

Full Length Research

Energy security, Terrorism and the Rise of China: The Securitization of U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa

David Dapaah

E-mail address: daviddapaah288@gmail.com

Accepted 31 May 2024

This study investigates whether US foreign policy towards Africa has become more securitized since the late 1990s through a qualitative single case study approach. It argues that three key interrelated factors have driven this securitization: energy security concerns amidst heavy US reliance on foreign oil supplies and instability in the Middle East; the incorporation of Africa into the Global War on Terror to combat weak states seen as havens for terrorists threatening US interests post-9/11; and most significantly, the perception of China's expanding African ties as undermining US dominance and access to critical resources. The paper utilizes securitization theory to examine how US policymakers have employed security rhetoric to portray Africa as a "high priority" threat, justifying expanded militarization like AFRICOM's establishment. It adopts an incremental view that securitization intensified gradually after the Cold War rather than suddenly. Although Africa faces genuine security challenges, the paper argues that an imbalanced US focus on security governance without sufficient economic development assistance risks exacerbating tensions. A more calibrated US strategy integrating development and security is vital for sustainable Africa partnerships.

Keywords: Energy Security, Terrorism, China-Africa Relations, U.S. Foreign Policy, Securitization Theory, Global War on Terror, Militarization

Cite this article as: Dapaah, D. (2024). Energy security, Terrorism and the Rise of China: The Securitization of U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa. *Int. J. Polit. Sci. Develop.* 12(1):55-70

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, evidence in the literature suggests that US policy towards Africa has become more security-focused due to factors like energy security, terrorism, and China's rise (Keenan, 2008; Keenan 2010; Conteh-Morgan, 2019). The relationship has become more heavily securitized, similar to the shift in US policy towards the Middle East after World War II. Like the US-Saudi alliance after World War II, which was based on security guarantees and access to oil, US engagement with Africa has followed a pattern of securitization and militarization in tandem with the region's growing salience as a potential theater of great power competition with China. Securitization is a theory of international relations, not

just a process. As summarized by Abrahamsen (2005, p. 59), the conceptualization of securitization "is not simply about the avoidance of harm; instead, its defining feature is the ability to place an issue above the normal rules of liberal democratic politics, and hence justify emergency action to do whatever is necessary to remedy the situation". The securitization of US foreign policy in Africa has become a popular approach in recent years, offering a comprehensive yet often controversial outlook on how the United States engages with states and societies on the African continent. This can be seen in the language and logic of security that is used by American policymakers and government officials when discussing issues related to Africa. This approach has been shaped by several historical and contemporary factors, including

Sino-American geopolitical power rivalry (similar to the concerns of the Cold War), the threat of terrorism, and energy security.

The continent of Africa has been through three major “scrambles” in the recent past: the arbitrary balkanization of Africa into over 50 varied states by European great powers, the post-World War II ideological cold war rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the current geopolitical power struggle between the United States and China, and other world powers (such as Russia, Iran, Japan, and India) with specific economic and political interests in Africa (Wengraff, 2018). Yet paradoxically, the continent has always been discussed as though it occupies a position of geostrategic non-relevance in the domains of world politics (Brown, 2011). This view of Africa as a geostrategic nonentity is wrong, which recent events point to a significant increase in the continent’s geostrategic relevance. This is, in part, evidenced by the lengths at which the United States will go to guarantee its national security interests in Africa, which has included increased securitization. Continent, there has been increased competition for commerce, political influence, and access to resources. Indeed, according to Hong (2008), the geopolitical power struggle on the continent, especially the Sino-American rivalry, is marked by intense geopolitical and economic competition mostly defined by access to natural resources, political influence, investment opportunities, and markets within the various countries on the continent. Additionally, the perceived need to protect American economic interests in Africa has also played a role in shaping the United States’ approach to the continent. American companies have long had a significant presence in Africa, particularly in the extractive industries such as oil and mining.

American policymakers have therefore viewed the stability and security of African states as crucial for protecting these economic interests. This has led to a focus on issues such as the protection of American investments and the promotion of economic growth in African states. The main argument here is that US foreign policy toward Africa has undergone significant changes in recent years with a growing emphasis on security issues. Prior to this, the majority of U.S. engagement was limited to humanitarian and governance issues, particularly the development and aid sectors (though, evidently, the national interest of the United States always came first). However, there has been a significant shift toward putting more emphasis on the security and defense aspect of the U.S.-Africa engagement since 2001. Although issues related to governance and development are still important, there is evidence that the goals and objectives of the U.S. national security establishment/elites are taking precedence over them. It is advanced in this article that there are three factors which define the logic of this new securitization of Africa by the U.S national security establishment and foreign policy elites.

The first securitization factor is that of energy security

(oil dependency). The United States has long been dependent on oil as a major source of energy, and this dependency has had a significant impact on its foreign policy. While this oil dependency has been a constant concern for every U.S. administration since the 1970’s (OPEC crisis); it assumed a new sense of urgency in the 2000’s. Indeed, the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in the Middle East emphasized the need to diversify oil suppliers and reduce dependence on oil from the Arabian Gulf. As result, Africa, particularly Nigeria, offered an opportunity to counter the dependency on Middle Eastern oil and serve as a stable alternative if its energy security needs. The second security factor is terrorism and internal conflict. The 9/11 attack demonstrated how a small group of terrorists on the other side of the world could pose a serious threat to the U.S. It also revealed how weak states can harbor terrorists and violent insurgent groups that can destabilize the state and the region. In Nigeria, the activities of Boko Haram, Ansaru, the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) pose a threat to the country’s stability and the stability of the West African region. As a result, Nigeria has become involved in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and U.S. engagement with the country has been shaped by the security concerns of the U.S.’s national security establishment. The third securitization factor in the U.S.-Africa relations is the rising influence of China in Africa. The U.S. perceives China’s increasing investment in Africa, particularly critical sectors such as energy and mining, as well as its arms sales and military training, as a threat to U.S. national economic and security interests. The concern is that China may use resources like oil as a weapon, similar to OPEC in the 1970s, and that China’s influence needs to be counterbalanced. This has led to an expansion of U.S. military activity in Africa to protect U.S. interests and counter China’s growing presence.

Understanding Great Power Competition

The concept of great power competition is not a new phenomenon in international politics. Indeed, during the cold war, two super powers—the United States and the Soviet Union— possessed overwhelming economic and military power that far exceeded that of any other nation in the world. Hence, they both engaged in what they consider as zero-sum game conflict for global influence and power. Similarly, today, the ability of China to project economic and military power far beyond its borders has made it not only a global force in international politics but a key rival or threat to American hegemony. Although this Sino-American rivalry has not produced opposing global coalitions, which was a dominant feature of the cold war and contributed to several proxy wars in developing nations, there are several debates within International Relations scholarship about the level, nature, and scope

of antagonism between China and the United States (Brunnermeier et al, 2018; Sun et al. 2020; DoD, 2020).

