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AFRICOM and the Burdens of Securitisation in Africa

Kialee Nyiayaana
Department of Political and Administrative Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Clare Ifeyinwa Nwankpa, PhD Student
Department of Political and Administrative Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract

This article aims at analyzing the nature and role of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in the governance security in Africa. It depended on secondary data, which were obtained from journals, newspapers, books, and annual reports on the activities of the Command. A combination of thematic, content and historical methods of data analysis was used to interpret and explain the nature, role, and challenges of AFRICOM in the governance of security in Africa. Guided by the theory of securitization, the results indicate that the nature of AFRICOM's security governance reflects continuity and change in the United States' militarism in Africa and the evolving character of the securitization order in the continent since the events of 9/11. The analysis shows that the securitization role of AFRICOM involves competitive militarisation strategically designed to contain the rising economic and political influence of China on the continent. Yet, its counterterrorism operations fall short of addressing the structural sources of Africa's security predicaments. In these contexts, AFRICOM's activities have had little or any significant impact on the protection of life and property in Africa. In fact, by articulating and reproducing Africa as security deficient and security dependent on the West, the concept and activities of AFRICOM broadly constitute a phase in the genealogies of coloniality of Western militarism and securitization in the continent.

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Introduction

Fifteen years on, the controversy over the rationale for establishing the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) has reemerged in the African security debate. President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria generated this round of debate in April 2021 when he called for the relocation of AFRICOM's headquarters from Stuttgart, Germany to Africa. President Buhari had argued that the relocation of the AFRICOM would draw the Command closer to Africa, enabling it to swiftly respond to the different types of insecurities that plague the continent. Specifically, Buhari drew the attention of the US government to the rising security and related development challenges in West and Central Africa, the Gulf of Guinea, the Lake Chad region, and the Sahel. Implicitly, Buhari's plea to the US questioned the effectiveness and relevance of AFRICOM to Africa. At the same time, the request contradicted the position taken by most African states including Nigeria, which denied the AFRICOM an operating base in the continent (see Adebayo, 2021; Mustafa, 2008).

Reactions to Buhari's argument suggest that the physical presence of AFRICOM in Africa cannot be the magic wand for the diverse security challenges facing African states (Adebayo, 2021; Onor, 2021**).** The case of the presence of French military bases across its ex-empire, namely, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Mali, and Senegal (French, 1996), and the fragility they generate are widely cited. In Mali, France has maintained a significant military presence since 2013 but the situations in the country continue to worsen from violent Islamic extremism to one military coup or the other. The American response to Buhari's request also forms a crucial aspect of the recent debate on the relationship between AFRICOM and the African security crisis. The US government refused to accede to Buhari's demand, arguing that the relocation will increase costs and undermine the effectiveness of the Command (Abioye, 2021).

Taken together, the divergent arguments and different nuances in the debate implicate the need to interrogate the nature of AFRICOM's security engagements in Africa since 2007 and America's wider security relationships in the continent. It can be argued that between 2007 and 2021, AFRICOM has matured, both institutionally and operationally, to benefit from an empirical analysis of its role as a security provider in Africa, especially in the context of growing security challenges. Going through the literature, most existing studies on AFRICOM are responses to the security framework during its formative and development stage that either interrogated why the AFRICOM

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was rejected by many African states or questioned the imperial intentions of the United States. These sets of literature are insightful. Nevertheless, it is important to understand how AFRICOM has actually responded to the security challenges of Africa since 2008 when it became operational, explaining whether AFRICOM is a radical departure from the historical role of American militarism and its imperial assertiveness in Africa during the Cold War era or not.

The article is structured into eight sections. Following the introduction is the literature review. Section three deals with the methodology for data collection and analysis while section four is the theoretical framework. Based on the securitization theory, this section situates the AFRICOM within the context of the politics of protection. Section five provides a background to the formation of AFRICOM that questions a reinvention of American militarism in Africa after the 9/11 attacks. The next section explains the US threat perceptions of China in Africa and the nature of AFRICOM's responses to these threats. The rest of the sections examine the nature of the governance of security by AFRICOM and its implications for insecurities. The last section concludes and offers policy advice.

