demonstrates, the attention to sustainability and to the voice of inhabitants' needs became crucial if a long-term presence wanted to be ensured in a territory (Eni 2017b). Therefore, they have been carrying out continuous contact with local authorities and civil society organizations. This type of dialogue with African institutions, which fostered development needs while preserving their autonomous action, characterized Italian politics too, and contributed to the welcoming attitude that they have maintained until these days (Carbone et al. 2013). An explicative example from the past can be the episode at the extraordinary UN General Assembly on the occasion of the cancellation of the African debt, where Italy pushed for a less-strictly financial resolution, contrarily to the prevailing Reagan's line of the time (Raffaelli 2017). Also, in the following conference, the Presidency was given to Italy, to the then-Ministry for Foreign Affairs Giulio Andreotti, who hosted 37 African leaders. The first to speak was its correspondent in Mozambique, Joachim Chissano, who underlined that while France and Britain still tended to refer only to their areas of influence as former **colonies** (CFA franc adherents and Commonwealth, respectively), Italy was the only country to start the discussions by leveling French, English, and Portuguese-speakers (Raffaelli 2017). As a matter of fact, Italy was not a stranger to colonialism. The Italian intervention in the Horn and in Libya had been more brutal than the other colonial powers in many occasions, particularly during the two World Wars (Caracciolo and Noto 2017). However, after the defeat of World War II, the Italian elites of those times tried to act to completely abandon those territories, with the sole exception of Somalia, for the one-decade experience of the AFIS ("*Amministrazione fiduciaria dell'Italia in Somalia*"), between 1950 and 1960 (Carbone et al. 2013). Later, Italian governments preferred the above-mentioned third-world view, thanks to which the perception of Italy positively changed, with two apparently opposing actors on the same scene (Caracciolo and Noto 2017). The Catholic Church, with its long-established charity system, and the Italian left-wing parties, as the Communist and Socialist ones, were together active in the liberation movements. This double-sided image of Italy notably emerged in the political crisis of **Mozambique**, when the peace process was largely favoured by the Italian NGO "Comunità di Sant'Egidio". In an interview carried out by Lucio Caracciolo and Lorenzo Noto (2017), its President and former Italian Minister of International Cooperation, Andrea Riccardi, refers to those moments an extremely positive example of foreign policy for the rest of the world. It clearly emerged as a more liberal and less traditionally realist approach to international relations: this is a characteristic that Italy will maintain when dealing with other African affairs. The Italian multi-centric approach, typical of a kind liberalism in the international arena, involved not only state apparatus, as the intervention of "Comunità di Sant'Egidio" showed. Moreover, it encouraged the dialogue with exponents of civil society and local institutions (Caraccio and Noto 2017). The civil war, indeed, ended thanks to a negotiation process that involved many strata of society and the peace was actually signed in Rome, on 4 October 1992, after more than two years of negotiations between the Maputo government and the combats of Renamo. The Italian presence was ensured even during the democratization process, that brought to local elections in 1994, thanks to the blue helmets' presence whose major component was formed by the Italian "*Alpini"* (Morozzo della Rocca 1997). This type of approach deployed by Italy, later called "track one and track two", will be a *unicum* in coping with African conflicts and peace resolutions (Raffaelli 2017). The relationships that followed this affair flourished and reflected the different parts involved in the peace process. This type of action is thus well integrated into a liberal framework, according to which at a global level there is a multi-player scenario: the state is not the only determinant actor anymore but acts together with other collective groups that exist apart from and even in competition with it (Rosenau 1992). This does not mean that the Italian state totally disappeared in those occasions; still, it came across as a multi-level, multi-nodal institution, capable of listening to different instances within the same society. In the same interview mentioned above, Andrea Riccardi told an episode that better portraits this multipolarity of the Italian state. African leaders indeed used to refer to Italy as a country with three capital cities: Rome, the seat of both of national government and the Vatican City, Reggio Emilia, that helped them during the liberation, and Sant'Egidio, where they achieved peace (Caracciolo and Noto 2017).

Nonetheless, Italian governments hardly seized these favourable chances to maintain long-lasting relationships with some local political authorities, nor did they stay in that leadership role that the episode in Mozambique gave them. Indeed, apart from the peace signed in Rome, the donors' conference too was organized there, and an Italian was nominated in the UN as Special Representative in the country (Raffaelli 2017). The only following case of Italian intervention occurred in the "Restore Hope" Operation in Somalia, a state in which in fact Italy was linked by a colonial experience. This episode underlines, once again, a fable protagonist role and a more accentuated relevance given to the multilateral arena (namely, to EU and UN), as well as a publicly-stated unwillingness of the use of force, unless for strictly humanitarian reasons (Carbone et al., 2013). These two accentuated features – the reluctance of use of force and reliance on international institutions – can both highlight, on the one hand, the liberal approach embraced by Italy; but on the other, also a too fable interest perceived by African countries in their regards. Moreover, this has also been accentuated by more interest shown in the foreign policy agenda in expanding or defending Italian business abroad, and Sub-Saharan countries were seen as too distant from this aim (Mantica 2017). The perception of political instability, a plague widely widespread throughout the continent, did not allow for further interest on the business sector (Carbone et al., 2013). But the democratic boom that occurred from the 1990s dramatically changed the African outlook, attracting international attention and enabling the economic boom that they have been witnessing over a decade (Carbone 2018).

3.1(b) *The African political evolution: democratization in the 1990s*

The origin of the African state – as it came to light after the colonial experience – was designed on externally driven logics, that referred to the influential powers in the region (Carbone et al., 2013). The following weak capacity to cope with territories that not always corresponded to ethnic nor social affinities ended in classifying African states as "*quasi-states*" (Hackson 1990). In this context of weak state capacity, during the 1990s, crucial political reforms began and finally introduced the political pluralism in electoral competitions (Carbone et al., 2013). The contribution of the African Union at a continental level was relevant, too: in 2007, in its "African Chart on Democracy, Elections, and Governance", it assumed a leadership role in checking the proper conduct of its member States (Carbone et al., 2013). The following charter better describes the substantial change occurred in leadership change, from 1960 to 2018:



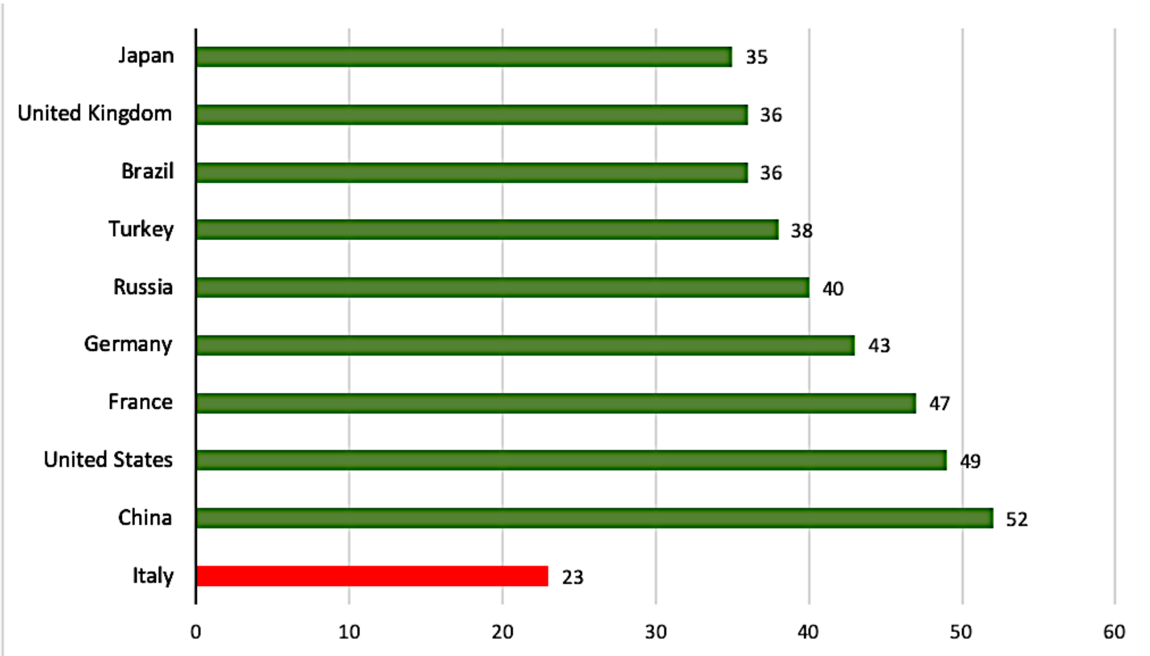
Source: "Africa Leadership Change Project", designed and developed by Chiara Accinelli & Simone Minisi
Dataset by Giovanni Carbone & Alessandro Pellegata, ISPI 2018

Thanks to this acquired increase in **political consciousness**, African countries irrupted in the global political scenario, shifting from an emarginated or even submitted role to be a protagonist in international politics (Carbone et al., 2013). Despite the end of the colonial monopoly, newly created states began international dialogues with former colonies after their independence. But soon, traditional actors have been replaced by other partners which had nothing to do with the colonial past in Africa (Carbone et al., 2013). During the

1990s, the US entered the African soil in a mainly bilateral approach, much stressed with this current administration, with no need to contact their former-colonies either (Carbone et al., 2013). France, instead, did not look willing to abandon its own influence in formerly colonized territories: the activism of Sarkozy in Libya and Cote d'Ivoire (2011) was replicated – and even exacerbated – by Hollande in Mali and Central African Republic (2013). The British ambitions are much less relevant, and in their former Commonwealth, they intervened only in Sierra Leone in 2000 – an episode that still increased the popularity of the then-PM Tony Blair in speaking about Africa (Carbone et al., 2013).

In this renovated spirit of democracy, Italy showed some backwardness in exploiting this situation early (Raffaelli 2017). Other countries, instead, started making their first, indelible steps in Africa. A clear sign of this increased cooperation with the rest of the world is the opening of **new embassies**: China is stably ranking first, with 52 embassies opened, against 49 Americans and 47 French (The Economist 2019). According to the "Diplometrics project" at the University of Denver, 322 embassies or consulates were opened in Africa between 2010 and 2016. Turkey alone inaugurated 26, reaching 38 seats in the continent, but also India last year announced that it would open 18 more. Italy is still well below, with 23 embassies so far. Nevertheless, afterward in the discussion, when dealing with the tools of Italian foreign policy implemented over the last few years, it will be clearer that there has been an increased effort in expanding this diplomatic network. In the following graph, the difference between Italian presence with the rest of the world easily strikes the attention:

- **EMBASSIES IN AFRICA IN 2019**



Source: **Author**'s elaboration of data from the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and from Pardee Centre for International Futures, Diplometrics Project, published in The Economist, March 9th-15th

Therefore, as already mentioned in Chapter II regarding the economic interests of newly emerging countries in the continent, the “new scramble for Africa” described by The Economist (2019) is far from being “new” (Carbone 2018). Still, it reflects an ongoing interest from the rest of the world that is looking at Africa as a land of major opportunities to grasp. But now, provided of this wide range of interlocutors, African leaders are not anymore in a submitted position and can actively choose who to work with. Moreover, despite widespread situations of conflicts in several areas (the Sahel, Great Lakes region and the Horn), a focus by international relations merely on security has become less and less plausible over the last few years (Carbone et al., 2013). Indeed, this strict realist approach used to deal with local instabilities proves, in the long run, less valid, because it underestimates an intervention at the roots of African problems (Carbone 2017). Therefore, in one of the most visible effects of social, political and economic crises that cyclically characterise the continent – the **migration** phenomenon – there is a major need to look for solutions that tackle its causes at their roots. The intervention of the private sector, intensely debated in Chapter II, is what is needed in order to bring the useful investments to sustain the growth and boost African economies. But to see the tangible effects of this growth on a durable development, there will be more need of political involvement by the States of the region and their foreign counterparts (Carbone et al., 2013).

In this aim, Italy is necessarily involved in managing this issue – not only for the mere geographical proximity to the continent. The effects of migration flow dramatically impact Italian territory by letting this Southern-Mediterranean country assume a worth-hearing voice at the international level. Also, Italy can count on a past that did not underestimate the dignity and validity of its African interlocutors. This type of approach, deployed during last-century crises, can be a valid solution also to the needed intervention in managing the XXI-century phenomenon. By distinguishing for its “quality”, compared to the “quantity” of the extensive involvement of Eastern partners such as China and India, Italy can definitely play a major role as a “privileged” partner with Africa (Carbone et al., 2013). Yet the efforts that are needed in order to recover the shortcomings of the past can be harder than for other countries and may require more time.