For some scholars the geopolitical competition between the United States and China in terms of security relations will likely resemble that of the cold war. (Allisson, 2017; Kofman, 2018; Lake, 2018; Hass, 2020). In fact, according to Porter (2019, pp. 11) a dominant feature of the geopolitical power struggle between the US and China will be “constant measures to seize advantage in are as short of head-on combat. ”This assumption of antagonism is also in line with US defense and foreign policy strategy (National Security Strategy, 2017; National Security Strategy, 2018). Moreover, the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the U.S states that “ central to the challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the re-emergence of long-term, strategic competition” with China and Russia. This debate highlights the fact that Sino-American geopolitical rivalry can be viewed from the lens of a zero-sum game for global power and influence. A win for China translates to a loss for the United States and vice versa. In this context, the above description of Sino-American relations as either “strategic competition or rivalry” creates an international framework where countries are willing to align themselves militarily or economically with either of the two great powers. Therefore, creating an atmosphere for both China and the United States to compete for more influence and power relative to each other in key regions of the world such as Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Carrozza and Marsh (2022, p. 3) argued that in such strategic antagonism between China and the US, a long-term aim of each great power would be to achieve or maintain the military alignment of African states. The outcome of a military alignment strategy would involve the African state relying upon an external great power for its security, while identifying itself as being a military partner of either Beijing or Washington. Each great power would aim to attract African states into a bloc aligned with it, and to detach states from the other power’s bloc. While much of the literature on Sino-American geopolitical relations focuses on the nature and level of antagonism between the two great powers, especially in terms of their security relations, other scholars point to a more coordinated geostrategic relations different from that of the cold war (Dobbins, et al. 2019; Kaplan, 2020). To them, given the fact that both countries enjoy significant trade and investment ties, as well as share similar international and multilateral partnerships that govern the global economy, China and the United States are more likely not to escalate their geopolitical differences to violent conflict or warfare. Therefore, as emphasized by Mazarr (2019, as cited in Carrozza and Marsh, 2022 p. 4), China is not looking to advance its geostrategic interest using military confrontation with the United States outside its immediate neighborhood (East and South-East Asia) particularly, rather China’s strategy is to “advance its interests through economic, geopolitical and

informational means”.

To sum up here, these two great powers are often competing for geopolitical and economic advantages defined in terms of access to key natural resources such as oil, trade and investment outlets, and political influence within the international system. (Hong, 2008; Carrozza and Marsh 2022). Concerning African states, while China has a more traditional way of securitizing by implementing a heavy military presence to protect its economic interests, the United States, on the other hand, primarily focuses on “speech act” as an effective securitization method for identifying existing threat and creating a military strategy to eliminate the threat. Of relevance to this paper are the increased militarization efforts of these two great powers, China and the United States, in Africa. Militarization here refers to the strategies both great powers employ to combat security threats on the continent. Whether the perceived threat is wave of communism, wave of refugees, transnational terrorism, or even a potential health pandemic, both great powers have remained consistent in securitizing an issue for their own geostrategic interests (Conteh-Morgan, 2019, pg. 78).

The Sino-American militarization of Africa here refers to the increased deployment and accumulation of capabilities—armed forces, arms transfers, and military bases—as a result of factors such as the war on terrorism, piracy, domestic rebellions against incumbent regimes, and a logical need to protect expanding geopolitical and economic interests as part of the quiet and ongoing great-power rivalry on the continent, or as a result of expected great power responsibilities. With an emerging consensus particularly within U.S. foreign policymaking circles, that China’s subtle rise as a global security actor in Africa challenges Western interests, this paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of the reality of how Beijing’s perceived rise by the United States in addition to issues of transnational terrorism and energy security impact the peace and security architecture of African states. In searching for an analytical scheme to understand the perception that China is pursuing a globally aggressive strategy designed to push the US out of its long-term alliances and partnerships, the complexity in security politics is acknowledged. Thus, all parties involved may have diverse interests and motivations for their actions, including economic and military concerns. To understand these complexities, securitization theory is employed in this paper as the analytical scheme.

Theoretical Framework: Securitization Theory

The securitization framework is a useful lens to examine the rapid increase of US military presence in Africa. For this paper, the broadened and deepened conceptualization of security studies was employed. Unlike the pre-cold war security studies agenda that was

preoccupied with just military threats as referenced to the state, the post-cold war security agenda included new sectors and reference objects. Indeed, Vultee (2010) emphasizes that the broadened security agenda does not only include new sectors such as economic, societal, political and environmental risks, but also opens new reference objects different from the state-individuals, groups, communities and even ecological systems. For the Copenhagen School, the main argument of securitization theory is that “security is not an objective condition but the outcome of a specific social process”. (Abrahamsen, 2005 p. 57) Thus, the interaction of an actor and an audience is necessary to move an issue from a normal political agenda to a security agenda. To achieve this, the securitization process primarily goes through (1) a securitization claim made by an actor and (2) legitimation by an audience (Buzan et al. 1998).

Indeed, for Balzacq (2005) successful securitization requires that a claim resonate with the audience in which it resides. And this can be realized through speech act: “verbal and textual material that transmits a threat from actor to audience” (Balzacq, 2005 as cited in Abrahamson, 2005 p. 67). While the securitization theory as developed by the Copenhagen school can best be understood in the broader context above, it still differs fundamentally in its approach to security (Abrahamson, 2005). Thus, unlike most approaches to security that elevates the concept to the status of an unquestionable good that must be realized by the reference object, the Copenhagen school treats security as an agenda with its own dangers. To put it differently, Copenhagen school does not define security in terms of ‘more or less’ but rather conceptualizes whether or not an issue should be treated as security. Fundamentally, in securitization theory, “security is not to be considered an objective condition but an outcome of a specific social process” (Abrahamsen, 2005 pp 57). That is, in securitization theory under the Copenhagen school, security is not a natural given. So, if security is not a natural given, then how do we determine security for whom, from what? and by whom? Central to the notion of securitization under the Copenhagen School is the idea of “speech act”-a social construction through which security issues are represented and recognized.

Moreover, the securitization framework is not only useful for exploring the securitization of Africa through ‘speech act securitization theory offers an avenue to examine new sectors in security studies, in this case energy security, which more traditional security theories (primarily realism and its variants) are ill suited for. Security threats have traditionally been portrayed as mainly military in nature because of their potential to completely overthrow the existing political entity of the state. If political or economic means, however, could be employed to bring about a similar threat to the survival of the state as an independent, sovereign political unit, they will also be security threats (Weaver, 1995). In a nutshell,

this implies that traditional security theories, such as realism, are not well-suited to analyzing non-military security threats, such as threats to the supply of resources like oil. By using securitization theory, the focus is shifted from whether oil supply is a security issue to how it has been presented as one. In the words of Abrahamsen (2005, p.59), “the process of securitization is [...] better understood as gradual and incremental, and importantly an issue can be placed on the security continuum without necessarily ever reaching the category of existential threat”. This perspective is considered useful in analyzing US engagement in Africa, as there has been no single defining moment where issues on the continent suddenly became an existential threat, but they have clearly been placed on the security agenda. In a similar fashion, McDonald also argues that securitization theory is too narrow and would benefit from certain aspects being broadened (McDonald, 2008).