AFRICOM in the Existing Scholarly Literature

The existing literature on AFRICOM reflects two major contributions. The first examined the reactions of the African states in terms of the initial rejection and subsequent acceptance of the AFRICOM initiative by African leaders. On the issue of rejection by African states, which was widespread at the time, some authors, mostly policy analysts of American foreign policy and security establishments argue that AFRICOM was poorly communicated and marketed to the African audience hence the rejection (Burgess, 2008). Still, on the issue of rejection, other radical scholars posit that the initial rejection reflected a deep-rooted anti-imperialist posture (Tella, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Nathan, 2009) and fears that the AFRICOM will be used as a tool for securing control over oil resources in the Gulf of Guinea (Badmus and Afolabi, 2017).

On the other side of the debate, the transition from rejection to acceptance of the AFRICOM more or less represented acquiescence, and this raised issues of weak power politics of African states. In fact, the argument is that those that depend on American aid were quick to support it while the less dependent rejected it. Overall, acceptance was much more a function of economic, political, and security vulnerabilities of African states than principled stand, which implicitly conveys and reinforces a sense of burdensomeness on Africa (Carl, 2010).

The second strand of arguments in the literature explains the social determinants and implications of the AFRICOM for Africa. Being amongst

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early scholarly responses to the AFRICOM, this set of literature is largely predictive. It analyzed the intentions of the US government, interrogating whether the establishment of the AFRICOM was underpinned by political motivations of pursuing a neo-colonial security policy of militarism in Africa and, therefore, a threat to the continent or not (Jamieson, 2009; Nathan, 2009; Gilbert, Uzodike and Isike, 2009; Hofstedt, 2009). However, for the US policymakers and other scholars sympathetic to the American security strategy, AFRICOM represented an opportunity in security cooperation, designed to promote humanitarian interventions, human security, stability, and social order in Africa (Pham, 2008; Berschinski, 2007). Ugwuja's (2018) study, for example, espoused the view that AFRRICOM is a blessing to African states despite some of its inherent weaknesses. The present article contributes to the latter by exploring the nature and effectiveness of AFRICOM in the governance of security against the backdrop of the rising security threats throughout the continent.

Data Sources and Methods of Data Analysis

The principal sources of information for this article were secondary data obtained from books, journal articles, newspapers, and annual reports on the activities of AFRICOM. Each year, for example, the Commander of the AFRICOM submits progress reports on the achievements and challenges of the Command to the American Congress. These reports summarize and provide basic details of the nature of the counterterrorism operations including capacity enhancement and development activities undertaken by the Command during the year. Some of these reports, such as that of 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 are currently available on the AFRICOM's website.

We combine thematic, content, and historical methods of data analysis to interpret and analyze the nature, role, and challenges of AFRICOM in the governance of security in the continent. Themes that emerged from the content analysis highlight issues of strategic control of Africa, politics of protection, geopolitics, American energy security, and militarization aimed at exercising influence in commerce, economy, and politics in the continent. Generally, the data point to the fact that AFRICOM is a necessary institutional structure for gaining and maintaining a geopolitical and strategic hold on Africa by the United States in the struggle to protect its national interests, especially in the emerging new world order defined by post-9/11 complexities and the assertive influence of China in global affairs. In this regard, African security interests are marginal to the United States. Indeed, complementing content analysis with historical data helps us to contextualize a historical pattern in America's security behavior that draws some parallels from the Cold War era when America competed militarily with Russia to contain the spread of communism in the continent.

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The data reveal, for instance, that AFRICOM's activities related to these dynamics of change and continuity in America's security strategy in terms of defending democracy and capitalist ideology in the continent in such a way that aptly captures the struggle between the Washington Consensus and the Beijing Consensus (Davies, 2008). As the Commander of AFRICOM, General Stephen J. Townsend, points out in his 2020 report to Congress, the growing influence of China and Russia in Africa constitutes a threat to America's liberalism and long-term interests in advancing democratic development, which AFRICOM must confront through increased American aid to support African security and human rights protection. To put it differently, "China and Russia's corrupt and exploitative investment and security assistance often prioritize their own gains rather than building long-term African security capacity, and their activities often undermine transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights" (Townsend, 2020, 4). Similarly, Waldhauser's (2019) report notes that Russia's increasing penetration in Africa through arms sales and funding of autocratic regimes as in the Central African Republic is a growing challenge to inclusive governance, democratic stability, and human rights in Africa.