3.1(c) *The change in 2013 and the country-continent model for conferences*

Recent years have seen unprecedented attention from Italy towards Africa. While being a relative latecomer to realizing that change was taking place on the continent, Italy swiftly tried to adapt and adopt new measures (Carbone and Corda 2018). Attempts to change the things that remained substantially on the card and soon forgotten, like the “Africa Plan” outlined by the Ministry of Economic Development in 2009 (Carbone 2016). Then the year 2013 arrived, in the wake of an economic crisis that had triggered new, strong pressures in the country and on its rulers. In an Italy that struggled to recover oxygen, everything had to be in service of economic recovery, including foreign relations managed by the “Farnesina”. It was necessary to reorient them, in order to really bring support from the side of the ministry's network, structures and competencies of foreign affairs to foster the internationalization for Italian companies, after suffering several losses on the national scene (Carbone 2016). In December 2013, the then-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Emma Bonino, launched the

Italy-Africa Initiative: a comprehensive, inter-ministerial framework with the collaboration of civil society organizations, NGOs and national firms (Carbone and Corda 2018). Despite the geographical colocation, it is surprising that this Initiative was set on the model of the Italy-Latin America one, which had already gained much success. This factor highlights the relative shyness that Italy used to have in past years regarding a continent that is so close, but distant, from our foreign politics (Mantica 2017). The Minister, while opening the press conference, did not disregard the precedent variety of initiatives for Africa that had already taken place. But the difference could not be avoided, and the mistakes from the past had inevitably (and fortunately) come to the surface (Carbone 2016). The new approach by this holistic initiative was clear: the need for a national, comprehensive strategy, which had lacked in the previous time. This initiative still took place within the multilateral framework of EU and UN set objectives, of which Italy has always been an active supporter[13]. The stress was initially put on human rights and stable democratization processes: two objectives that Italy set with its African interlocutors and with their continental organization, the African Union. As it has been said, since 2007 with its "African Chart on Democracy, Elections, and Governance", the Union would support democratization processes to come, but also monitor that fair and free elections took place (Carbone et al., 2013). The sectors in which the Initiative wanted to focus in order to boost African growth were access to energy and agriculture, indispensable to let the whole continent exploit its trends of growth. The same sectors are those that looked more appealing to Italian firms which, as analysed in Chapter II, have finally approached the African soil.

The beginning of this Initiative in 2013 was also the chance to launch for an urgent reform to Law 49/1986 regarding **development cooperation**. Official development aid (ODA) flow was indeed declining from the 1980s, and so it was the faith on their validity. The huge amount of money, pouring on African governments, did not always see effects in real terms of the economy; but, almost, broad strata of population were still totally excluded from them (Ranzoni 1987). Examples range from the so-called Asian tigers to Malaysia, countries that expanded rapidly without receiving much development aid. On the contrary, African countries, such as Ghana, Zambia, Chad, and Zimbabwe, failed to take off when their ODAs were at their pick (Dassù 2017). This aspect triggered a need to change the mindset with which development had to be approached: not abandoned, but better addressed and to real beneficiaries, with efficient projects.

In 2014, the overhaul of the country's development aid system got underway with the passing of an overdue reform that finally established an independent aid agency. Meanwhile, after the long decline that had prevailed since the 1980s, Italian ODA slowly began to recover, almost doubling from 0.15 % of GNI in 2004 to 0.29% in 2017 (Carbone and Corda 2018). The reform in the law 125/2014 brought to light two new institutions in committing to development cooperation: an Inter-ministry Committee to plan and coordinate the activities, so to put them in a broader framework of national politics' coherence; and a proper Agency for Development Cooperation (**AICS**), that operates following the instruction of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. However, the

[13] From the then-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Emma Bonino, opening speech at Italy-Africa Initiative. Available online at: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/399860/iniziativa-italia-africa

latter also enjoys a level of autonomy in coordinating the several partners involved in providing aid. Therefore, it also introduced more cooperation with the Italian private sector, which began being attracted by investing in the African continent. So, what started to change was the old, reticent approach to Africa. As declared in an interview, Mario Raffaelli, now President of AMREF Italia and formerly special representative in several parts of Africa during the 1980s and the 1990s, the current trend is that foreign direct investments have overcome development aid (Angeli 2018). The data commented in Chapter I were already showing this evidence: FDI are the most efficient external flow in triggering a long-term sustainable growth (UNCTAD 2018b). The old strategy of "big aid" is now being replaced by requiring the proper necessities to trigger mechanisms for growth. As a consequence, the Ministry also announced an upcoming conference that would involve all the stakeholders, also the private sector, in this fostered Italian-African dialogue.

The "**country-continent**" conference model was not new in the African context. France inaugurated the first *sommets "France-Afrique"* (from 2010 "*Afrique-France*") already in 1973. Foreign leaders indeed see this model as a forceful diplomatic push. This year Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, is set to host the first Russia-Africa summit, a tribute act to the triennial Forum on Africa-China Co-operation (FOCAC), in Beijing. Hosted by President Xi Jinping, last year's FOCAC attracted "more African leaders than the annual meeting of the un General Assembly" (The Economist 2019). In Italy, following the path paved since 2013, the first "Italy-Africa" Conference was held in May 2016, and the following year, with Italy holding the Presidency of the G7, 'Africa' was made a crosscutting theme at the summit hosted in Taormina, Sicily (Carbone and Corda 2018). The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also hosted an additional meeting between African and G7 Think Thanks; one of the most important involved the participation of African directors from G7 countries with their African interlocutors. This was a further occasion to stress good governance for the direct impact on the business environment for foreign investments as well as African self-financing incentives to support the private sector, in particular small-and-medium-sized enterprises.

As a consequence, Italy pushed for a strategic, tailor-made mix of capacity building, private sector development, service models and global value chain. In particular, agriculture and the agroindustry became significant pathways for long-term growth and shared prosperity, using new adequate technologies for Africa needs. Thanks to Italian recognized leadership in the agricultural chain, as well as the positive experience of EXPO 2015 held in Milan, it could authoritatively launch the **Initiative on Food Security** proposed, while retaining the G7 Presidency. This was one of the first events that called for the participation of Italian firms interested in being involved in this potential value chain, which is currently been favoured by the Italian agribusiness sector, as deeply discussed in Chapter II. Therefore, it is clear that the synergy between the business sector and Italian politics, in all its Ministries, takes place in a favourable environment that has fostered an effort at a national level to grasp the opportunities emerging from this environment (Carbone and Corda 2018).

With the following "Italy-Africa" Conference in 2018, the link between business opportunities and political action was finally strengthened and more relevance was also given to the migration phenomenon management

(Carbone and Corda 2018). As clearly stated by the Italian Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte: "On the one hand, we need to grasp the opportunities that this historic moment offers us promptly; on the other, we must take on shared responsibilities together to ensure a common future of prosperity, where there are no losers, no forgotten ones".[14] The Conference was indeed a major opportunity for a peer-to-peer dialogue, fostering the method of equal treatment that characterized Italian international relations. In the words of the current Prime Minister, the Italian government emerged as much more conscious of the role that it is willing to embrace: in order to promote a common path towards security, development, sustainability, peace and wellbeing, Italy declared its intention to lead other countries to follow suit, by engaging a "people-to-people" dialogue. In particular, Italy has always counted, with regard to its approach to African interlocutors, on avoiding secret agendas: transparency and accountability are precious qualities with emerging countries, which deserve an equal treatment (Carbone et al. 2013).

Furthermore, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte stressed the importance of a teamwork with the other European countries: an effort, this one, that has been carrying out by the last governments so that even Northern states realize the crucial importance of African growth for the years to follow. Indeed, Italy was the first European country in greenfield foreign direct investments both in 2016 and in 2017 (UNCTAD 2017 and 2018b), as it has already been mentioned throughout this work. This data was particularly stressed also in the occasion of the Conference, where the Italian effort compared to other countries clearly emerged. Moreover, the "External Investments Plan" by the Union had been developed with a robust Italian impulse and is expected to reach the goal of over 44 billion euros of public and private investments directed to the African continent. In this context, the relevance of migration management came straightforwardly: the Italian pledge to the EU Emergency Trust Fund, known as "Valletta Fund", was worth 200 million, a fund launched in 2015 that aimed to foster stability and to contribute to better migration management, including by addressing the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration.

The 2018 Conference was thus the occasion to better contextualize and give substance to this massive pledge by Italy: both by its institutions, through the 200-million-euro pledge, and its firms, through foreign investments. First, the Ministry set new meetings and visit in the continent and in Italy, as an exchange of information and a way to foster political and economic developments between the two partners. Indeed, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte went to Niger and Chad in January 2019. These two occasions met one of the first targets of the Conference, the political cooperation with countries of origin or of transit of the majority of migrants. During the visit in Chad, the Prime Minister's contributions to reaffirm the strategic role of Italy gained success at the international level, also trying to grasp European institutions' attention (Cecinini 2019). The Prime Minister indeed claimed that Italy could make a significant contribution, not only in terms of financial support for its own sake, in regard to migration management. In particular, Rome has excellent technological and professional skills in various fields, such as agriculture, food, infrastructure, and renewable

[14] Conte, G., Closing session's speech at "Italy-Africa" Conference, 25 October 2018. Available online at: http://www.governo.it/articolo/il-presidente-conte-interviene-alla-conferenza-ministeriale-italia-africa/10198

energy (Cecinini 2019). The approach declared in the 2018 Conference has thus smoothly passed to the new administration. In the recent "Day for Africa" at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, delivered its speech to its Italian and African audience, where the words "integration" and "cooperation" were severely stressed (MAECI 2019). The Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Emanuela Del Re, who visited the Sahelian region last May immediately after the Horn of Africa, highlighted the peculiar approach of no secret agendas, to foster a shared, sustainable cooperation with a major continent (MAECI 2019). Italian administration is thus maintaining a partnership with Africa that undeniably implies a holistic approach to this significant phenomenon that also affects Italian domestic policy – migration. Not only through the means to foster security and borders control; more particularly, the Italian approach tries to, and should even more focus on, the root causes that induce migration. When visiting Niger, for example, the Prime Minister stressed that Europeans could not remain insensitive to the drying up of **Lake Chad**, which could increase poverty and the terrorist threat. To this end, he announced the agreement of an irrigation project with the Niger president, to create the premises for the development of these territories, while at the same time countering the migratory flows (Cecinini 2019). Indeed, Italy was already present in the region with a major project aimed at this climate disaster, which is also one of the main contributors to the massive flee from Sahel (Ross 2018). Lake Chad has become the symbol of the desert that is advancing and today risks disappearing. The prospect of a dried-up basin is likely to result in an environmental and humanitarian disaster since it used to provide water for a dramatic number of countries around it (Algeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Nigeria, Niger, and Sudan). With the aim of intervening in this humanitarian and environmental emergency, the Italian group "Bonifica" launched the "Transaqua project". It represents a major example of collaboration among the Italian public and private sectors, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Chinese government. The latter one's recent Belt and Road project indeed sees the node at Mombasa as a strategic terminal that would be decisive for access flows in the African continent: a hub which, in its connection with Lagos, functionally intersects the entire corridor identified in the Transaqua proposal. The Italian Ministry of the Environment also signed several Memoranda of Understanding with the Lake Chad Basin Commission: this underlines the Italian will to "support the implementation of adaptation actions aimed at reducing vulnerability and building resilience in developing countries, taking into account the urgent and immediate needs of those developing countries that are particularly vulnerable" (MATTM 2018).

Then, dealing with structural causes that bring about migration also involves tackling unemployment and creating prospects for African people. In this context, thus, both development cooperation and Italian firms' internationalization played a major role (MAECI 2018). The Conference was indeed an occasion to set the future lines for business meetings and country presentations to increase economic cooperation between Italy and African countries. By aiming at a concrete know-how transfer, this dialogue should also improve the managerial capabilities of local entrepreneurs, and not merely fulfilling the employment gap (MAECI 2018). Also, in the 2018 Conference the idea of an *ad hoc* fund for small and medium enterprises to invest in Africa was launched, on the model of a German plan that was carried out only some months after the Italian conference of October 2018 (MAECI 2018). Indeed, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced the launch of a 1billion euro worth fund to support private investments in African countries, with a particular focus on small and medium enterprises (Simsek 2018). Given the structural characteristic of Italian firms, that tend much more neatly to this model, the fund could be a significant improvement for internationalization, and it is still debated by the "*Cassa Depositi e Prestiti"* – the Italian institution of Deposits and Loans Fund – and its German counterpart, KfW (MAECI 2018).