Specifically, the calls for greater security by multinational oil corporations such as Total, Chevron, BP etc. operating within the Niger Delta and other oil producing regions to secure their commercial interests have played a critical role in the securitization of oil by both African states and the corporations’ home governments. McDonald (2008) also argues that the context of securitizing acts is defined too narrowly, focusing only on the moment of intervention and not addressing the potential for security to be constructed over time. It is important to note that this point is relevant to the case of African resource extraction, as there is no single defining moment, but an accumulation of interests which span over a long period of time. Moving forward, when a matter becomes a security concern, it is seen as a threat to survival. For this reason, exceptional actions may be taken that go beyond standard political procedures. (Buzan et al. 1998). This process of securitization prioritizes quick action over thoughtful deliberation, which could potentially undermine the importance of diverse opinions and lead to an emphasis on executive-centered government, as well as the suppression of dissent (Roe, 2012, pp.252).

Post-War African-US Relations: A Slow Start

In order to understand the ongoing shift in US-Africa relations, it is necessary to contextualize the ever-evolving, dynamic and historical context of U.S. perceptions of Africa’s geostrategic importance (before and after the Cold War) leading to the creation of the Africa Command Center (AFRICOM) in 2007. Throughout the 1940s, Africa was not a significant focus for the U.S. and was not included in the U.S. military command structure. Indeed, as at the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, the only two geographic combatant centers that existed were the European Command and the U.S. Pacific Command

centers, created in 1947 (Brown, 2013). Despite the relative non-importance of the region to the U.S. security relations, the U.S. State Department established its Africa Bureau in 1958, signaling the importance it placed on political relations with the growing number of newly independent African countries (Anyaso, 2008). In contrast, the U.S. security establishment (especially the Department of Defense -DoD) only viewed Africa through the lens of Cold War geopolitics. Indeed, Africa remained a low security priority for the DoD, despite the numerous proxy wars the U.S. elites overtly and covertly influenced on the continent in areas such as Mozambique, Angola, and South Africa (McFate, 2007).

Until 1952, when several North African countries were added to the U.S. European command due to their historic ties to Europe, the majority of the continent remained outside of the geographic command (Brown, 2013). However, the Cold War geopolitical power struggle for influence over newly independent African states prompted the U.S. to assign responsibility for sub-Saharan Africa to the Atlantic Command (LANTCOM) in 1960. This responsibility then shifted to the newly created Strike Command (STRICOM) in 1962, but this responsibility for Africa was eventually removed, leaving sub-Saharan Africa outside the U.S. military command structure until 1983, when the Cold War geopolitical power struggle once again brought attention to Africa (Congressional Research Service, 2011 as cite in Brown, 2013). After the Cold War ended, the United States withdrew from Africa (Michaels, 1993; Ohaegbulam, 2005). This retreat, however, was cut short by new claims about the humanitarian necessity of intervening in crises in places such as Burundi, Liberia, Sudan, among others. For the United States, humanitarian intervention was not a traditional security issue, but the argument was that it could be accomplished by America's unparalleled military might. Hence, the United States then supported a UN humanitarian intervention in Somalia in 1992 (Lawson, 2007). In accordance with the securitization theory, the Department of Defense (DoD) stated in 1995 that the US had "very little traditional strategic interest in Africa," and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) was ranked last in the 1998 National Security Strategy Integrated Regional Approaches to Security (NDS, 1998 as cite in Walters & Seegers, 2012).

Another important illustration is the period when President George W. Bush entered the White House. As he famously stated on the campaign trail in 2000, President Bush remarked that "while Africa may be important, it doesn't fit into the national strategic interests, as far as I can see" (Fisher, 2001). For the author, this notion of implicit non-importance of Africa was marked by one line of reasoning which was to claim that Africa was barbaric. This gave the impression that Africa at that time was marked with continuous wars, public health crises and the likes. A typical example is the genocide recorded in Rwanda and the AIDS crises, both which claimed

millions of lives and required external intervention. For the U.S., these disasters would drag the U.S. into the continent since it is the only major country with unparalleled military and economic resources. Hence, the U.S. had to find a way not to get involved. However, the bombings of the United States embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dares Salaam, Tanzania, in 1998, marked a turning point in the United States' strategic interest in Africa. The US Department of Defense (DoD) established the African Center for Security Studies in 1999 to aid in the development of US strategic policy toward Africa—a move that could be seen as a precursor to the establishment of AFRICOM in 2007 (Brown, 2013). Furthermore, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11), also marked a turning point in U.S. strategic policy toward Africa. Thus, the events of 9/11 forced the Bush Administration to reassess the continent and its place on the U.S. security agenda.

Post 9/11 Securitization of Africa

It is important to note that there is a considerable amount of literature which attempts to explain the Bush Administration's reaction to the events of 9/11 and their response. First, one of the dominant explanations focused on the structural nature of power (Isikoff & Corn, 2006). Here, scholars focused on how the US became complacent after defeating the Soviet Union in the geopolitical struggle. Hence, it was taken by surprise and shaken by the 9/11 attack. This implied that their response would primarily center on old pragmatic security efforts- "enemies are everywhere; they could strike at any moment; they could strike with devastating effect" (Walters & Seegers, 2012 p.27). Secondly, there has been discussion on the impersonal nature of power (Halloran, 2004). To them, the top hierarchy of the Bush White House (also referred to as 'Vulcans') all share similar experiences in their rise to power-radical opponents of the Vietnam Syndrome-hence, predisposed to a more executive-driven foreign policy characterized by war. A typical example is the National Security Advisor of President Bush, Condoleezza Rice. In a statement, she remarked that, "there is no longer any doubt today that America faces an existential threat to our security—athreat as great as any we faced during the Civil War, World War II or Cold War" (Lefler, 2003, cites in Seegers, 2012, p. 28).

Therefore, "our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign" (ibid). In a similar vein, other scholars argue that Vice President Cheney's authoritarian personality may have contributed to the aggressive militarization response which defined America's foreign policy post-9/11 (Seegers, 2012). Although, concerns about the integrity and sincerity of actors in the securitization process is not necessarily

important, in this case, it provides some context in understanding claims of the justification of the securitization and militarization of U.S. foreign policy particularly toward Africa. Considering the posture and response of the American Government to the events of 9/11, it is of no surprise that the executive began to seriously question the idea of separation of development and security. Thus, the view held that Africa had little or no impact on U.S. national security became counter-productive in the eyes of the American government. Therefore, rather than seeing Africa as a continent where disasters are made-poverty, public health crises, incessant conflicts-the rhetoric now switched to a place of "high priority" on U.S. security agenda since the spillover effects of these issues could have significant impact on American soil (Duffield, 2014).