Theoretical Grounding

This article is based on the theory of securitization, which is popularly associated with Barry Buzan and Ole Waever otherwise known as the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. The central theoretical insight of the securitization school of thought is that the social construction of security threats constitutes a form of insecurity in itself. According to Buzan and Waever, the intersubjective process of constructing and politicizing threats starts with a speech act where a securitizing actor with an institutional voice frames an issue as an existential threat with a corresponding declaration of emergency actions to address the security situation (Buzan and Waever, 2003). Accordingly, the action taken to respond to the imagined threat does not always follow a normal democratic process of policymaking because it forms part of the politicization of security.

The securitization theory has many nuances including desecuritization. According to Fasakin (2022), the use of violent protests by the subaltern in post-colonial contexts in Africa to emancipate themselves from state and elite oppression is a form of desecuritisation that draws on Fanonian violence. The argument is that when members of the subaltern successfully mobilize themselves in protests to collectively challenge and confront their real or perceived threat, they are involved in the process of desecuritisation. For Fasakin (2022), therefore, there is a link between desecuritisation and violence of the oppressed. There are also criticisms of the securitization theory such as the marginalization of women in its analysis as well as the fact that security

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threat is often constructed by state actors, thereby underappreciating the role of non-state securitizing actors (Fasakin 2022, Simonds, 2016).

These different nuances and criticisms notwithstanding, the conceptual underpinnings of securitization are "preemption, imminence, and asymmetric threats" (Filimon 2016, p.49). These themes have had a critical influence on the formation of AFRICOM in 2007, and provide insights into the performative power behind the security architecture of the AFRICOM and the security practices of threat construction of the United States. As many scholars had acknowledged, the American war on terrorism globally, and Africa in particular after the Islamic terrorist attacks of 9/11, has been decidedly preemptive. Some have argued that as of 2007, the incidence of terrorism was not a significant issue of concern to the African continent. Nevertheless, by conceiving Africa as a zone of war and the United States as the zone of peace, AFRICOM fits into the theoretical articulation of preemptive response to prevent the dangers posed by rising poverty and underdevelopment in Africa to the American state on one hand, and the imminence and significance of deterring asymmetric threats of terrorism and insurgency on the other.

Against these backgrounds, migrant refugees from the third world have generally been constructed as threats to the sovereignty and political and economic survival of Western states and in some instances, violence has been deployed to deprive them of asylum and their basic rights of protection. These violent activities of the securitizing states against refugees have found expressions amongst others in the restrictive visa policies and the violent nature of border control practices. Jones (2016) has argued that "the hardening of the border through new security practices is the source of the violence, not a response to it" (p.16). In other words, "militarized borders do not stop migrants from attempting to cross borders, but merely prompt them to risk their lives by using more dangerous routes such as deserts, seas or jungles" (Jones, 2016, p. 16). Part of this securitization of the border resonates with Mbembe's (2021) articulation of the border as a political instrument for determining "who is my neighbor, how to treat an enemy, and what to do with the foreigner" (p. 90).

The Reinvention of American Militarism since 9/11

The background of American militarism in Africa dates back prominently to the Cold War era, and AFRICOM reflects an important historical continuum in contemporary times. During the period of the Cold War, America's militarism manifested in proxy wars, the establishment of military bases, and the proliferation of weapons on the continent. Then, the main driving force of the American militarization of Africa was the ideological rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States. The struggle was to defeat the expansion and spread of communism in Africa. Even when the Cold