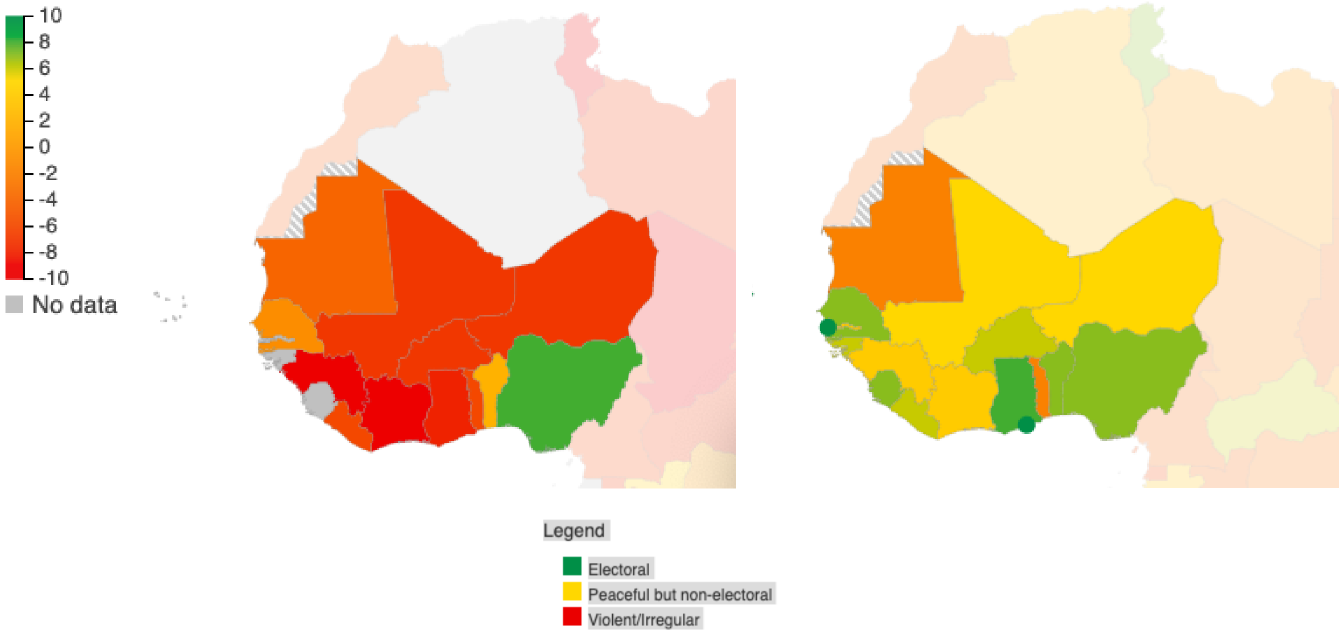
In this context of projects for African countries and opportunities – and challenges – for Italy, the stress on West Africa came straightforwardly. The majority of immigrants in Italy were indeed coming from regional states in 2017, mainly from Nigeria, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and Mali (UNHCR 2018). While the numbers of arrivals from Nigeria and western African countries have significantly decreased the following year (UNHCR 2019), there is still a major need to sustain that growth if this "spell" is to be seriously taken into account and exploited, for the prosperity of both countries of origin and arrival. The next paragraph will thus deal with the proper instrument that governments have been deploying over the last very few years in this appeal to the region.

3.2. The West: an undeniable priority for foreign politics

In this context of renovated interest and fostered dialogue with the whole continent, West Africa becomes necessarily one of the most crucial areas where to foster a sustainable development path. The figures of growth, deeply discussed in Chapter I, urge to be sustained in the overall framework of reducing the root causes that induce to migrate. As a matter of fact, this region has been improperly disregarded by Italian foreign politics, until recent years (Carbone et al. 2013). The prevalence of the French and British interlocutors, linked to their former status of colonies, monopolized the discussion around their areas of influence even after African states' independence, as it has been stated in the former paragraph. West Africa was indeed given as a priority for development cooperation, in particular during the short existence of a Ministry for International Cooperation (2011-2013), headed by the above-mentioned Andrea Riccardi (Carbone et al. 2013). However, given the numerous trends that have been described throughout this work, this region of the continent needed a closer look by Italian authorities. The recent figures of growth, interrupted by worrying moments as the decline in 2015-2016 of the "giant" country, Nigeria (mentioned in Chapter I); the national plans by governments, calling for foreign intervention; the massive impact of the oil and gas discovery by Eni on Ghana's economy; the widespread interest for investments and export by the Italian whole agro-industry sector. The political answer came slightly later, by supporting the tools for investment and trade, together with the incentive of a widespread network of projects and associations that have increased the know-how transfer to the local private sector. This paragraph will try to sum up all these efforts, starting from the first Prime Ministers' trips in 2016 and 2017. It will then draw on the outcomes and drive-lines by last Italy-Africa Conference, during which West Africa was mentioned both a security priority with regards to the migration flows from Sahel, but also for the a more intense investment and trade cooperation. Some target countries and sectors have been identified, always inspired by the ideal of equal partnership that the Italian governments have been carrying out. The decision to intervene was also given by a clear objective in mind: foster a growth that will increase employment and development opportunities to reduce the causes for migrating.

3.2(a) *Promoting internationalization*

After the success of the Italy-Africa Initiative, launched in 2013, two successive Prime ministers carried out four trips to the region over four years: in 2014, Matteo Renzi and in 2017, his successor, Paolo Gentiloni. With the aim of promoting Italy's international trade and investments – within a post-global-crisis and increasingly competitive economic context – they visited as many as ten distinct countries (Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia) (Carbone and Corda 2018). West Africa was finally regarded as a priority also for Italian business since these trips clearly showed the region's increased importance for Italy. This clear political intention came together with the striking data of greenfield foreign direct investments from Italian firms to Italy: in 2015-2016, a study carried out by OECD, African Development Bank and UNCTAD identifies Italy as the third source of FDI after China and the United Arab Emirates, thus first among the European countries (UNCTAD 2017). While the majority of these flows still reached the Northern countries, those with whom Italy used to have more economic ties (UNCTAD 2017), the recent political and economic development of Western countries also attract the attention of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In an interview in the magazine *Limes* in December 2017, the then-Vice Minister Mario Giro identified Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Benin, Ghana, and Nigeria (in spite of the terrorist attacks that still characterize the North-East region) as examples of **resilience** (Caracciolo and Di Muro 2017). From the same study mentioned above for the leadership change in the continent, the West African outlook is undeniably one of the most attractive. In the following map, the three colours can better highlight the positive situation of the region. The first map describes the type of leadership change that used to occur in 1960, while the second is what it was like in 2017:



Source: "Africa Leadership Change Project", designed and developed by Chiara Accinelli & Simone Minisi. Dataset by Giovanni Carbone & Alessandro Pellegata, ISPI 2018

These data of political capabilities, which have continued over the last decade, clearly encouraged the major economic plan for Africa that Prime Minister Matteo Renzi had launched in 2016, when this recovery was already evident (Cappellini 2016). The political resilience of some states as Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire and recently Ghana made them attractive for Italian business, which could count on a more explicit legal framework where to invest; therefore, they were already considered a priority by the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of those times, Mario Giro (Caracciolo and Di Muro 2017). The so-called Africa Act included three main directions: a tax advantage for those investors, with an eye to the sectors of transport, infrastructure, agriculture and energy, especially the **sustainable** one; subsidized credits for private investors; and a package of initiatives to support training, university exchanges and internships (Cappellini 2016). The efforts deployed to foster Italian firms' intervention have expanded over the last few years. It is clear from the tools that investors now have at their disposal and that have tried to alleviate that primary grade of shyness that they had when looking at African counties. From that Act, Italy, as a State, started being more involved in providing the most efficient tools to intervene in the African context, trying to provide guidelines and directions (Raffaelli 2017).

One of the most critical obstacles that foreign firms face is indeed the high interest rates when dealing with access to credit in those countries. To avoid this barrier, **SACE**, which works partly as an Ex-Im Bank, launched its "Frontier Markets" programme, which aims at helping Italian companies identify emerging and unexplored markets. SACE is a joint-stock company wholly owned by "*Cassa depositi e prestiti*" and precisely offers a wide range of insurance and financial products: export credit, investment protection, financial guarantees, surety bonds and factoring. The above-mention programme's first publication – a guide for companies – was entirely devoted to sub-Saharan markets. Indeed, in a context where Italian exports to emerging countries has now surpassed that of the Euro area, the Program devised by SACE was created to respond to a challenge: identifying the next emerging markets, the destinations not yet fully controlled by our companies, but capable of offering the best margins of growth to the "Made in Italy" business (SACE 2014). Developed for the needs of small-and-medium-sized companies, the Program provides insurance-financial products to support exports and investments, assistance for international network offices and dedicated services, underlying risk profiles (credit, political, regulatory, environmental) of destination countries and adopting effective financial and insurance structures to support commercial and investment transactions by single companies (SACE 2014). In their most recent report, they included one Western-African country among the five promises for a re-launch of the Italian export. Thanks to its "*Plan Emergent*", which has given new impetus to sectors such as energy, transport, agriculture and infrastructure, Senegal now shares with Morocco, Turkey, Philippines, and Colombia a privileged status of exporting country, also attracting investments from Italian business (SACE 2018). An example of this strengthened collaboration after the 2018 Conference occurred in the following November, in the Nigeria-Italia **Business Forum**. On this occasion, both public and private sectors met to fix their economic cooperation, which goes well beyond the sole oil and gas companies and massively involves, instead, small and medium enterprises. Through the voice of its General Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs expressed, on that occasion, its unconditional support to small and medium enterprises willing to expand their investment in that country. Still, because Italy has not got an import-export bank, SACE does represent the equivalent for such a protection needed, which the government is financially and technically supporting.

In building this proper outlook for the attractiveness of investments, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs supported, also financially, a more widespread presence of Italian trade agencies (Carbone and Corda 2018). The new **ICE/Italian Trade Agency** is the governmental agency that supports the business development of companies abroad and also promotes the attraction of foreign investment in Italy. Thanks to this renewed collaboration with the continent from 2013, it expanded its presence in Africa beyond the Johannesburg office, which was the only one until recent years. The network now stretches across the whole continent, from Maputo (Mozambique) to Luanda (Angola), from Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) to Brazzaville (Congo) and Accra (**Ghana**). By talking with the current agent with the latter country, responsible for the whole West Africa, it emerged that the reason why this agency was opened followed the export and investment willingness expressed by Italian entrepreneurs in this country. Despite its small size, particularly when compared to the "giant" of the region (Nigeria), Ghana's political stability, economic diversification and increased middle-class represented a major incentive for Italian firms. The Italian Trade Agency particularly assists the actions of small-and-medium-sized ones, for which the agribusiness sector, as deeply discussed in Chapter II, represented a major attractiveness. However, their limited capacity when compared to international tenders makes it harder to enter such markets; for this reason, the action of ITA finally expanded and is being capable of building the roots for an Italian value chain on the field (ITA 2018).

The last Conference in 2018 was also a further occasion to strengthen the collaboration with **Confindustria** (the "General Confederation of Italian Industry"), to reinforce the capability of Italian firms to enter as a value chain in this region, and in the whole continent too. The organization, born out of Italian industries' instances to defend their interests, has got a specialized sub-field dedicated to the Mediterranean, Africa and the Middle East, called "**Assafrica & Mediterraneo**". The association aims at providing associated companies with information, networking, lobbies, and specialized services to support internationalization in these delicate geographical areas where Italian entrepreneurial presence is increasing, but still scarce compared to the actual existing business opportunities. Therefore, in such a complex but interesting region as West Africa, this association is necessary in providing a planned approach, analysing the economic development potential of the countries, financial resources to dedicate, possible partners, customer targets. This involvement is particularly relevant for small and medium enterprises, which are sometimes unaware of the type of context where they are eager to intervene (Assafrica 2019). The contribution of the Ministry is thus particularly relevant: the country presentations, forecasted until the next conference in 2020, will always be carried out with Confindustria, capable of bringing together the interests of the several sectors involved (MAECI 2018). On the mentioned occasion of the Macfrut exposition, held in last May in Rimini, the contribution of "Confindustria Assafrica & Mediterraneo" was indeed crucial. In the press conference, Pier Luigi D'Agata, its President, spoke of an ongoing collaboration with Macfruit since agribusiness has been a significant area of interest for the Italian industry sector. This is particularly true for a value chain that involves each area of production; the contribution of industry, therefore, becomes crucial both at the very beginning of the chain, by supplying fertilizers, to the packaging of the very end.