Indeed, in the 2006 U.S. National Security Strategy, the Bush White House concluded that "Africa held growing geostrategic importance and had become a high priority" (McFate, 2007 p.3). The new ascendancy of Africa from the domains of non-strategic importance to geo-strategic importance did not only manifest in the core executive branch of the American government but also other private agencies such as Think Tanks, NGO's, etc. According to Walters and Seegers (2012, p.29), just after two months of the 9/11 attack: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) held a briefing on "Africa, Islam and Terrorism". The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) issued a special report on "Terrorism in the Horn of Africa". The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) established the first Africa policy division of any US think tank, promptly producing a series on the national security implications of the current African condition. In addition, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) reported on the need for a comprehensive security-development approach to underdevelopment in Africa. One of the obvious results of this new claim about Africa after the events of 9/11 was the "creation of the Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa in 2002, ostensibly to capture Islamic fighters fleeing from Afghanistan and the Middle East" (Brown, 2013 p.6).

Prior to the creation of this security architecture, Commander General John P. Abizaid of Central Command stated that he viewed the Horn of Africa as "vulnerable to penetration by regional extremist groups, terrorist activity, and ethnic violence" (Cradock, 2006 as cited in Brown, 2013 p. 6). In that same year, General Bantz Craddock, Jones's successor, stated that Africa in recent years had posed "the greatest security stability challenge" to the U.S. European Command and "a separate command for Africa would provide better focus and increase synergy in support of U.S. policy and engagement." (Ibid) For this reason, President George W. Bush decided in 2007 to create the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany. The creation of AFRICOM ushered a new U.S.-Africa relation, which is now often defined by

security engagement and foreign security assistance. In a speech delivered on November 21, 2012, at Chatham House in London, United Kingdom (UK), AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham made casual remarks reflecting the preceding timeline and how the U.S. have come to view Africa through a security lens (Brown, 2013, p. 13).

Africa is not a part of the world that the United States military has focused on very intently until recently. We have had previously only a very small number of U.S. military intelligence analysts who focused on Africa and an extraordinary but small community of attachés with repetitive assignments and experiences on the African continent. That changed in the mid-2000s. Amid military engagement in other parts of the world, there was a growing recognition in the United States that Africa was increasingly important to the United States in a number of areas, certainly economically but politically and diplomatically as well from a development standpoint and also from a security standpoint. So, in the mid-2000s there was a decision to establish the United States military command that was exclusively focused on the African continent. In 2007, AFRICOM was established as a military command responsible for Africa, and it became fully operational in 2008 under General William E. Ward. This move replaced the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and was motivated by the realization that Africa had vast oil reserves that were too strategically valuable to be lost to state failure (Brown, 2013). EUCOM's resources were being stretched as they spent over half their time dealing with African security challenges in 2006, which was a significant increase from just three years earlier (Ploch, 2011).

AFRICOM's primary focus is to promote regional peace and security, which it achieves by concentrating on countering violent extremist organizations, supporting maritime security and combating illicit trafficking, and strengthening African defense capabilities (Varhola and Sheperd, 2013). Its main objective was to create a stable and secure environment in Africa that supports the foreign policy goals of the United States, primarily through military-to-military programs and operations. (Ploch, 2008) The command places a high priority on stability operations as they recognize that failing states and instability pose a significant threat to the interests of the U.S. and its allies, emphasizing that America is now more threatened by failing states than by conquering ones (Ploch, 2008). For instance, the Global Trends 2030 report by the National Intelligence Council identified several African countries, particularly Nigeria, as being at risk of experiencing state failure due to various challenges they are facing and their limited ability to address them. Due to this fragile situation and the possibility of violent groups taking hold, the United States military is increasing its involvement in the region, mainly through AFRICOM.

The creation of AFRICOM signaled a new prioritized

engagement between the U.S. and Africa. For Keenan (2008), Africa gained an increased geostrategic importance to the United States for three main reasons: (1) the war on terror (2) energy security concerns and (3) the eventful rise of China as a geopolitical rival. It is important to note that this increased geostrategic importance of Africa to the United States was a gradual process. Thus, in accordance with the version of the securitization framework advanced by Abrahamsen and McDonald (2005), this securitization of Africa did not happen overnight. It has rather been as low process which the author argues began to intensify after the end of the Cold War. Since Africa re-entered America's worldview as an important part of its military command structure, anything which threatens its capacity to fulfill this role, including China, is dangerous and perceived as a potential threat to U.S. national security interests.

China and Africa

There is no shortage of literature on the rise of China as a global security actor and its adverse effects on U.S.'s political, economic and security interests across the globe (Gavin, 2021; Meierding and Sigman 2021; Soule, 2021; DoD, 2020, Edel and Brands, 2019; Roskin, 2014; Yuan, 2010). Indeed, since President Xi Jinping assumed office in 2012, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has pursued more aggressive foreign policies abroad which has left many analysts especially in the West to raise concerns regarding China's role in the international system. Specifically, for many scholars and foreign policy makers, Xi Jinping's aggressive drive for international recognition is rooted in the ideals of China's 'Great Rejuvenation' or the 'Chinese Dream' (Langan 2018, p. 90; Reeves 2018, p. 978). This concept of the "Chinese Dream" according to Wang (2013) reflects the CCP's determination for China to claim back its rightful place as a great power within the international system. Essentially, as the continent with the largest number of developing countries, Africa represent if not the key, among, the key testing ground for "China's evolving resource diplomacy and its efforts to ensure long-term economic security and influence" (Beeson 2018, p. 245).

As should be noted, China's relations with Africa are grounded in several factors including historical narratives and similar shared experiences (South-South solidarity). It is important to point out that this Sino-Africa relationship is not new and has long been a feature of Chinese foreign policy, characterized by a pattern of South-South development cooperation and shared identity with African people based on their experiences of imperialism and socio-economic developmental struggles (Okolo & Akwu, 2016; Reeves, 2018). For this reason, the CCP has constructed its African approach on the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," which emphasize mutual respect for states' sovereignty, mutual

non-aggression, mutual non-interference, equality and mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence. In 2006, China published its first African Policy Paper outlining its engagement with Africa as enshrining the principles of equality, non-interference, and mutual benefits (Chen, 2016). This policy of "rayonnement" has been translated into effective diplomacy, comprehensive financial incentives in the form of development assistance, trade and investments, and military cooperation, as well as peacekeeping operations (Zhu, 2013). China's holistic approach to African relations has position edit as a key player in global power shifts, marking its inevitable ascent as a significant global power.