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War ended, American militarism in Africa took new forms. There was the proliferation of specialized private security companies that offer both military and police services, which were previously the preserve of the state (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Victor Ojakorotu, 2010). Similarly, the changing dynamics of the 9/11 incidents provided immediate structural conditions for the reinvention and continuation of American militarism within the context of the creation of AFRICOM in 2007. More specifically, the devastating social, economic, political, and psychological consequences of the 9/11 attacks on American power influenced a redefinition of imminent threats and the nature of responses to them, which basically revolve around the adoption of preventive and anticipatory strategies (Badalič, 2021; Gilbert, Uzodike, and Isike, 2009). These strategies found practical expression, both locally and internationally. At the domestic political level in America, September 11 influenced the nature of law enforcement as well as the creation of new institutions such as the Department of Homeland Security in 2002. On the international front, September 11 shaped the antiterrorism strategy of the United States and the Global War on Terrorism (Badalič, 2021). Given these contexts and with specific reference to Africa, 9/11 forced a reassessment of the presence of Islamic extremist groups and their imminent threat implications for the United States. Thus, preventing and responding to crimes of terrorism and violent conflicts in Africa was a crucial determinant of the evolution of AFRICOM ((Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Victor Ojakorotu, 2010).

Furthermore, the geostrategic calculations and conceptions of threats emanating from Africa in a post-September 11 world were not restricted to the violent activities of terrorist and rebel groups in the continent. Rather, the social and economic conditions of poverty, unemployment, diseases, and corrupt and failed governance systems that often provide breeding grounds for terrorism were broadly conceived as critical sources of security threats to the US and should be responded to. In this sense, Africa was conceived as the zone of conflict/insecurity and poverty that threaten the Western and American zone of development and peace. Consequently, from the American perspective, the formation of the AFRICOM represented a shift in its foreign policy goals that seek to respond to the intersections of security and development in Africa. Conceptually, this approach highlights prevention measures grounded in the visions of strategic peacebuilding and the determination to address structural violence (Pham, 2008). It is important to note that until the AFRICOM initiative, American security policy had been traditionally and historically concerned with a short-term kinetic approach to governing insecurity in the continent. However, as the analysis questions in a latter section, the soft power approach that seeks to institutionalize security as development merely camouflages AFRICOM's deeply entrenched practices and the primacy of militarization and militarism.

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Finally, the US security in the post-9/11 context was also conceived in terms of the stability of the sources of energy in Africa in which the protection of the Gulf of Guinea by AFRICOM was a strategic consideration in the US geopolitical calculations of threats. It would be recalled that following the American-led war on terrorism in Iraq in 2003 and the instability it caused to the oil supply in the Middle East, the US energy security was threatened. A pragmatic response to this threat by the American government was to look for other alternative sources of energy supply elsewhere, and as Jamieson (2009) argued, Africa which was relatively stable compared to the Middle East at the time, came into sharp focus. In fact, by 2007, Angola and Nigeria were the major suppliers of oil to the United States, and projections pointed to the Gulf of Guinea as a stable source of supply. Moreover, the threat posed by China and India's increasing interests in African oil was considered a strategic factor in the formation and role of the AFRICOM.

Given the foregoing, AFRICOM is more or less a reinvention of American militarism that underlines the significance of continuity and change in the deployment of military might by the US in the pursuit and protection of its vital interests in Africa, especially in the context of a new scramble for African resources (Petry 2011; Davies, 2008; Large, 2008; Obi, 2008; Navarro, 2007; Klare and Volman, 2006).

The Securitising Burdens of Containing China

Given the competitive struggle for geopolitical influence and strategic control of natural resources and markets in Africa by the US and China, the formation of AFRICOM has been arguably linked to the containment of China or more aptly, as a response to the Chinese Question in the continent. The Chinese Question has two broad interpretations, namely, the African and Western perceptions of China's rising profile in Africa and its ramifications for security and development. From the African point of view, especially from radical African and Africanist scholarships, China is conceived as a late colonizer in Africa, scrambling for territories, trade, markets, and resource extraction through the strategic application of both soft and hard power that have the trappings of imperialism (Tella, 2016; Navarro, 2007. Holslag, 2006). The conceptual representation of China as a Dragon in the continent effectively captures this viewpoint of the late colonizer, a view that is somewhat shared by the West in articulating the politics of Africa-China relations on one hand (Obi 2008) and China-America engagements in Africa on the other (Large, 2008; Klare and Volman, 2006).