While the economic and financial tools expanded, so the **embassy network** did, with the aim of supporting all those initiatives (Carbone and Corda 2018). As it has been shown above, the number of Italian representations in Africa is still below the average of other countries (29, versus 52 of China or a closer 35 of Turkey). However, it is remarkable that the number in Sub-Saharan Africa grew, particularly in the West: thanks to the recent openings in Niger, Guinea Conakry (both in 2018) and Burkina Faso (2019), the number of embassies has now reached 23. By participating in the recent opening of the latter one in Ouagadougou, which occurred in February, several elements of the new Italian strategy in West Africa were visible. The meeting was the occasion for the several stakeholders involved in an emerging country, where opportunities for business and development cooperation can coexist with the needs to strengthen security. On the one hand, indeed, representative of the Ministry of the Interior and of the armed forces witnessed the efforts deployed by Italy to train local troops. Also, they publicly stated their intentions to open a new centre for vulnerable immigrants on their way to Libya also in Burkina Faso, so as to favour the process of reintegration in the countries of origin, as is already happening in other countries of the region. On the other hand, though, there emerged several opportunities for Italian NGOs, civil society organizations and firms to enter the country with a grant from their country's diplomatic tie. The latter can indeed find a reliable point of reference in order to enter more hazardous markets, sometimes simply because they did not know how to intervene appropriately within them. Thanks to new European instruments such as the above-mentioned Valletta Trust Fund, indeed, cooperation for aid is changing its appearance and is starting to take an interest in those areas once considered at risk. It is undeniable that, as a consequence, this shift in mindset has also caused instability in the implementation of the projects due to their actual realization capacity. For example, there are still various jihadist attacks, which have discouraged many activities. However, it is for this reason that the AICS (the above-mentioned agency that now develops the implementation of cooperative projects) is making sure that, together with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a cooperation project can be developed between the various NGOs in the area - not only the Italian ones. At the moment, there are about 25 active initiatives, in which civil society also participates.

3.2(b) *Building sustainable development*

Since demography, terrorism, and economic push to look at Africa and European borders keeps moving southwards, with Italy personally feels it with the ongoing migratory crisis, the Italian government has begun carrying out a holistic approach to the continent of the future (Di Muro 2017). As the prior visits by Prime Ministers Renzi and Gentiloni, they tried to pave the way to link the security field, traditionally associated with migration, with a more economic dimension to solve this issue (Di Muro 2017). The current government also showed his interest in the West African region: PM Giuseppe Conte visited Niger and Chad, in the middle of the critical zone of the Sahel, and expressed the Italian closeness to those territories, affected by instability (Cecinini 2019). However, as the last Italy-Africa Conference clearly showed, there is a vital necessity to ensure the same holistic approach in dealing with the issues raised by the then-participating countries (MAECI 2018).

By still drawing on the last Conference in October 2018, where the major guidelines for Italian foreign policy with Africa were set, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs indeed identifies as projects of unconditional importance those that have involved the participation of big firms (Eni and Enel) and of Italian universities to foster the dialogue on training and education. The contribution of these involved companies proved indeed fundamental to the attainment of many of the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, including "access to quality education, decent work, economic growth and poverty reduction" (E4Impact 2017). The action of Eni has been intensely discussed in Chapter II, underlining its approach to the social impact that the model in Ghana represents. The method of Eni Foundation, founded in 2012, is been considered a model by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the ongoing care to the local dimension (MAECI 2018). Indeed, the company has always considered high priority the transfer of know-how in host countries, always sustaining the development of local content and social investments (Eni 2017b). In Ghana, not only has local labour force been employed in the plants; Eni also collaborated with the Ministry of Health and the Health Service to equip themselves with the technical and managerial skills to build up a system of long-term assessment of the impact on health also by training professional people. This type of commitment will thus lay the basis for the basic policy on the matter in the oil and gas sector, providing the tools that the country will need to sustain such a project (Eni 2017b). This model highlights a comprehensive and inclusive view that goes beyond the activity of the company and involves the **social impact** that a foreign company is making on the investment field. For this reason, Eni's action in Africa has been expressly taken as a model: both for Italian firms investing abroad (MAECI 2018), and for African interlocutors, when dealing with foreign partners, as they showed in different occasions (Carbone et al. 2013).

Therefore, other companies have followed this model of cooperation when dealing with local communities, which fostered their relationships in the area. The Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs has expressly stated its interest in supporting them, in particular when young population was involved. During the 2018 Conference, they set several initiatives for the two years to come to train young entrepreneurs and start-ups, which widely characterize West African soil, as it has been seen in Chapter I. The most strategic sectors identified were, once again, agriculture and energy, in particular renewables; two other ones were underlined though, where Italian excellence is globally recognized – tourism and fishing. "Farnesina" gave its financial support, also with the aid of other Ministries that can be involved in several sectors, as the one for the Environment and for Economic Development (MAECI 2018). **Res4Africa** is one of the most efficient partners for local training in **renewables**. Born after the success of the platform "Res4Med", dedicated to Southern Mediterranean countries, it emerged as necessary in a context where over 600 million people still live without access to energy, representing a significant residential and productive market demand for affordable, reliable and clean energy solutions. Enel Green Power is the dominant firm that lies behind this project and, as it has been showed in Chapter II of this work, it has now the chance to become the most extensive renewable energy solutions' provider in Africa. In 2012, RES4Med was initiated as a leading platform with the innovative aim to foster public-private dialogue in light of the vast renewable energy potential and growing energy demand of Southern-Mediterranean countries (RES4Med&Africa 2019). Since then, they promoted renewables as a cost-effective, sustainable, and reliable energy strategy to meet growing local energy demand. This approach, called "upside-down", considers renewable energy solutions through the direct exchange of dialogue, expertise, and skills among private and public actors. In 2016, Sub-Saharan Africa was chosen in light of the growth opportunities for Africa's renewable energy sector, and RES4Med&Africa then was created. Still, since its expansion in 2016, Program Launch conferences have been held in Kenya (2016), Ethiopia (2017) and Zambia (2018) (RES4Med&Africa 2019), but West Africa is still a less touched land by this project. Nonetheless, the recent announcement by Enel Green Power to be in touch with Senegalese authorities will let this further African region enter this network, thus fostering its green energy transition.

Other projects have also been directly involved by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to provide professional training and know-how transfer. Given that this aspect one of the most demanded requests by African leaders to foreign investors when touching their soil, Italian interlocutors, both in their national and business representatives, have always been welcomed by local authorities. Among the initiatives encouraged and sustained by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, there was also **E4impact.** This is an initiative launched in 2010 by ALTIS – Graduate School of Business and Society of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, with the objective of **training impact entrepreneurs** in the developing world. In 2015, the E4Impact Foundation was born with the support of Securfin, Mapei, Salini-Impregilo, the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and

Always Africa Association. Later, important Italian firms active in Africa, as Eni and Bracco (a multinational pharmaceutical company), joined as Corporate Participants (E4Impact 2017). The Foundation inaugurated, with Università Cattolica and universities from host countries, the Global MBA in Impact Entrepreneurship. The MBA was first offered in Kenya in 2010 and has since expanded to Ghana, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Ethiopia. The Foundation held a notable place during the Italy-Africa Conference in the context of fostering the private-private dialogue. Indeed, E4Impact "builds partnerships between public, private and NGOs to promote and replicate successful social businesses and engage large corporations in the development of their local supply chain; it also involves businesses in development cooperation projects supported by institutional donors to enhance shared value; in order to link the Italian and African business, the Foundation supports SMEs interested in Africa by matching them with local entrepreneurs who can become valuable partners for facilitating their entry into the African market" (E4Impact 2017).
Italian institutions have been particularly active also in increasing the African business capabilities with ad hoc formation programmes. It is the case of **LabInnova**, launched by the already mentioned governmental agency ICE (Italian Trade Agency). The objective of LabInnova is to accompany the companies of the target countries active in the **agro-food** sector in the process of internationalization towards European markets, improving both organizational and managerial skills and technological innovation and modernization of the local production chain, based on the Italian agri-food district. The project will be an opportunity to promote commercial opportunities and partnerships with Italian companies in some key sectors (packaging, processing and storage, packaging, shipping, and distribution of food products) (ICE 2019). As a consequence, the project, which began with a course aimed at African companies in the agri-food sector in Africa for local businesses in the agri-food sector, was one of the protagonists of the Macfrut event in Rimini last May. In particular, it provided a study tour in Italy of an African delegation in the same period, with the aim to strengthen a cooperative and fruitful dialogue among the two realities: it will be possible for Italian companies to meet a selected part of the African delegation, composed of about 26 units in the agri-food sector. While the project is currently active in many parts of Africa, it is not still available in one of its Western countries. The willingness to expand in the continent is clear though, given also the success of its first exposition last May in Macfrut. The project can represent a suitable occasion to favour the two sides of the medal: Italian entrepreneurs, looking for new markets where to expand their investments, and the African private sector, which has been struggling to grasp the innovations needed to make that giant jump finally (ITA 2019).

3.2(c) *Is this model valuable? A "S.W.O.T." analysis to evaluate the Italian approach*

All those initiatives taken in the overall context of relations with Africa perfectly suit in a liberal approach undertaken by Italian institutions. The significant reference directives, set in the first 2013 Italy-Africa Initiative, referred to the need for the internationalization of firms, still below their potentiality although some time passed after the crisis. But then, the Initiative was also aiming at fostering African capacities, which could not be underestimated, if other objectives were to be met. Migration is a complex, multi-faced phenomenon, that if wanted to be seriously undertaken, it deserves a stronger commitment by hosting and neighbour countries. But many times, political choices adopted by receiving countries reflected instead the reliance on easy explanations, which appeared as convenient shortcuts but ultimately underestimated the truth (Carbone 2017). The realist approach in managing this phenomenon, by continuously prioritising border protection on the field, and the supposed consequences in European societies affected by migration, finally gave opposite effects. These policies also have an inverse impact on migrants' decision to return to their home countries, since in spite of willing, migrants are less prone to leave Europe if they know it will be difficult, or even impossible, to return (Carbone 2017). While being perfectly aligned with EU institutions, Italy can also propose a different model of cooperation with its African counterparts. The efforts that have been deployed so far have indeed regarded strengthening security means, and are planning to do so, if we observe the outcomes of the 2018 Conference. At the same time, however, the same occasion emerged as a chance to foster a different type of cooperation, possibly more effective. The aim of the internationalization of Italian firms, in an overall strategy of fruitful know-how transfer and trade cooperation, can bring the tools to sustain a long-term path of development. The Initiative, while launched in the far 2013, is still on its way, but the efforts to renew it thanks to the 2016 and 2018 Italy-Africa Conferences look to sustain this line. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Economic Development, and also of the Environment, are finally realizing the strategic importance of Africa to boost Italian economic interests abroad. Since they are not anymore lead merely by big-sized companies, it is instead a significant chance to increase small and medium ones' capabilities to enter a fast-accelerating market, rich in opportunities.

An evaluation of the Italian foreign policy conduct is required to see what its structural strengths and weaknesses of this model are. The following table summarises the two of them, concerning both the region's outlook and the model of foreign policy that Italy has applied in it. It will then follow by highlighting future opportunities and risks that are associated with this model of liberalism in external relations:

STRENGTHS	**WEAKNESSES**
Equal treatment to African leaders	Despite increase of democratization, still feeling of political instability.
Shared path sustainable development	Not always clear legal frameworks present that induce to invest
African countries supported by Italy in multilateral occasion to occupy important places.	At EU level, the development-migration nexus is hard to apply because of diversity of partners' views: from realist approach by France to a more similar to the Italian one by Germany.
No secret agendas for discussions: transparency and equal partnership.	