In the context of the United States, there is no doubt that the phenomenal rise of China and its profound engagement with the continent in diverse areas and sectors account for the primary factor underlying America's securitization of Africa. Indeed, as evidenced by Corrazzo and Marsh (2022), the concept of great power competition is critical to current U.S. defense and security policy. For instance, the 2015, 2017, and 2018 National Defense and Security Strategy of the United States, emphasizes that "central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the re-emergence of long-term, strategic competition with the revisionist powers China and Russia" (as cited in Corrazo & Marsh, 2022). Similarly, the Biden Administration has reiterated that its relationship with China will be competitive and managing it will be US's "biggest geographical test of the 21st Century" (Associated Press, 2021). The key point is that China's rapid and aggressive expansion on the continent has provoked great power anxiety for the United States especially as a challenge to its hegemonic status and ability to influence other nations economic, diplomatic and security decisions. It could, therefore, be argued that U.S. efforts to securitize Africa are largely in response to China's deepening footprint on the continent which is perceived as a threat to U.S. hegemonic status.

To sum up, the theoretical framework of securitization theory which attempts to understand how and why certain issues, states or groups of people come to be deemed security threats and what effects it has underscores the lens through which the geostrategic importance of Africa is viewed through securitization of issues (Balzacq, 2005). As emphasized by Conteh-Morgan (2018) the articulation of securitization reflected in policy statements of these great powers particularly the United States, which deem certain issues as extreme threats to wit military strategies must be directed at to eliminate, is responsible for the heavy military footprint of foreign powers in Africa. In the other words, in the case of both the U.S. and China, the securitization of Africa has evolved from just policy statements to the physical heavy military presence (troops, bases, joint exercises, transfer of military equipment etc.) on the continent. The subsequent paragraphs will analyze the phenomenal rise of China, in addition to issues of transnational terrorism

and energy security as key factors underpinning U.S. – Africa relations through the lens of securitization theory.

Securitization Factors

This section discusses the causal factors for the US relations with Africa that is more or less securitized over time include:

Terrorism

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, brought significant changes to US foreign policy and the global security landscape. In response to the attacks, the United States launched a "war on terror" that aimed to root out terrorism globally. The war on terror has had significant implications for countries across the world, especially African countries that have seen a significant rise in the emergence and proliferation of terror groups, attacks and threats of attack. Thus, from the West, East, South and to the North of the African continent, the tales of threats of terror and activities of terror groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab have necessitated the war on terror; and this has in turn brought with it the securitization of the continent. One of the most significant impacts of the war on terror on Africa has been the expansion of US military presence on the continent. Since the launch of the war on terror, the US has established a network of military bases and operations in Africa. The US military has used these bases to conduct counter-terrorism operations and provide military training and support to African governments.

Moreover, contemporary terrorism has become a pervasive phenomenon that affects every aspect of daily human life globally, including the conduct of foreign relations by state actors, corporate entities' business practices, and the structure and pattern of security forces. The impact of terrorism has also influenced the thinking and approach of individual citizens and systems of government in modern societies (Efebeh, 2008). Although there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism, modern terrorism has several basic characteristics that are prevalent in various definitions. For instance, the African Union Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (July 1999) defines terrorism broadly as "any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a state party, and which may endanger the life, physical integrity...or cause serious injury or death to any person, any number of group of persons or causes damage to public or private property, natural resources, environment or cultural heritage."

Although the September 11 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil in 2001, appears to have deepened the war on terror especially on 'weak and undeveloped states' as safe havens for terror groups and by extension increasingly portrayed as security threats beyond their borders, the

history of terrorism in Africa has its root in the early 1990s. In Africa, the emergence of terrorism and terrorist attacks can be traced back to the early 1990s when Osama Bin Laden, the leader of the Al Qaeda network, sought refuge and operated in Sudan. From there, attacks were launched on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dares Salaam, Tanzania in 1995 and 1998, respectively (Efebeh, 2022). These attacks on American interests prompted the bombing of a chemical plant in Sudan, which marked the beginning of the war on terror in Africa. The fight against terrorism then spread to Somalia, where some of the attackers were eventually apprehended and killed, coinciding with the rise of radical Islamic groups in the country. These attacks on American targets served as the foundation for the United States' policy towards terrorism in Africa. In North Africa, the existence of terrorist cells in Algeria, Libya, and Morocco was linked to attacks on London and Madrid.

In a similar manner, the emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria portrayed Africa as a security threat to the West especially the United States even further. Thus, in 2009, the Nigeria law enforcement agency resorted to extra-judicial killing of Usman Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, who was in police custody. The assumption was that this action would deter Boko Haram members from engaging in further violent activities. However, contrary to expectations, Yusuf's death triggered intense fighting and terrorist attacks against the Nigerian state and its citizens, leading to an escalation and spread of conflicts. In fact, between 2009 and June 2020, Boko Haram has caused significant damage, killing over 36,000 people, displacing over 1.8 million people, and leaving hundreds of thousands injured (Efebeh, 2022). The group has been associated with international terrorist organizations such as the Al Qaeda network and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). As of now, Boko Haram has renamed itself as the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP). To the West, especially the United States, these events demonstrate Africa as a haven for terrorist groups whose actions have national security implications on the U.S. Thus, Africa is increasingly viewed as a potential breeding ground for terrorism, insurgency, and instability that can spillover to other sides of the world, as Osama Bin Laden's use of Afghanistan as a staging ground for the September 11, 2001 attacks on U.S. soil demonstrated. (Abrahamsen 2004 as cited in Power, 2014).

In Africa, military operations are taking place in various hotspots with support from both local and foreign allies, in the form of military hardware and software supplies. In 2002, the United States established the Combined Joint Task Force in the Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) and stationed troops in Djibouti to combat terrorism. (Keenan, 2008) In 2003, \$100 million was released to improve border control, intelligence building, and state capacity in East Africa, to curb the flow of arms, personnel, illicit

funds, and other forms of support going to terrorists in the Horn and East Africa from the Middle East (Keenan, 2008). The Europe Command (EUCOM) was responsible for military training and support operations in the Sahel region, aimed at containing the Islamic radical GLPF in Algeria, and later expanded to cover North Africa and the entire Sahel region (Serafino, 2013). When the Islamic Court Movement took over Somalia in 2006, US counter-terrorism efforts intensified, and the US supported Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia. In 2007, the United States announced the establishment of the unified African Command (AFRICOM) to coordinate the different military programs in Africa, as it became clear that Africa was not immune to terrorism and its threats.

The primary categories of assistance provided by Section 1206/333 in Sub-Saharan Africa include combat operations, military aircraft, logistics, and command and control. From this key data and trend, it is not only indicative of the fact the war on terror has turned Africa into a hotbed of U.S. military operations but more importantly, the securitization of the continent is also a boost to the military industrial complex, as sales of arms and ammunitions takes precedence over fundamental bread and butter issues. To end here, the security concerns posed by terrorism and its potential to destabilize an already fragile continent, coupled with the Middle East's current instability, have contributed to a securitized relationship between the United States and Africa. This securitization is particularly evident in countries that are considered particularly susceptible to terrorism or other violent insurgencies. The manifestation of this heightened security posture takes the form of increased military aid, the provision of military equipment, and enhanced military training. Such measures are intended to enhance the capacity of African countries to respond effectively to the threat of terrorism and other violent insurgencies and to maintain stability in the region (albeit for the strategic interests of the United States).