The second perspective, which is represented by the United States, argues that the Chinese Question includes but is not limited to the evolving economic domination of markets and increasing militarization in Africa, but extends to the fears of spreading the values of China's State capitalism, bad

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human rights records, corrupt practices and the ideological threats they pose to the neoliberal world order (Townsend, 2021; McNally, 2012; Mearsheimer 2001). This second view is particularly relevant in understanding the international political economy of the containment of, and or engagement with China in Africa by the US and its linkages to the securitizing implications by the AFRICOM. In order to appreciate this notion of the Chinese Question, it is important to highlight the broader contexts of the rise of China as an emerging global power and the evolving nature of its economic, military, and political relationships with Africa, and how these relationships have been securitized as constituting a threat to American interests in the continent.

The Rise of China and Strategic Rivalry

Historically, by the end of the 20th century, the emergence of China as a global power to reckon with constituted one of the significant developments in world politics. Through visionary and effective domestic leadership, China adopted and adapted Western capitalism and World Bank policies to its culture, local circumstances, and national aspirations to engineer rapid technological and economic development. In fact, given its brand of state capitalism, authoritarian capitalism, or what McNally (2012) calls Sino-capitalism, China has been able to sustain steady economic growth such that it was projected that by 2025, it will most likely replace the US as a world power (US Intelligence Council Report, 2008). For Ikenberry (2008), "China heralds a profound shift in the distribution of global power in the 21st century" (p.26).

Interestingly, like all powers in history, China's new global power status and rise to prominence are, however, not without some complications for the existing international economic and political order. McNally (2012, p.741) argues that "as China's political economy gains in importance, its interactions with other major political economies will shape global values, institutions, and policies, thereby restructuring the international political economy." China is already demonstrating this challenger behavior by leading other emerging powers into negotiations on how to create new institutions that will serve as alternatives to the Bretton Woods. More instructively, it is also noted that China cannot rise peacefully because the contradictions of great power politics impose on China not to act otherwise (Conteh-Morgan, 2021; Mearsheimer, 2001). Conceivably, as China grows, even in the context of the relative decline in American hegemony, the strategic rivalry appears destined between the US and China, making them be adversaries (Conteh-Morgan, 2021; Mearsheimer, 2001).

In several regions of the world including Africa, the significance of strategic struggles for geopolitical influence is self-evident in the activities of the US and China with some repercussions that resemble Cold War politics of

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divide and rule. In its 2020 Report to the American Congress, the Commander of AFRICOM highlighted the nature and practical implications of the growing Chinese threats to American interests in Africa as follows:

> China is outpacing all of its competitors in Africa, where, with the construction of a military port and helicopter landing pads, it is converting its first overseas military base in Djibouti into a power projection platform. We know they seek to open more bases and their unprofitable seaport investments in East Africa and Southern Africa track closely with involvement by Chinese military forces. These Chinese seaports are not genuine commercial ports; these investments are geo-economic tools to increase the PRC's geopolitical influence throughout the continent. China continues to invest heavily in African infrastructure and currently maintains 52 embassies in Africa – three more than the U.S. and a 24% increase since 2012 (Townsend, 2020, p.3).

In addition, China has steadily engaged in the militarization of the continent through military aid such as the donation of 100 million USD to the African Union (AU) in 2017 to establish the African Union Standby Force; its ongoing military cooperation with the 55 members of the AU; and its active involvement in UN Peacekeeping Missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Darfur, Mali, and South Sudan, among others. In fact, China currently deploys more troops than any other permanent member of the UN Security Council in its peacekeeping role in Africa. In summary, "there has been a slow but steady trend towards militarization and securitization of Africa by China" (Conteh-Morgan, 2021, p. 279).

The other aspects of the Chinese threat include its peculiar strategy of development financing that can be described as "debt-trap diplomacy" (Pay and Nwosu, 2020, p. 351); support for the repressive governments and arms sales in Africa. In the last seven years, "China has sold over two billion USD in arms to African partners (Townsend, 2020, p.3). Crucially, whether expanded trade, rising political influence, militarization, or the nature of infrastructural development projects in Africa, "increased Chinese involvement in Africa is in part designed to counter Western dominance (Petry 2011, p. 27). Obi's (2008) research shows that in relation to investments in oil in Africa, Western dominance and monopoly had held sway since the 20th century. This has also been the case in the Middle East. Except in Iran, China is strategically excluded from the sources of energy in the Middle East for its growing economy, making Africa the next battleground in geopolitical competition to get secured access to energy sources. It is against this background that the aggressive tendencies and increasing space of the acquisition of African energy reserves as in "Angola, Sudan and Nigeria by

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Chinese national oil corporations can be understood (Davies, 2008, p, 136). For Obi (2008), China is a dragon to be feared when it comes to investing in oil, especially in volatile regions of the world such as Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta. Similarly, China has invested heavily in large-scale industrial fishing infrastructure in the Gulf of Guinea, and in the context of growing pirate activities in the region and attendant security challenges, such investments must be protected by the Chinese state at all costs.