Reliance on two suitable models in African context: big firms (first by Eni, which introduced the 50-50 formula of labour force for national-local); and SMEs, appealing to African local private sector.	
Initiatives carried out by MAECI with private collaboration to foster private-private dialogue, education and know-how transfer.	

OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
Internationalization of firms can find an increasing market: a growing middle-class needs access to energy and to processed food. This will be easily clear in the very short run.	Firms can easily withdraw if not enough support if given in the way to internationalization in emerging countries.
Triggering solutions to migration from roots	At European level, long-term commitment to managing migration can let MS withdraw from this common cause.
Aiming at a long-run effects that will make powerful impacts in the future.	Unseizable short-term effects: risk of going back to the wrong approach of borders control or migration flows blocked on field.

As it has emerged throughout this chapter, the treatment that Italian governments and institutions deserved to African interlocutors also represented a *unicum* in many cases. This has undoubtedly represented a strength point also in multilateral contexts, where Italian authorities have been less shy in fostering a peer-to-peer treatment to newly-independent states, as it has been seen in the years of African democratization. The same procedure has been undertaken so far with the G7 Meeting, with the special focus on Africa, and almost with the two Conferences that followed the 2013 Initiative. The same approach looked unchanged also during the current government's last trips in West Africa, too. When entering this soil to promote internationalization of their interested companies, Italian authorities can count on a favourable model carried out by their business. This has proved to be a valid card to play when dealing with issues as attention to the local dimension and the sustainability of the projects proposed, in particular for big firms. The same has happened with small-and-medium-sized enterprises, which in turn could enjoy the appeal of African private sector, eager to exploit this know-how transfer (Carbone et al. 2013). Admittedly, it is undeniable that foreign policy in such a region, where political instability is still a widespread consequence of some held elections, can make the relations with those partners not always smooth as imagined. In business, many firms still encounter legal obstacles.

Enel Green Power entered only recently in contact with Senegal thanks to the recently-launched National Plan: since the legal framework was still linked to conventional forms of energy, it has been hard to let them switch to renewables. A choice towards the latter indeed does not exclude traditional forms of energy from oil and gas, which West Africa is rich in, but can implement it in a better way, providing energy on a much wider scale. In the agri-food sector, economic diplomacy requires many efforts to break down phytosanitary barriers, which is difficult in West Africa and can limit the export orientation of Italian firms.

Criticisms of this liberal model do not involve only the will of internationalization, which can result difficult in this particular region. They also suggest the model to approach migration, which is not always appreciated at the European level – nor even always at a national one. If real development of the region is to be undertaken, this cooperation will bring its fruits only in the long term; meaning, when there are sufficiently rooted conditions for which what induces now to emigrate is almost wholly eradicated (Venturi 2017). Indeed, as already shown in Chapter I, economists have demonstrated that higher levels of economic and human development do not immediately reduce flows, but in fact, they bring higher over-all levels of migration (de Haas 2010).

Therefore, on one side the development-migration nexus represents a major opportunity both for Italian firms, which can contribute by accompanying these countries towards this path and for Italian and European institutions, which can finally find the most suitable solution to cope with an issue that also affects their domestic politics (Carbone 2017). On the other, however, it presents numerous complications to be applied. Threats can come from both the business and the institutional sectors. Firms can indeed encounter many difficulties in committing themselves for the long term if the instruments provided by the Italian Trade Agency, SACE and their associations as Confindustria are not well coordinated to carry on their efforts. On the institutional side, other European countries can still find this method inefficient, if outcomes do not come in a nearer future, with the risk that the whole project crumbles down. Therefore, Italy needs serious commitments in all its integrity if it is eager to carry on with this model. The role of the State, conceived as a general guideline to shape the conduct of both private and public sectors, might come into the scene more promptly and with more decisiveness. If Italian governments are willing to embrace this major cause, West African and Italian economy will both benefit from this choice.

CONCLUSIONS

The global scenario to which the Western world was used to is slowly – but dramatically – changing. What they used to refer to Africa as the continent of richness in resources, but of overall backwardness, is an old picture of little value nowadays. If it is undeniable that Sub-Saharan Africa remains the poorest among world regions, the recent trends of growth described in Chapter I, contrary to widespread perceptions in the West, showed that the whole area is far from static. Political reforms, urbanization, demographic increase, impressive economic growth, spread of new technologies: all these advances made African leaders more aware, often capable of pretending their role of protagonists. But the same processes have triggered heterogeneous paths of development, which all had a substantial impact on African migration (Carbone 2017). Young people with high aspirations of socio-economic improvement, fueled even more by the use of new technologies and social media, encountered economies growing, but with a "jobless" growth, which was undoubtedly not enough to meet their expectations. Meanwhile, the recent slowdown of some sub-Saharan economies even acerbated the diversity of growth trajectories in the region (Carbone 2017). The example of the economic recession of Nigeria is emblematic, which corresponds to the pick of their arrivals on our coasts (UNHCR 2018). By reminding the patterns of "growth spells", mentioned in Chapter I, it is clear that Sub-Saharan Africa is highly vulnerable to endogenous and exogenous factors, making its growth hardly translatable into real development (Berg, Ostry, and Zettelmeyer 2012). These two structural elements – volatility of growth performances and the relatively few jobs created – make it difficult to predict if Africa's development processes will increase migration, as de Haas predicted particularly in the medium and short term (2010). The first spill-over will take place over internal migration, at least until African countries' performances diverge. But the truth is that neither the West, nor even Italy, can expect to find one single solution for one region of origin of those migrants. As de Haas states in his work, the Western mentality is inextricably linked to the "Hegelian teleological assumption that there is a single, unilinear path towards development and progress" (de Haas 2010). Consequently, by coping with this issue in the same way regarding international migrants, the root causes of fleeing have been underestimated, and the problem stayed (Venturi 2017).

Nevertheless, the scenario that is gradually taking place in Africa, and in its Western region too, may bring about a substantial shift in this mentality. The validity of a liberal approach would underestimate the use of policies that used to aim at solely controlling the external borders of the EU. Those measures actually ended in unintended consequences, such as changing the migrants' choices of destination countries, the routes they follow and the ways they set out to enter Europe (i.e., legally or irregularly); and, more importantly, they did not enable them to return home temporarily or for staying (Carbone 2017). Although it is not possible to regulate migration at complete effectiveness, a valuable alternative is shaping the conditions under which it occurs. So far, the EU and its member states have failed to look below the surface of migration, but now that the business sector has entered the scene, this drama might have another final. Their interest in Africa by delivering their products and their direct investments was introduced in the new framework of development cooperation in Law 125/2014 when the Italy-Africa Initiative had triggered a shift in providing aid. Not bringing money, but long-term projects, where African people should more and more gain their role of protagonists. In West Africa, Italian presence is bringing energy and processed food, but, most importantly, is teaching them the cheapest and smartest solutions to be implemented by themselves.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to trigger an inclusive development, nor even in a determined region that, as Chapter I has shown, still presents many differences inside. The efficiency of this liberal approach will only bring its fruits in the long term, making it difficult to evaluate it soon. Still, what is undeniable is that the modalities with which it is taking place look as the most plausible on the table. Bringing aid in terms of long-term projects and of impacting investments will be able to suit with this new era of international commitments to developing countries, where generic financial grants are not enough anymore. Linking it to firms' performance abroad has proved extremely fruitful for their productivity and employment, as shown in Chapter II of this work: internationalization has been a keyword over the last decade, and governments have struggled to apply it in the most suitable manner for national companies. The chance to expand to Africa is new, since despite so close to the Mediterranean, other factors made firms more reluctant to approach risky soils (Mantica 2017). Still, even in the past other firms have started, on their own, initiatives in Africa, but their sporadic incidence was mainly caused by insufficient knowledge of the territory and some certain risks that are associated with it. What is needed is a substantial effort from all those parts involved. But, more importantly, without the general political guidelines given by Italy as a State, this project could never see the light. **Economic diplomacy** indeed has been gradually assuming more relevance in Italian foreign policy, and it now regards West Africa too. Italy needs to embrace this cause in all its integrity: from its institutions to its private sector, internationalization towards this region will be a major opportunity to exploit. But to align it in a broader context of sustaining the regional growth, Italy, as a State, will be called to stress their role of leadership, by bringing this model of sustainable development and a new strategy for Africa at European discussions. This makes this aim more challenging, but undeniably more rewarding, finally capable of bringing a great opportunity to all the parts in the game: to Italy, to Europe and, more importantly, to West African countries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Academic references and articles

- Angeli, M. (2018). *Noi e l'Africa. L'Africa e noi. Conversando con Mario Raffaelli*. [online] ytali. Available at: https://ytali.com/2018/10/12/cosa-significa-davvero-aiutarli-casa-loro-parla-mario-raffaelli/ [Accessed 7 May 2019].
- Barlaam, R., *Nasce una grande area di libero scambio. La rivincita dell'Africa parte dal commercio*, in Il Sole 24 Ore, April 1, 2018. [Online] Available at: https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/commenti-e-idee/2018-03-31/commercio-l-occasione-dell-africa-210323.shtml?uuid=AEbKhpME&fromSearch
- Caracciolo, L., and Di Muro, L. (2017). *"La nostra profondità strategica in Africa"*, in "Africa italiana", "Limes" 11/2017, pp. 9-18, Roma.
- Caracciolo, L., and Noto, L. (2017). *"Perché non possiamo essere italoafricani",* in "Africa italiana", "Limes" 11/2017, pp. 103-112, Roma.
- Carbone, G. (2016). *Italia-Africa: verso la "normalità" del nuovo corso?* ISPI [Online] Available at: https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/italia-africa-verso-la-normalita-del-nuovo-corso-15148 [Accessed 15 February 2019]
- Carbone, G. (2017). *Out of Africa. Why people migrate*. ISPI, Milano
- Carbone, G. (2019). *The New Scramble for Africa? Sì, ma non è nuovo*. [online] ISPI. Available at: https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/new-scramble-africa-si-ma-non-e-nuovo-22668 [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].
- Carbone, G., Corda, T. (2018). *Mapping change in Africa*, in "A vision of Africa's Future – Mapping change, transformations and trajectories towards 2030", ISPI, Milano, pp. 195-210
- Caslin, O. (2019). *Philippe Le Houérou (IFC): « Dans les années qui viennent, le commerce intra-africain pourrait augmenter de 52 % »* – JeuneAfrique.com. [online] Available at: https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/749646/economie/philippe-le-houerou-ifc-a-moyen-terme-le-commerce-intra-africain-passera-de-14-a-plus-de-52/ [Accessed 30 Mar. 2019].
- Cecinini, S. (2019). *Conte in visita in Ciad e Niger*, in Sicurezza Internazionale [Online] Available at: http://sicurezzainternazionale.luiss.it/2019/01/17/conte-visita-ciad-niger/ [Accessed 8 May 2019]
- Codazzi, M. (2017). *The Electricity Highway: Power to the People* in "Africa: lighting up the future", in "Aspenia", 76, pp. 150-154
- Coulibaly, N. (2019). "*Togo : Faure Gnassingbé lance officiellement son PND"* – JeuneAfrique.com, March 1, 2019, [online] Available at: https://www.jeuneafrique.com/743441/economie/togo-faure-gnassingbe-lance-officiellement-son-plan-national-de-developpement/ [Accessed 27 Mar. 2019].
- Cozzi, L., (2017). *Africa rising* in "Africa: lighting up the future", in "Aspenia", 76, pp. 116-123
- Dassù, M. (2017). *Editorial* in "Africa: lighting up the future", in "Aspenia", 76, pp. 9-10