Energy Security

The United States' dependence on oil has long influenced its foreign policy. U.S. oil development spans three major periods: the rise of oil as a commodity, beginning in 1850; the post-World War II age of geopolitical competition; and the post-Cold War era of deregulation and diversification. Most recently, Russia's war with Ukraine has aggravated geopolitical tensions and revived the debate about U.S. energy independence (Council on Foreign Relations, June 2022). Energy security has become a major concern for the United States in recent years. The country has been heavily dependent on foreign oil to meet its energy demands, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in global energy markets and geopolitical instability in oil-producing regions. This has led to the securitization of energy as a

critical component of U.S. foreign policy, particularly in Africa, where the United States has significant energy interests. During the 1980s, the discourses of security were mainly dominated by nuclear weapons, the arms race, and deterrence theory. After the Cold War, there was a growing awareness that "war was disappearing as an option in relations amongst a substantial group of states" (Buzan 1997, p. 6). As a result, Security Studies underwent a split between those who believed it should remain focused only on military issues, those who advocated for broadening the security agenda to include areas such as energy security, and those who questioned the entire conceptualization of security at its roots (Buzan, 1997).

The securitization of energy, especially affordable oil supply, first became linked to national security during World War I, when British and American navies began to transition from coal to oil as their primary source of power (Dahl, 2001). Thus, at the onset of World War I, oil became vital for modern warfare, fueling ships, land vehicles and airplanes. Hence, as more military forces became reliant on oil to function effectively on the battleground, securing access to this 'black gold' became a national security concern for many nations. The United States, for instance, during the war period supplied its allies-France and Britain- with oil to power their military. However, as the war alliance against Germany began to increase, the Wilson administration could no longer step-up efforts to supply oil to Britain and France, as it could no longer meet both its domestic and war demands. Hence the United States began to import oil from Mexico to close the demand gap. During this same period, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) predicted that the nation's oil reserves would be depleted within a decade, leading to the first oil security concerns in the country. Despite being the world's largest producer of oil at the time, generating approximately one million barrels per day and accounting for 65% of global oil production, more than 90% of this output was consumed domestically.

In the aftermath of World Wars, oil still emerged as a crucial element in modern economies, thereby becoming a vital component of national economic security and military preparedness. The pursuit of foreign oil resources gained momentum during the immediate post-war period, when the United States became a net importer of oil in 1947 due to rising domestic consumption (Ross, 2013). Although the U.S. was initially able to regulate its oil production from East Texas, it eventually reached peak production in 1970, leaving only OPEC countries with surplus capacity (Ross, 2013). The series of oil supply disruptions in the 1950s and 1960s, coupled with the 1973 oil embargo, set the stage for the Carter Doctrine of 1980. The Carter Doctrine unequivocally declared that safeguarding the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf was a vital interest of the U.S., and that any attempt to interfere with this flow would be met with necessary force (Klare,

2001). According to Klare and Volman's (2006) analysis, the global oil supply faces mounting pressures due to its diminishing quantity and the need to reduce reliance on the volatile Middle East. This has led to a renewed interest in African oil reserves. The authors argue that the exploitation of African oil resources could serve as a means of prolonging the eventual depletion of global oil and may potentially trigger a "scramble" for African oil between Western powers and China.

In Nigeria's oil industry, piracy, sabotage, and oil theft pose significant challenges to many international oil companies such as Exxon, Chevron, Shell, Total, and Eni who own and operate both onshore and offshore production and distribution networks (Peele, 2010). For instance, in 2003, Shell commissioned a report that estimated the daily theft of up to 685,000 barrels of oil, equivalent to one-third of total production. (Ibid) Indeed, due to the increasing issues of sabotage, piracy, and oil theft, Nigeria is facing a record reduction in oil production, dropping from the first largest producer in Africa to the fourth, behind Angola, Algeria and Libya (VOA, 2022). Additionally, the Nigerian government is currently grappling with a severe security crisis in the northern region of the country, which has been instigated by terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram and Ansaru. Moreover, there is a legitimate concern that Nigeria may follow the path of Sudan, which experienced a civil war resulting in a crippled oil production industry, and any cut in Nigeria's oil production by as much as a quarter will have a significant effect on global oil prices. As a result, ensuring uninterrupted oil supply from the region as observed in the Middle East has been declared a "national security interest and followed by arms for oil agreements, weapons sales, military aid and training, military bases, and even deployment of military forces" (Klare and Volman, 2006 p. 298).

Political disruptions have taken place in Africa, particularly Nigeria, have significantly impacted the global oil market. As a result, the recent gains made by the United States in shale oil production have been essentially wiped out (Johnson, 2013). In addition, this situation has the capability to reduce the spare production capacity of countries such as Saudi Arabia, which must increase their oil production to compensate for the global shortfall. Moreover, the interconnectedness of the global economy means price hikes resulting from significant cuts in global oil supply have a lasting impact on the U.S. economy. Therefore, even though the United States is importing less oil from Nigeria (currently down to about 3.5% as of 2020), other countries, especially U.S. allies and key geopolitical competitors such as China still rely on such producers. For example, European imports of Nigerian oil stands at 14% and is expected to increase to about 40% due to fallouts of the Russian-Ukraine crisis (Reuters, 2022).

The China Factor

China's rising influence in Africa and its strategic partnerships with African nations have gained global attention, particularly among the Western nations. The United States considers China's increasing footprint on the continent as a threat to its strategic and economic interests in Africa. This has led to the securitization of the U.S. foreign policy towards Africa. This section focuses on the rise of China as a factor for the securitization of U.S. foreign policy in Africa. As stated earlier, the increasing importance of China in the international system has been a significant factor contributing to the securitization of Africa. Following the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s and 1980s, China has emerged as a significant actor in the global arena. As the world's second-largest economy, China's demand for raw materials, particularly oil, has increased exponentially, most of which can be obtained from developing countries. Since the 1990s, China has been actively working to bolster its diplomatic and economic influence in developing countries, utilizing its considerable financial resources to finance infrastructure projects, resource development, and Chinese companies in some of the world's poorest nations (Winton, 2013).

In the realm of the U.S.-Africa relations, China presents a major challenge to the United States, in both economic and security terms. Unlike the traditional extractive approach of Western countries, China regards Africa not only as a source of raw materials such as oil and minerals but also as a market and investment destination. In the period leading up to 2012, China-Africa trade had expanded by a factor of twenty, reaching a total volume of \$200 billion, a level that exceeded that of any other major trading partner of Africa, including the United States, Britain, and France (Gavin, 2021). Indeed, by 2009, China had become Africa's top trading partner, a position that it has since maintained, surpassing the European Union and other significant trading blocs in the process. Presently, due to supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of China-Africa trade was valued at \$176 billion in 2020, down from \$192 billion the previous year (CARI, 2021). At the same time, however, Africa accounts for about only two percent of total U.S. exports and imports merchandise, which is valued at about \$37 billion as of 2021 (Kronsten, 2022).