Consequently, as part of its strategic military engagements in Africa aimed at protecting and advancing economic and political interests, China's establishment of its first oversea naval military base in Djibouti in 2018 is instructive. Interestingly, the Chinese military base in Djibouti is only a few miles from Camp Lemonnier, which houses approximately half of the U.S. military personnel in AFRICOM. This mini AFRICOM military base in Djibouti enables the U.S. to "protect the Red Sea and project power across East, Central, and Southern Africa ..." (Towsend, 2021, p.11). Strategically, therefore, the US views access to Djibouti as a top priority in order to ensure that her interests are not deterred. Accordingly, the strategic struggle to control Djibouti and the dialectics of containing Chinese military and economic influence effectively illustrate the character of securitisation and militarisation of Africa. As stated in the 2007 National Security Strategy, Africa must be protected for the realization of American vital interests in terms of responding to the rise of key strategic competitors like China and Russia. But even more challenging for the US is the fact that beyond China and Russia, there is an increased engagement of non-traditional security actors, such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Japan and the United Arab Emirates in Africa that also seek to carve a strategic foothold in the continent. These emergent new competitors not only pose crucial challenges to America's political economy (Waldhauser, 2019), but also deepens fears and anxieties of more complicated burdens of securitisation in the continent.

Governing Insecurities?

There are basically two broad activities that AFRICOM undertakes in the governance of security in Africa**.** The first is counterterrorism operations and interventions that respond to crisis situations in the continent such as actions directed at degrading and countering the expansion of Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs). The second is capacity building including governance/diplomatic-related functions. The Command has leveraged partnerships and collaborations with different US agencies and Departments such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State, and other international organizations such as NATO, the European Union, the UN, the African Military, and African Union to carry these activities in the continent. As the Commander of AFRICOM, General

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Thomas D. Waldhauser notes in his 2019 Report on the activities of AFRICOM: "Each day, we have approximately 7,000 personnel conducting their assigned tasks on the African continent" (Waldhauser, 2019, p.7). For example, the Command Surgeon leads Africa Malaria Taskforce Programme to support African efforts in Malaria prevention as part of the implementation of the US Presidential Programme on Malaria Initiative (The 2018 Report, p.21). Similarly, "USAFRICOM supported U.S. efforts to provide COVID-19 assistance in 43 countries, including the delivery of nearly $500M in medical supplies (Townsend, 2021, pp 2-3).

In the area of capacity building, AFRICOM has trained and provided military equipment to African Armed forces and regional peacekeeping troops. In West Africa, AFRICOM supports the activities of the Multinational National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) by providing military intelligence, training, and equipment in the battle against the Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP). The training targets improving the capacity of the MNJTF to counter the effective deployment of IEDs. As the 2018 Annual Report of the activities of AFRICOM to the American Congress notes, "Over a hundred MNJTF soldiers are now less vulnerable to IEDs employed by violent extremists." (p. 18). The Command is also a key partner and supporter of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISON). It has been providing training for the AMISOM troops. In Tunisia, AFRICOM works with the military to develop its counterterrorism and border security capabilities. In fact, on border security, "Tunisia is making use of U.S.-provided mobile ground surveillance radar systems and ISR aircraft to better monitor its border with Libya" (The 2018 AFRICOM Report, p. 14). Relatedly, the governance functions seek to develop and improve the capacity of the African military in human rights protection and security governance; effective civil-military relations, and the observance of the principles of laws of armed conflicts.