- De Simone, S. (2018). *Human Development, Education and Mobility*, in "A vision of Africa's Future – Mapping change, transformations and trajectories towards 2030", ISPI, Milano, pp. 171-194
- Di Muro, L. (2017). *Geoeconomia delle nostre Afriche – Le priorità delle imprese italiane.* in "Africa italiana", "Limes" 11/2017, pp. 149-154, Roma.
- Ecofin Agency (2019). *African Development Bank, ECOWAS, sign agreement for study on Abidjan-Lagos Corridor Highway*. February 5, 2019. EcofinAgancy.com [Online]. Available at: https://www.ecofinagency.com/public-management/0502-39603-african-development-bank-ecowas-sign-agreement-for-study-on-abidjan-lagos-corridor-highway [Accessed 20 March 2019]
- Gheasi, M., and Nijkamp, P. (2017). *A Brief Overview of International Migration Motives and Impacts, with Specific Reference to FDI*. Economies, MDPI, Open Access Journal, vol. 5(3), pages 1-11
- Investopedia (2019). *How Brownfield Investments Work.* [Online] Available at: https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brownfield.asp
- Ito, E.E., and Ugbome I.L., (2017), *Impact of gas flaring on biodiversity in Niger Delta, Nigeria*, Nigerian Journal of Science and Environment, Vol. 15 (1)
- JeuneAfrique (2019). *Côte d'Ivoire : la BAD engage 275 milliards de F CFA pour financer des projets d'aménagement*, JeuneAfrique.com [Online] Available at: https://www.jeuneafrique.com/744474/economie/cote-divoire-la-bad-engage-275-milliards-de-f-cfa-pour-financer-des-projets-damenagement/ [Accessed 6 March 2019]
- Jackson, R., Sørensen, G. (2013). *Introduction to International Relations – Theories and Approaches. Fifth Edition.* Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Keohane, R. O., and Nye J.S., Jr (1977). *Power and interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. Boston, MA: Little Brown
- Leke, A., Lund, S., Roxburgh, C. and van Wamelen, A. (2010). *What's driving Africa's growth.* [online] McKinsey & Company. Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/middle-east-and-africa/whats-driving-africas-growth [Accessed 23 Apr. 2019].
- Lopes, C. (2018). *La Zlec, une chance historique pour le continent* – JeuneAfrique.com. [online] JeuneAfrique.com. [Online] Available at: https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/545317/economie/la-zlec-une-chance-historique-pour-le-continent/ [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].
- Mangeni, F. (2018). *Il grande potenziale commerciale dell'Africa*. [online] Il Sole 24 ORE. Available at: https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/commenti-e-idee/2018-05-21/il-grande-potenziale-commerciale-africa-154338.shtml?uuid=AES2VxrE&refresh_ce=1 [Accessed 13 Mar. 2019].
- Mantica, A. (2017). *Siamo all'anno zero*, in "Africa italiana", "Limes" 11/2017, pp. 113-122, Roma.
- Mayaki, H. (2019). *ECOWAS, AfDB sign agreement and contracts for the $22.7 million Abidjan-Lagos highway corridor* | Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). [online] Ecowas.int. Available at: https://www.ecowas.int/ecowas-afdb-sign-agreement-and-contracts-for-the-22-7-million-abidjan-lagos-highway-corridor/ [Accessed 7 Apr. 2019].

- Martín, J. R. (2019). *African solar reaps lion's share of latest GCF funding round*. Pv-Tech.org [Online] Available at: https://www.pv-tech.org/news/african-solar-reaps-lions-share-of-latest-gcf-funding-round [Accessed 17 Apr. 2019]
- Mazzei, F., Marchetti, R., Petito, F. (2010). *Manuale di Politica Internazionale*. Egea, Milano.
- Micaela, C. (2016). *Investire in Africa, il piano italiano*. IlSole24Ore, 19 September 2016
- Monga, C. (2019). *Africa, the Business Deal of the Century* [online] Project Syndicate. Available at: https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/africa-manufacturing-investment-opportunities-by-c-lestin-monga-2017-12 [Accessed 18 Apr. 2019].
- Monnet, T. (2019). *Libre-échange : la signature gambienne amorce l'entrée en vigueur du futur marché commun* – JeuneAfrique.com. [online] JeuneAfrique.com. Available at: https://www.jeuneafrique.com/757802/economie/libre-echange-la-signature-gambienne-amorce-lentree-en-vigueur-du-futur-marche-commun/ [Accessed 8 Apr. 2019].
- Morozzo della Rocca, R. (1997). *Mozambico: una pace all'italiana* in "Africa!", *Limes*, 3/1997 [online] Available at: http://www.archivio900.it/it/articoli/art.aspx?id=7867 [Accessed 10 May 2019].
- Newscentral (2019). *Gambia launches renewable energy programme*. News Central TV - Latest African news, stories, live TV. [Online] Available at: https://newscentral.ng/gambia-launches-renewable-energy-programme/ [Accessed 27 Mar. 2019].
- Nguyen-Quoc, T., Minsal, A. and Deiana, R., (2018), *Africa's multi-speed growth prospects: diverging policy options?* in "A vision of Africa's Future – Mapping change, transformations and trajectories towards 2030", ISPI, Milano, pp. 41-68
- Pagni, L. (2017). *Enel scommette rinnovabili in Africa e investe nel fotovoltaico in Etiopia* in *La Repubblica*, 23 October 2017. [Online] Available at https://www.repubblica.it/economia/2017/10/23/news/enel-179103395/ [Accessed 20 Apr. 2019]
- Pistelli, L. (2017). *Geoeconomia delle nostre Afriche – L'Eni è in Africa per restarci.* in "Africa italiana", "Limes" 11/2017, pp. 154-158, Roma.
- Raffaelli, M. (2017). *La triste fine del metodo italiano e qualche idea per ravvivarlo,* in "Africa italiana", "Limes" 11/2017, pp. 95-102, Roma.
- Ranzoni, A. (1987), *Addio Terzo Mondo Crudele,* La Repubblica, 26 July 1987 [Online]. Available at: https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1987/07/26/addio-terzo-mondo-crudele.html [Accessed 20 May 2019]
- Rosenau, J. N. (1992). "Citizenship in a Changing Global Order" in J. N. Rosenau and E.-O. Czempien (eds), *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 272-94
- Ross, W. (2018), *Lake Chad: Can the vanishing lake be saved?*. BBC News [online]. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43500314 [Accessed 8 May 2019]

- Simsek, A. (2018) *Germany announces $1.14 billion fund for Africa*, AA.com [Online]. Available at: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/germany-announces-114-billion-fund-for-africa/1298211 [Accessed 12 May 2019]
- Specia, M. (2019). *The African Currency at the Center of a European Dispute*. [online] Nytimes.com. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/22/world/africa/africa-cfa-franc-currency.html [Accessed 23 Mar. 2019].
- Starace, F. (2017). *Africa's Energy: A New Deal,* in Africa: lighting up the future", in "Aspenia", 76, pp. 11-17
- The Economist (2019). *Choices on the continent*. In The Economist, "The New Scramble for Africa – And How the Africans Could Win*".* March 9th-15th, pg 18-20.
- Williams, M., Mayer R., and Minger, M. (2011), *Africa's ICT Infrastructure: Building on the mobile revolution*, Washington D.C., World Bank. [Online] Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/375261468204545149/pdf/632510PUB0ICT000ID0184540BOX361512B.pdf

Reports and papers

- AfDB/OECD (2008), *African Economic Outlook: 2008*, OECD Publishing, Paris. [Online] Available at: https://doi.org/10.1787/aeo-2008-en.
- AfDB/OECD/UNDP (2016), *African Economic Outlook 2016: Sustainable Cities and Structural Transformation*, OECD Publishing. Paris. [Online] Available at: https://doi.org/10.1787/aeo-2016-en.
- AfDB, OECD, UNDP (2017). *African Economic Outlook 2017: Entrepreneurship and industrialization*, Paris, OECS Publishing. [Online] Available at: https://doi.org/10.1787/aeo-2017-en.
- AfDB, OEDC, UNDP, UNECA (2012). *African Economic Outlook 2017. Promoting Youth Employment*, Paris, OECS Publishing
- Ahmed et al. (2014), *How significant is Africa's demographic dividend for its future growth and poverty reduction?* World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, No. 7134, Washington, DC.
- Allen, T. and P. Heinrigs (2016). *Emerging Opportunities in the West African Food Economy*, *West African Papers*, N° 1, OECD Publishing, Paris. [Online] Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/5jlvfj4968jb-en.pdf?expires=1559378319&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=BB4C3E70E0F23DE0177BFBD2AC6EFD78
- Allen, T., P. Heinrigs and I. Heo (2018). *Agriculture, food and jobs in West Africa*, *West African Papers*, N° 14, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/agriculture-and-food/agriculture-food-and-jobs-in-west-africa_dc152bc0-en.

- ANSD (2015), *Rapport global du recensement général des entreprises, Agence nationale de statistique et de la démographie*, Ministère de l'Économie, des Finances et du Plan du Sénégal. Dakar. [Online] Available at: http://www.ansd.sn/index.php?option=com_rapports&view#.
- AUC/OECD (2018), *Africa's Development Dynamics 2018: Growth, Jobs and Inequalities*, AUC, Addis Ababa/OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Berg, A., J. Ostry, and J. Zettelmeyer (2012), *What Makes Growth Sustained?* in Journal of Development Economics 98: 149–66.
- Blankenburg, A. (2018). *L'internazionalizzazione delle imprese italiane: analisi delle caratteristiche e dell'evoluzione del fenomeno con dati FATS,* in "Italian Trade Agency 2017-2018 report", pp. 327-337
- Boselli, C. (2017). *Le condizioni economico-finanziarie delle imprese esportatrici* in Chapter 6 of "Italian Trade Agency Report", 2016-2017.
- Bugamelli, M., Fabiani S., Federico, S., Felettigh, A., Giordano C. and Linarello A., (2018a). *Back on track? A micro-macro Narrative of Italian Exports*. Working Papers, no.1, January 2018. Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, Rome. Available at: http://www.dt.mef.gov.it/export/sites/sitodt/modules/documenti_it/analisi_progammazione/working_papers/WP_Nx_1_-_JAN_2018.pdf
- Bugamelli, M., Linarello, A. & Serafini, R. (2018b). *The 'Margin Call': firm-level export dynamics in Italy*. Banca d'Italia, mimeo.
- Bugamelli, M., Lotti, F. (eds), Amici, M., Ciapanna, E., Colonna, F., D'Amuri F., Giacomelli, S., Linarello, A., Manaresi, F., Palumbo, G., Scoccianti, F. e Sette, E. (2018). *Productivity growth in Italy: a tale of a slow-motion change*. Banca d'Italia, Questioni di economia e finanza, n. 422, pp. 1–98.
- De Haas, H. (2010) *Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration*, in IMI Working Papers, No. 24. Available at: https://heindehaas.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/de-haas-2010-migration-transitions-imi-wp-24.pdf
- DLA Piper (2018). *Renewable Energy in Africa*. [Online] Available at: http://www.ikm.co.ke/export/sites/ikm/news/articles/2018/downloads/Africa_Energy_Guide.pdf
- Doing Business (2019), *Training for reform, 2019*. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank. [Online] Available at: http://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report_web-version.pdf [Accessed 15 Apr. 2019]
- E4Impact (2017). *E4Impact: Entrepreneurship for Impact – Brochure of the Project.* [Online] Available at: http://e4impact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/E4Impact-Brochure-2017-new.pdf
- ECOWAS (2016). *History*. [Online] Available at: http://www.ecowas.int/about-ecowas/history/

- ENI (2015). *Ghana Offshore Cape Three Points Oil Block Development: phase 2. Final environmental impact statement*. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/817641467997610071/pdf/E4834-v2-EA-P152670-PUBLIC-Disclosed-9-21-2015-Box393209B.pdf
- ENI (2017a). *Integrated Annual Report*. Available at: https://www.eni.com/docs/en_IT/enicom/publications-archive/publications/reports/rapporti-2017/Integrated-Annual-Report-2017.pdf
- ENI (2017b). *Sankofa: the first oil from Ghana's OCTP development, July 2017*. Available at: https://www.eni.com/docs/en_IT/enicom/sustainability/eni-ghana2017.pdf
- Hackson, R. H. (1990), *Quasi-States. Sovereignty, international relations and the Third World*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,
- Harris, L. (2017), *Beyond the grid* in "Africa: lighting up the future", in "Aspenia", 76, pp. 143-149
- IEA, OECD, IIASA (2016). *Energy and Air Pollution: World Energy Outlook Special Report 2016.* International Energy Agency, Paris
- IMF (2017a), *World Economic Outlook: Seeking Sustainable Growth*, International Monetary Fund, Washington D.C.; [Online] Available at: http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2016/12/27/A- Shifting-Global-Economic-Landscape.
- IMF (2017b), *Regional Economic Outlook: Sub Saharan Africa – Restarting the growth engine*, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC. [Online] Available at: http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/ Issues/2017/05/03/sreo0517
- IMF (2019), *World economic outlook: Growth Slowdown, Precarious Recovery*, International Monetary Fund, Washington D.C., April 2019
- IRENA (2018), *IRENA Planning and prospects for renewable power*: West Africa, International Renewable Energy Agency, Abu Dhabi.
- ITA (2018), *L'Italia nell'economia internazionale – Rapporto ICE 2017-2018.* Roma.
- ITA (2019). *Esportazioni di prodotti agro-alimentari italiani 2016-2018.* Italian Trade Agency, Rome. https://www.ice.it/it/sites/default/files/inline-files/SCHEDA%20Prodotto%20Ortofrutta%202018.pdf
- Kowalski, P. et al. (2015), *Participation of developing countries in global value chains: Implications for trade and trade-related policies*, OECD Trade Policy Papers, No. 179, OECD Publishing, Paris. [Online] Available at: online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5js33lfw0xxn-en.
- MAECI (2018). *Conferenza Italia-Africa: Piano dei Seguiti*. Roma.
- Mariotti S., Mutinelli M. (2017). *Italia Multinazionale 2017 - Le partecipazioni italiane all'estero ed estere in Italia*. Rome, 2017. ITA – Italian Trade Agency. https://www.esteri.it/mae/resource/doc/2018/01/italia_multinazionale_2017_web.pdf