Chinese armored military vehicles, and nearly 20% of all military vehicles on the continent are imported from China (WSJ, 2022). This demonstrates a sharp increase in Chinese military sales to Africa in the last few decades, compared to the United States. Although China is not the only nation that supplies arms to Africa, its contribution to the militarization process is significant, primarily through the transfer of small arms and light weapons to conflict zones and dictatorial regimes in Africa. The transfer of Small Arms Light Weapons (SALW) by China to Africa is

a dominant feature of the arms trade, as these weapons are inexpensive and easy to operate, making them a common feature in ethno-political conflicts and government-rebel clashes in countries such as the Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe, among others (Conteh-Morgan, 2019). As Earl Conteh-Morgan (2019, p. 87) concludes that China's militarization of the continent via arms transfer is now a reality because of its strategy of making its weapons: (i) affordable/inexpensive; (ii) available for all because of its arms transfer or military relationship with both strategic and non-strategic African countries such as Egypt, South Africa, and Zimbabwe on the one hand, and Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Burundi, or Sierra Leone on the other; and (iii) aggressive and effective marketing of both its sophisticated and SALWs infrequent and regular arms exhibits throughout the continent.

According to some analysts, China's foreign aid and investment practices contribute to exacerbating this trend, as they are primarily focused on meeting China's own economic development needs. Most of the economic assistance provided by China is targeted towards securing access to raw materials, such as oil, minerals, timber, and agricultural products (Lum, 2009). In addition, Chinese investment in developing countries is often considered more appealing than that of Western countries, given China's tendency to link investment to other infrastructure projects, such as the construction of ports and roads (Alden, 2007). For instance, before China became an importer of Angolan oil in the early 2000s, the United States was the leading consumer of Angolan oil. However, a \$2 billion oil-backed loan pledged by the Export-Import Bank of China in 2004 for the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure marked the beginning of a fully-fledged Sino-Angolan partnership. This rapid transformation of Sino-Anglo ties from a moderate partnership to a fully-fledged economic and political partnership in a relatively small amount of time portrays how China is utilizing its diplomatic, institutional, and financial power to achieve a more asymmetrical or even more superior level of influence with African states.

The United States, in response, has been grappling with its long-term posture on the continent. This is particularly evident as the rivalry against China in Africa has seen a progression from neutral or even positive to negative. As remarked by then Assistant Secretary of State Jonny Carson in February 2010: "China is a very aggressive and pernicious economic competitor with no morals. China is not in Africa for altruistic reasons. China is in Africa for China primarily" (Shinn, 2012 as cited in Conteh-Morgan, 2019 p. 46). Hence, the U.S. reaction to China's aggressive and expansive geo-strategy in Africa has been rooted in AFRICOM, which although is a military command, is multi-functional for purposes of maintaining its hegemonic world order. In this sense, it could be argued that with the establishment of AFRICOM

in 2007, the United States launched its China containment policy on the continent. This strategy involves an ever-increasing American presence within the region to counterbalance the rapid growth of China's multipronged Africa engagement, which is becoming increasingly worrisome to the West. In fact, according to the US National Defense Business Operations Plan (2018-2022), the US military manages a 'global portfolio that consists of more than 568,000 assets (buildings and structures), located at nearly 4,800 sites worldwide (TheIntercept,2022).

Violent ISIS affiliates active in the Sahel region, including Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, and al-Qaeda, as well as other extremist groups, do not only pose a threat to other regions of the continent but more importantly, a challenge to U.S. security interests. According to AFRICOM, the United States kept around 6,000 active-duty troops on the continent in 2017 (Turse, 2020). While China's aggressive and expansive operations in Africa do not pose any immediate danger or threat to the United States, it has been interpreted by some (U.S. foreign policymakers) as a significant manifestation of China's growing geopolitical power and influence, which could ultimately challenge the United States' hegemony in the future. From the United States' perspective, China's involvement in Africa is premised on the sole aim of scrambling Africa's natural resources such as oil and other precious earth minerals (Klare and Volman, 2006). Thus, China thrives on its long-standing policy of 'non-interference' to aid and abet authoritarian regimes and dictators on the continent to gain access to critical natural resources. China, on the other hand, argues that attempts by the United States and its allies to block and discredit China's involvement in Africa is rooted in the grand strategy of maintaining the current neoliberal international order, and more importantly, China containment policy, which only worsens the current geopolitical rivalry between the two global powers (Yi-Chong, 2008).

Ignored but Growing: Gauging African Agency in the US-China Geopolitical Power Struggle on the Continent

As emphasized earlier, the competitive power struggle between the United States and China for geopolitical influence and control of natural resources and markets in Africa has led to the formation of AFRICOM. This has been seen as a response to the 'Chinese Question' in the continent, which has two broad interpretations. From the African point of view, China is viewed as a late colonizer in Africa, seeking territories, trade, markets, and resources through the strategic use of both soft and hard power, with imperialistic undertones (Obi, 2008; Large, 2008; Klare and Volman 2006) in the continent, which is particularly prevalent among radical African and Africanist

scholarship seeking to reassert a new form of agency in Africa's external relations. On the other hand, from the United States perspective, the 'China Question' encompasses the growing economic dominance of markets, increasing militarization, and the spread of China's State capitalism, poor human rights records, corrupt practices, and more importantly, the ideological threats to the neoliberal world order (Townsend, 2021; Mearsheimer, 2001).

Gauging African agency on the U.S./China geopolitical struggle on the continent can be quite an uphill task especially considering the fact Africa is such a diverse continent with varied goals, norms, and societal practices. It is important to note that the concept of 'agency' refers to the ability of actors to make independent decisions and take actions that shape their own destinies. Indeed, Andreasson (2013, p.144), defines agency as the "ability of states as the primary actors in the international system, to generate and deploy arrange of capabilities (hard and soft) in the pursuit of their national interest". In the case of Africa's voice in the US-China strategic rivalry, agency refers to the ability of African states and other actors to make choices that influence the competition between the two great powers. In the last few decades, concerns over issues of the U.S. expanding military footprint in Africa have been on the forefront of African agencies in international politics. From the African government's perspective, the militarization of U.S. relations with Africa, especially the establishment of AFRICOM in 2007 were initially characterized with confusion and distrust (Africa Action, 2008).

Though certain government leaders have been very supportive of the expanding U.S. military presence, especially with regards to the operations of AFRICOM, other agents such as civil society leaders, academicians, journalists and the general populace even within Nigeria have found more platforms (civil suits, demonstrations, social media campaigns etc.) to assert their agency of re-imagining not only a new U.S. Africa relations but also a new form of partnership with emerging powers such as China, Russia, India that is based on mutual partnerships and not dependency. For instance, in April 2018, thousands of Ghanaians took to the streets of Accra to protest a military pact between the government of Ghana and Washington that would give the U.S. military an expanded role in Ghana (Searcy & Schmitt, 2018). Similarly, in October 2020, a group of environmental advocates from Ghana, led by the non-governmental organization A Rocha Ghana, filed a complaint in the High Court of Accra seeking to halt a \$2-billion infrastructure-for-natural resources agreement between the government and Sinohydro (a Chinese conglomerate). These two instances reflect the growing intensity at which African citizens want to assert Africa's agency in critical issues such as the sovereignty of African countries, the function of the U.S. military in administering development assistance, and U.S.-China

interests in controlling access to African resources at the expense of ordinary Africans.