On the other hand, counterterrorism/combatant operations involve the application of kinetic force to contain terrorist activities. AFRICOM's interventions in Libya and Somalia are striking illustrations. In Libya, following the uprisings after the fall of Gadhafi in 2011, AFRICOM conducted several kinetic operations in support of the "Libyan Government of National Accord to degrade violent extremist organizations" (Waldhauser 2019, p.25). Similarly in Somalia, AFRICOM has been engaged in military operations that seek to free the country and the rest of East Africa from the terrorist activities of al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia. In 2021, precisely on Jan 1, AFRICOM in conjunction with the Federal Government of Somalia, conducted an airstrike in Somalia, targeting the al-Shabaab and killing about three of its members.

A recent evaluation of the performance of the AFRICOM argues that its activities are a blessing to the African continent (see Ugwuja, 2018).

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Clearly, there are upsides to the security and governance roles of AFRICOM in Africa. These are in the area of building and improving the professional, operational, and institutional capabilities of African militaries. But even at this, the capacity building role, has, however, been conceived and implemented as tools in strategic competition with other major security actors in Africa such as China and Russia. They fall in line with some form of strategic competition in Africa aimed at fostering, increasing, and reinforcing America's closer ties in security cooperation with African states relative to the Chinese.

On the balance, the realities of both the development functions and military operations of AFRICOM suggest that they have not practically translated into viable peace, stable and a secure Africa. In fact, juxtaposing AFRICOM's activities with the existential security threats that Africa currently faces, AFRICOM can be described as a case of governing insecurities. As highlighted by President Buhari in 2021, the security situations in Africa, whether interpreted from the human security perspective or physical safety, have deteriorated. Moreover, some specific cases of AFRICOM military operations such as the involvement in the overthrow of the Libyan leader in 2011 and the security crises witnessed in Libya since then demonstrate the nature of its securitization activities in the continent (Wai, 2014). Yet, the development oriented-functions of AFRICOM such as the provision of aid fall short of responses that address basic human needs in Africa's underdevelopment crisis, which America's imperial relationships deepen and in turn reproduce in the form of terrorism, insurgency, rebellion, and armed banditry in the continent.

Conclusion

The relationship between AFRICOM and the governance of security in Africa is problematic in the sense that peace and security are elusive in most regions and communities across the continent. Utilizing the securitization theoretical framework for analysis, this article explains how AFRICOM represents the burdens of a complex process of securitization in Africa that is historically consistent with America's militarism in the continent since the Cold War. For example, the redefinition of Africa's strategic importance to the United States after the 9/11 attacks and the struggle to contain other strong competitors in the continent, especially China through the militarisation activities of AFRICOM raise issues of the third Scramble for Africa. The establishment of AFRICOM's mini military base in Djibouti, amongst others, performs surveillance functions over the activities of China, which also incidentally has a military base in the same Djibouti effectively illustrates the nature of the new scramble for African territorial space and resources with implications for militarisation and insecurities. Conceivably, all of these

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struggles signify how Africa has featured in the global security politics and how America's calculations of its vital interests have created a context for the occurrence of permanent securitization in the continent. AFRICOM's deployment of militarism to degrading terrorist groups in Africa, particularly in Somalia and Libya has compounded the resolution of conflicts and security issues in these regions. This is because AFRICOM's kinetic operations fall short of responding to the underlying causes of terrorism in Africa, such as the development challenges of poverty, social and political exclusion, and structural issues of identity contestations. AFRICOM's involvement in the overthrow and killing of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya in 2011 and the political chaos and security crises that had bedeviled that country with spillover effects in other parts of Africa is a classic illustration of the failure of militarism.

The other crucial aspect of AFRICOM's security governance activities in Africa is the training of African soldiers and the development of security cooperation agreements with African states with the aim of contributing to state and institutional capacity building. The impact of this capacity enhancement training is not in doubt. Nevertheless, these training programs more or less reflect efforts in strategic competition, designed to draw African states closer to the United States relative to other foreign competing powers in the continent. In all, dependence on external security actors of other nations by Africa as suggested by President Buhari's call for the redeployment of AFRICOM is not a sustainable solution to the African security crisis. Instead, the way out of the present security challenges is that African leaders must provide democratic and accountable governance that engenders economic, political, and social inclusion; build and sustain strong independent institutions including state security institutions for the provision and management of public security.

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