- MATTM (2018). *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Climate Change, Vulnerability, Risk Assessment, Adaptation and Mitigation*. Available online at: https://www.minambiente.it/sites/default/files/archivio/allegati/sviluppo_sostenibile/Protocollo_lago_ciad_EN.pdf
- Moducci and Zurlo (2017). *Innovazione e digitalizzazione nelle imprese manifatturiere esportatrici: profili, performance economica e impatto occupazionale*. in Italian Trade Agency 2017-2018 report, pp. 203-302
- OECD (2016), *Examen multidimensionnel de la Côte d'Ivoire: Volume 2. Analyse approfondie et recommandations*, OECD Development Pathways, OECD Publicshing, Paris. [Online] Available at: http://dx.doi. org/10.1787/9789264251670-fr.
- OECD (2017), *Unlocking the Potential of Youth Entrepreneurship in Developing Countries: From subsistence to performance*, Development Centre Studies, OECD Publications, Paris. [Online] Available at: https://doi. org/10.1787/9789264277830-en.
- OPHI (2017), *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index Winter 2017/2018* (database), Oxford Poverty & Human Development Intitiative, Oxford. [Online] Available at: http://ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/ global-mpi-2017/.
- Res4Med&Africa (2019) Brochure of the project: https://www.res4africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Brochure_Res4Med-Africa_ENG.pdf
- SACE (2018). *Keep calm & Made in Italy: Rapporto Export 2018.* SACE, SIMEST.
- UNCTAD (2015), *Economic development in Africa Report 2015: Unlocking the potential of Africa's services trade for growth and development*, United Nations Conference for Trade and Development, Geneva. [Online] Available at: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/aldcafrica2015_en.pdf.
- UNCTAD (2017). *World Investment Report. Investment and the Digital Economy*, United Nations Conference for Trade and Development, Geneva. [Online] Available at: https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/wir2017_en.pdf
- UNCTAD (2018a). *Economic Development in Africa Report 2018: Migration for Structural Transformation*. United Nations Publications, New York and Geneva.
- UNCTAD (2018b), *World Investment report*. New York and Geneva: United Nations.
- UNDP, HCRO (2018), *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update*, the United Nations Development Programme, New York. [Online] Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf
- UNHCR (2018): *Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboards – December 2017*. 11 January 2018 https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/61547
- UNHCR (2019): *Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboards – December 2018*. 9 January 2018 https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67555

- Venturi, B. (2017), *The security-migration-development nexus in the Sahel: a reality check*, in "The security-migration-development nexus revised: a perspective from the Sahel", FEPS, IAI. Brussel, Rome.
- World Bank (2011). *Ghana Looks to Retool Its Economy as it Reaches Middle-Income Status.* WorldBank. [Online] Available at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2011/07/18/ghana-looks-to-retool-its-economy-as-it-reaches-middle-income-status
- World Bank (2013), *African Development Indicators 2012-2013*, Washington, 1 January 2013, pp. 72-73
- World Bank (2017). *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and International Development Association. Project appraisal Document on Proposed IBRD Enclave Guarantees in the Amaount of up to UD$500 million for the Republic of Ghana in support of the Sankofa Gas Project.* 7 July 2015. [Online] Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/173561467986250592/pdf/96554-PAD-P152670-R2015-0143-1-IDA-R2015-0200-1-Box391499B-OUO-9.pdf
- World Bank and Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (2017). *Migration and remittances: Recent developments and outlook* – Special Topic: Return Migration. Migration and Development Brief No. 28.

Speeches and press releases

- Assafrica (2019): http://www.assafrica.it/
- Bolton, J., (2018). *Remarks by National Security Advisor Ambassador John R. Bolton on the Trump Administration's New Africa Strategy*, delivered on December 13, 2018. Available online at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-r-bolton-trump-administrations-new-africa-strategy/
- Bonino, E. opening speech at Italy-Africa Initiative. Available online at: http://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/399860/iniziativa-italia-africa
- Conte, G., opening speech at Italy-Africa Conference, 25 October 2018. Available online at: http://www.governo.it/articolo/il-presidente-conte-interviene-alla-conferenza-ministeriale-italia-africa/10198
- ECOWAS (2019). *ECOWAS, AfDB sign agreement for $22.7 million Abidjan-Lagos highway corridor*. [Online] Available at: https://f4dafrica.com/2019/02/08/ecowas-afdb-sign-agreement-for-22-7-million-abidjan-lagos-highway-corridor/
- ENI (2018a). *The President of Ghana Akufo-Addo meets Eni CEO Claudio Descalzi*. Press release. [Online] Available at: https://www.eni.com/docs/en_IT/enicom/media/press-release/2018/10/PR-Pres-Ghana-Akufo-Addo-meets-Descalzi.pdf

- ENI (2018b). *Eni and UNDP Join Forces to Promote Sustainable Energy and SDGs in Africa*. Press release [Online] Available at: https://www.eni.com/docs/en_IT/enicom/media/press-release/2018/09/PR-Eni-UNDP-MoU.pdf
- ICE (2019), https://www.exportraining.ice.it/it/attivita-e-servizi/lista-corsi/291-lab-innova-for-africa-formazione-per-operatori-stranieri.html.
- FratMat (2018). *Zone économique Sikasso-Korhogo-Bobodioulasso : Ce que dit la déclaration d'engagement.* Declaration of Engagement: https://www.fratmat.info/index.php/economie/zone-economique-sikasso-korhogo-bobodioulasso-ce-que-dit-la-declaration-d-engagement
- MAECI (2019). "Giornata per l'Africa": https://www.esteri.it/mae/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/eventi/giornata-dell-africa-2019.html
- MarketWatch (2016). *Micoperi and Quantum Power Have Reached Agreement on the EPC Role for the Tema Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Import, Storage, Regasification and Delivery Facility, Commencing Construction in Ghana in 2016*. Press release: https://www.marketwatch.com/press-release/micoperi-and-quantum-power-have-reached-agreement-on-the-epc-role-for-the-tema-liquefied-natural-gas-lng-import-storage-regasification-and-delivery-facility-commencing-construction-in-ghana-in-2016-2016-03-04
- SACE (2014): https://www.sace.it/media/comunicati-stampa/dettaglio/al-via-il-programma-frontier-markets-la-prima-guida-%C3%A8-dedicata-all'africa-sub-sahariana

ABSTRACT

Il presente lavoro si propone di analizzare la condotta della politica estera italiana in Africa occidentale, con una particolare attenzione al ruolo della diplomazia economica nella difesa degli interessi delle aziende che hanno mostrato maggiore attenzione su questa zona del continente. Attraverso una lunga ricerca di analisi, grazie soprattutto alle documentazioni disponibili del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, dell'Istituto Commercio Estero (ICE) e di altri Ministeri, è stato possibile rintracciare le linee guida della politica italiana in Africa, che negli ultimi anni ha coinvolto sempre più attori, con un progetto a lungo termine. Gli interessi del settore privato italiano in quell'area nel continente, infatti, si intrecciano, da una parte, a quelli locali, per sostenere la crescita di quindici Paesi; dall'altra parte, però, si inseriscono in un quadro più ampio di politica estera, che riguarda inevitabilmente la gestione del fenomeno migratorio. Il modo in cui i governi si sono approcciati a questa delicata zona del pianeta è però cambiato, evolvendosi in un approccio sempre più olistico ed inclusivo di più attori. Ne è stata prova l'Iniziativa "Italia-Africa", ideata nel 2013 dall'allora Ministro degli Affari Esteri, Emma Bonino: l'attenzione verso il continente ha finalmente preso sostanza, dando inizio ad una serie di conferenze, con data ogni due anni, che stabiliscono una strategia nazionale che coinvolge più parti interessate allo sviluppo dell'Africa. Ne risulta, perciò, un approccio italiano sempre più marcatamente liberale, come testimoniano anche altri episodi presi dalla storia delle relazioni con il continente. Un approccio inedito e alle volte in collisione con altri partner, anche europei, più spiccatamente realistici ed improntati a risultati a breve termine. Ciononostante, il *modus operandi* che l'Italia sembra delineare appare come l'unica alternativa per arginare le cause che inducono alle migrazioni; ma anche, più ampiamente, per dare respiro ad un continente in crescita, fornendogli i mezzi per cogliere questo momento storico.

Capitolo I

Il rinnovato interesse da parte del settore privato italiano, che ha coinvolto anche la piccola e media imprenditoria, ha avuto inizio in seguito alla crisi economica del 2009. Da quel momento, lo scenario globale ha visto un graduale spostamento della ricchezza verso i Paesi non-OCSE: i Paesi emergenti hanno infatti superato la metà della ricchezza globale, ed è stato questo il momento in cui anche l'Africa si affacciata, con maggior determinazione, sulla scena economica e politica del pianeta. Il continente, un tempo ricco solo di risorse da poter sfruttare, iniziava ad assumere più consapevolezza, ed anche la sua regione occidentale, un tempo fra le più povere del pianeta, ha iniziato a diversificare gradualmente le sue economie e a sfruttare così i suoi ritmi di crescita.

La prima parte della presente ricerca ha perciò analizzato nel dettaglio le cause della crescita dell'Africa occidentale, dietro solo ai ritmi del Nord (24% del PIL del continente, contro il 38% di quest'ultima). Ciononostante, i trend del *West Africa* sono apparsi particolarmente interessanti, sotto molti punti di vista. Innanzitutto, i numeri del "boom" demografico, rilevante soprattutto per la crescita della classe media, che porterà a 809 milioni di abitanti, secondo le previsioni ONU. Ad essa si aggiunge un'urbanizzazione sempre

più accentuata, che fa sì che molte più persone abbiano bisogno di cibo processato e di energia, settori estremamente strategici nel continente. Le innovazioni tecnologiche, inoltre, hanno favorito un accesso sempre più ampio a servizi che hanno rimpiazzato la carenza di infrastrutture, agevolando le vite di molti cittadini, e dall'altra parte hanno stimolato il crescere di *start-up* e di nuovi modi di produzione che hanno agevolato l'inserimento nei mercati globali. Accanto ai dati attraenti, non mancano però debolezze strutturali nella regione. Il numero di poveri, infatti, cresce assieme ai numeri dell'aumento demografico, evidenziando un problema sostanziale di redistribuzione di ricchezze. Seguendo uno studio di Berg, Ostry, e Zettelmeyer (2012), i ritmi di crescita dell'intera area sub-sahariana tendono inoltre ad essere più volatili rispetto ad altre economie più strutturate, sensibili ad effetti esogeni ed endogeni; non hanno portato, inoltre, ad una graduale redistribuzione delle ricchezze né a sufficienti posti di lavori, dai quali soprattutto i giovani sono stati penalizzati. Per tutti questi motivi, il fenomeno migratorio ha interessato in particolar modo questa regione: ad esempio, il picco di migranti nigeriani giunti alle coste italiane è stato fra il 2016 e il 2017, appena dopo la difficile recessione economica della Nigeria, uno dei giganti del continente. Di conseguenza, vi è un forte bisogno di un sistema di investimenti più durevoli, che mirino a risolvere dalle radici i problemi strutturali dell'Africa occidentale, per fare in modo che le opportunità nascano in loco per i suoi abitanti. I governi locali hanno iniziato ad attuare, negli ultimi anni, imponenti progetti di infrastrutture e modernizzazione dei loro territori: dal Togo alla Costa d'Avorio, fino al Senegal e il Ghana, i numeri di crescita, tra i più performanti secondo le stime del 2019 del Fondo Monetario Internazionale, hanno stimolato la voglia di rinascere, coinvolgendo anche attori stranieri in loro aiuto. Paradossalmente, però, il primo effetto di maggiore sviluppo in un territorio porta ad un'altrettanta maggiore propensione ad emigrare, grazie ai pochi mezzi messi da parte, sufficienti però per lasciare queste terre. Nel capitolo, infatti, è stata riportata la curva ideata dal sociologo de Haas che illustra la crescente propensione ad emigrare in un contesto di condizioni economiche migliori, la quale inizia a calare solo quando esse raggiungono un certo livello di sviluppo. Per questo motivo, nonostante i trend positivi che la regione mostra, occorrerà attendere decenni prima di vederne effetti in termini di economia reale.

Capitolo II

Il secondo capitolo riguarda, alla luce della rilevanza strategica del mercato africano e dell'apertura dei suoi governi, gli interessi economici delle imprese italiane. Dopo un accenno al rinnovato interesse globale e un'attenta analisi dei flussi degli investimenti diretti esteri nella regione, il capitolo si è concentrato su due settori, fra i più rilevanti nel contesto dell'Africa occidentale: l'accesso all'energia e il crescente *agribusiness*. I due rappresentano anche due modi di fare impresa: se il primo è pressoché legato alle grandi aziende, che dispongono di grandi capitali e mezzi, il secondo ha aperto la strada anche alle imprese di minori dimensioni. Il capitolo ha tracciato dunque una mappa complessiva dell'internazionalizzazione del settore privato italiano, partendo prima dalle differenze strutturali fra grandi e piccole o medie imprese, quest'ultime più penalizzate dall'accesso ad alcuni mercati, come l'Africa, tradizionalmente considerati più "a rischio". Tuttavia, analizzando i numeri degli investimenti esteri e dell'export, si è considerato soprattutto il valore aggiunto dell'internazionalizzazione che, grazie a recenti studi dell'ICE, ha visto le imprese con più mercati di sbocco effetti sull'impiego, sulla produttività e sulla digitalizzazione. Questo contesto di rinnovato interesse all'estero è stato poi applicato all'Africa occidentale, con uno sguardo anche alle opportunità per il futuro. Nel settore dell'energia, è stata illustrata la scoperta di gas in Ghana con il blocco OCTP di Eni che, secondo la Banca Mondiale, sta facendo emergere il Paese fra le "*middle economies*", risultato inedito nella zona. Il bacino di *oil and gas* ha permesso al Ghana non solo di raggiungere l'indipendenza energetica, ma di esportare gas ed elettricità a Paesi vicini. Il progetto Eni è stato inoltre attento alla sua sostenibilità e non ha escluso l'uso delle rinnovabili, capaci di ampliare la copertura di approvvigionamento energetico. A questo proposito, altre aziende impiegate nel settore della *green economy* hanno cominciato a guardare all'Africa occidentale con occhi più interessati: nel capitolo viene trattato il caso di Enel Green Power, la quale, sebbene non sia ancora fisicamente presente con propri impianti in questa zona, ha già avviato progetti di collaborazione con Senegal e Costa d'Avorio, e si avvia così a diventare il maggiore fornitore di energie rinnovabili su tutto il continente. L'interesse del settore dell'ortofrutta e dell'industria agroalimentare nasce dall'esigenza di trovare nuovi sbocchi di mercato, a seguito degli effetti negativi sui dati export come l'embargo europeo alla Russia. L'Africa occidentale è dunque parte di un'area più ampia, quella sub-sahariana alla quale è stata dedicata l'ultima edizione di Macfrut: una fiera internazionale, unica per l'intera catena di valore dell'ortofrutta, alla quale sono stati invitati capi di Stato e ministri del settore africani. L'iniziativa rappresenta il *modus operandi* tutto italiano: coinvolgimento dei settori privati di entrambe le parti, contando sull'appoggio governativo che consente le logistiche e identifica le linee guida da seguire per intervenire in Paesi emergenti come quelli coinvolti. Una partnership strategica, finalmente inserita in un'ottica sempre più ampia e strutturata.

Capitolo III

L'ultima parte di questo lavoro analizza nello specifico le azioni di politica estera dei governi italiani nei confronti dell'Africa, non solo occidentale, per meglio comprenderne l'approccio. In seguito a questa maggiore consapevolezza, anche politica, grazie all'ondata di democratizzazione degli anni Novanta, i leader africani sono stati in grado non solo di aprirsi di più al mercato, ma soprattutto di diversificare i loro partner commerciali. Sebbene, infatti, la rivista inglese "The Economist" abbia intitolato il suo numero di marzo "*The new scramble for Africa*", rievocando alla conquista coloniale del XIX secolo, questa "corsa" all'Africa è tutt'altro che nuova: già dai primi anni del terzo millennio nuovi partner si sono affacciati sulla scena africana, primo fra tutti la Cina, che ne è diventata prima fonte di flussi di investimenti diretti esteri. L'Italia, inizialmente, sembrava restare a guardare, non riuscendo a sostenere tali ritmi; tuttavia, nel 2015 la quota italiana arrivò a 23 miliardi, contro i 13 di cinque anni prima. Numeri ancora ben distanti da quelli di Francia o Stati Uniti, ma che promettono un maggior interesse sia dalle istituzioni pubbliche, che sostengono questo massiccio intervento, sia dal mondo delle imprese, che guarda al mercato africano con sempre più interesse. La prima Iniziativa "Italia-Africa" ebbe dunque luogo solo nel 2013, necessaria per inquadrare questo crescente interesse del settore privato, e rilanciare l'Africa come uno sbocco di mercato attrattivo per gli anni a venire. Quella stessa crisi del 2009 ha avuto invece effetti drammatici per un Paese OCSE: la crescita galoppante di un continente incontrava, allora, quello di un'economia in declino, come quella italiana. L'internazionalizzazione verso l'Africa si proponeva, dunque, di portare un modello di *win-win cooperation*, attraverso massicci investimenti con effetti sul lungo e medio periodo. La formula 50-50 dell'impiego di manodopera locale era stato infatti inaugurato, negli anni Cinquanta, proprio da un italiano, Enrico Mattei, capo della principale impresa italiana che ancora oggi opera nel continente – Eni.

Dunque, in quest'ottica di internazionalizzazione delle imprese poteva ben inserirsi anche l'altro fondamentale obiettivo di politica estera in Africa occidentale. Un clima disteso fra istituzioni aveva l'obiettivo di creare un contesto adatto anche per gestire uno dei temi più caldi della politica italiana degli ultimi governi: il fenomeno migratorio. Lungi da un mero approccio realistico di sola protezione dei confini e blocco dei flussi, l'intento italiano è stato, e continua ad essere, quello della promozione di uno sviluppo sostenibile in un'area delicata, ma ad altissimo potenziale. Di conseguenza, le azioni di diplomazia economica nel continente hanno iniziato ad interessare anche l'Africa occidentale, un tempo riconosciuta come sfera di influenza unicamente francese ed inglese. Sono aumentati gli strumenti a supporto delle aziende intenzionate ad investire nell'area, grazie alle misure prese da SACE (gruppo Cdp) e dall'ICE, che ha recentemente aperto una sua agenzia proprio in Ghana. L'associazione degli industriali italiani, Confindustria, ha poi dedicato una sua associazione proprio all'Africa e al Mediterraneo, che collabora attivamente con il Ministero degli Esteri per facilitare *country presentations* e incontri con il settore privato dei Paesi dell'area. La Farnesina ha poi ampliato la sua copertura di ambasciate in Africa: sebbene ancora lontana dalla copertura pressoché totale di Cina o Stati Uniti, l'Italia può contare su 23 ambasciate sul continente. Durante la presentazione alle istituzioni dell'ultima, in Burkina Faso, sono stati coinvolti non solo i Ministeri e le forze dell'ordine interessati, ma anche le aziende in grado di contribuire allo sviluppo di uno dei Paesi più poveri e a rischio del pianeta.

Le motivazioni per cui la politica estera continua ad essere allineata con il settore del business italiano appaiono perciò evidenti. Da una parte, l'esigenza sempre più sentita dell'internazionalizzazione delle aziende, anche di dimensioni minori. Dall'altra, con l'aiuto del settore privato sul campo, sostenere la crescita di una regione con l'obiettivo di ridurre le cause strutturali che inducono alle migrazioni. Questo tipo di approccio dell'Italia nei confronti del continente africano non può che essere di stampo **liberale**: ben diverso dall'intervenzionismo francese, o dall'arrivo in massa delle industrie cinesi, l'Italia si è da sempre saputa ritagliare un ruolo di parziale autonomia nel modo di approcciarsi alle crisi africane. Nel corso della storia, infatti, i governi italiano hanno preferito coinvolgere diverse parti, dalle associazioni non governative alla Chiesa cattolica, fino ai partiti all'opposizione di sinistra, che hanno partecipato alle cause di liberazione degli stati, primo fra tutti il Mozambico. Quest'approccio multicentrico è infatti tipico di una visione liberale nelle relazioni internazionali: lo Stato non è affatto l'unico attore ad intervenire, e spesso insegue gli interessi delle aziende, come si è visto negli anni passato con Eni e più recentemente con l'intero settore dell'ortofrutta, che si è dimostrato attento alle dinamiche dell'area sub-sahariana. Di conseguenza, il contesto che sembra prevalere nella politica estera italiana in Africa occidentale è quello dell'**interdipendenza complessa**: la teoria di Keohane e Nye (1977) ha infatti particolare rilevanza laddove il potere militare si è fatto sempre meno rilevante di fronte a questioni di natura sociale ed economica. Gli interventi militari italiani sono difatti sempre di natura umanitaria ed inseriti nel quadro delle operazioni di pace dell'Unione Europea e delle Nazioni Unite. Questo modello appare dunque come il più olistico e a lungo termine, e che si profila come il più adatto anche nella difficile gestione del fenomeno migratorio.

Conclusioni

Nonostante sia ancora presto per poterne valutare l'esito, è altresì innegabile che blocchi dei flussi e controllo dei confini, politiche tipiche dell'Unione Europea degli ultimi anni, non hanno portato ai risultati sperati. Al contrario, spesso gli stessi migranti non hanno avuto modo di tornare nelle loro terre d'origine, dopo semplici spostamenti interni, proprio per le frontiere bloccate. Allo stesso tempo, però, è ben difficile assistere a breve agli effetti sperati dopo questo tipo di intervento che mira alle radici delle migrazioni: come si è già visto nel primo capitolo, gli effetti delle politiche strutturali di sviluppo possono impiegare decenni per avere effetti sulla popolazione reale. Ciononostante, l'approccio liberale in Africa occidentale appare come il miglior metodo applicabile: in grado, innanzitutto, di conferire autonomia agli interlocutori locali, affinché possano ripartire dal loro settore privato sempre più al passo con i tempi, beneficiando del *know-how* italiano, riconosciuto nel mondo. Le aziende italiane, da parte loro, troverebbero un nuovo sbocco di mercato che, come le analisi del secondo capitolo hanno dimostrato, garantiscono maggiore impiego e produttività di quelle interessate solo al mercato domestico. L'Italia può dunque assumere il ruolo di *leadership* nella gestione del fenomeno migratorio, partendo dalle sue origini, e può contare su partner europei che, come la Germania, hanno mostrato interesse in un approccio più olistico e durevole. L'obiettivo, senza scadenza, vede finalmente l'Africa occidentale sfruttare le sue capacità, avvalendosi delle sue forze: uno sforzo arduo che solo grazie al coinvolgimento di tutte le parti interessati potrà vedere i propri esiti. Tuttavia, c'è bisogno che l'Italia, come Stato, si assuma un ruolo di guida nel dettare le direttive da seguire affinché questo partenariato pubblico-privato avvenga; senza di esso, l'intero progetto potrebbe andare in frantumi ed arrestarsi prima del previsto, lasciando sfuggire una grande opportunità per l'Italia, per l'Europa e, soprattutto, per l'Africa occidentale.