Problematizing Securitization: Why does it Matter?

It is widely argued that securitization of issues often exacerbates problems rather than providing solutions. This is particularly true in the case of US policy towards Africa, where securitization has marginalized development agencies such as USAID and undermined policies aimed at promoting good democracy (Ploch, 2010). Complaints of extrajudicial killings, torture, corruption, and excessive use of force are frequently directed at the militaries and security forces of countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, and Burundi. It is believed that governments use the need to combat terrorism and maintain stability as a pretext for using security forces to suppress dissent and remain in power. The disproportionate allocation of government budgets towards defense over development and diplomatic operations has raised concerns about the extent to which the Pentagon has influenced the direction of USA fricapolicy away from civilian agencies towards military and security actors (Keenan, 2019).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo offers an example of the negative effects of prolonged armed conflict, as increased police and military expenditure has reduced funding for health and education (UNDP, 2010). Also, in the Central African Republic, insecurity and political instability have led to damage to administrative and economic infrastructure, causing many organizations and development partners to leave the country, thereby reducing its capacity to meet its development goals (UNDP, 2010). Furthermore, Nigeria has also experienced negative consequences resulting from decades of civil war and misrule by military regimes, including widespread poverty, (currently 63% of people living within Nigeria, about 130 million are considered multi-dimensionally poor) rampant corruption, and failing government institutions (World Bank 2022; Afrodad, 2005). One may argue that the concept of securitization, which involves framing a particular issue as a security threat, may not be inherently bad as it can generate a sense of 'urgency' and stimulate action from top-level policymakers. Specifically, in the context of U.S.- Africa engagement, securitization could potentially serve to combat the 'marginalization' of the continent's challenges and increase development aid to a populace experiencing economic recession and government austerity measures (Abrahamsen, 2004). For instance, U.S. aid to African nations experienced a sharp decline in the 1990s at the end of the Cold War, when it was no longer in geopolitical competition with the Soviet Union. The problem is that the securitization of an issue can result in its framing as a matter of threat and defense, and assign the primary responsibility for its resolution to

the state (Waever, 1998).

For Waever (1998), this is not out of reach, as securitization can fail, and issues can be securitized. Because of this, he favors de-securitization-where issues are moved out of 'high' stake politics into 'normal' stake politics and dealt with through the established political system (Buzan et al. 1998). For instance, rather than pour billions of dollars into combating global terror-build indigenous capacity to secure porous borders, train military forces, and build local law enforcement and intelligence infrastructure to deny terrorist havens in Africa-the United States can frame the issues as human-centered development. In this regard, the primary responsibility falls on the United States Agency for International Development or the State Department and not the DoD. It is important to note that the problem of ensuring peace in Africa is one where the lines between development and security are mostly blurred. Indeed, as evidenced by President Obama in 2009 that "as long as parts of Africa continue to be ravaged by war and mayhem, opportunity and democracy cannot take root" (Obama, 2013 as cited in Power, 2014 p. 67). As a result, the provision of development in such an environment inevitably involves the use of military and security assistance, which unfortunately changes the dynamic of the partnership immediately.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to analyze the logic of securitization of US foreign policy towards Africa in recent years, with a particular emphasis on energy security, terrorism, and the rise of China as geopolitical rival to U.S. hegemony. While the continent of Africa has historically been considered of non-geostrategic relevance, it has gone through major geopolitical power struggles, leading to increased competition for commerce, political influence, and access to the continent's resources. The rise of China has further intensified this competition, contributing to the securitization of US foreign policy towards Africa. The establishment of AFRICOM in 2007 is indicative of this shift to securitization, with energy security and terrorism also being key factors. The US has long been dependent on oil as a major source of energy, and this dependency has had a significant impact on its foreign policy, leading to a search for alternative sources, such as Africa. Additionally, the threat of terrorism and internal conflict has further contributed to the securitization of US foreign policy towards Africa. While governance and development issues remain important, there is evidence that the goals and objectives of the US national security establishment and foreign policy elites are taking precedence over them. Overall, the securitization of US foreign policy towards Africa has had significant implications for the continent's political and economic

development, as well as for US interests in the region. It is important to note that the securitization of Africa was analyzed through an in-depth analysis of the U.S. relationship with Africa, which was chosen due to its significant oil production, vulnerability to terrorism, and rapidly expanding Chinese presence. Future research could expand upon this study by undertaking a multiple case study analysis by mapping U.S. relationship with African states that lack valuable oil resources or have not experienced terrorism to determine which factor is most influential in the securitization process.

REFERENCES

- Abrahamsen, Rita. 2004. "A Breeding Ground for Terrorists? Africa & Britain's War on Terrorism." *Review of African Political Economy* 31 (102): 677–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305624042000327840>.
- Abrahamsen, Rita. 2005. "Blair's Africa: The Politics of Securitization and Fear." *Alternatives* 30(1): 55–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437540503000103>
- Adebajo, Adekeye. 2021. "Buhari and AFRICOM." *The Guardian*. May 12, 2021. <https://guardian.ng/opinion/buhari-and-africom/>. Retrieved April 18, 2023.
- Allison, Graham T. 2017. *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?* Boston, New York: Mariner Books.
- Alden, Chris. 2007. *"China in Africa"*. New York, Capetown, South Africa, London, Zed Books.
- Alden, Chris. 2000. "From neglect to 'virtual engagement': The United States and its new paradigm for Africa." *African Affairs* 99, no. 396: 355-371.
- Afodad. 2005. "The politics of the MDGs and Nigeria: a critical appraisal of the Global Partnership for Development (Goal 8)."
- Anyaso, Claudia E. 2008. "An Overview of AFRICOM: A Unified Combatant Command." *The DISAM Journal (September 2008)*: 59.
- Africa Action. 2008. *Africa-Action-Report-Africa-Actions-Stands-with-African-Voices-on-Africom-Feb-2008-4-Pp*, February. https://doi.org/10.1163/2210-7975_hrd-1171-0298.
- AP News. 2021. "Biden: China Should Expect 'extreme Competition' From US." <https://apnews.com/Article/ Joe-Biden-Xi-Jinping-China-8f5158c12eed14e002bb1c094f3a048a> Retrieved on April 20, 2023.
- Arabian, Christina, and Colby Goodman, 2020. "The Major Trends in the U.S. Counterterrorism Aids 2015-19." *Security Assistance Monitor*. 2020. <https://securityassistance.org/publications/major-trends-in-u-s-counterterrorism-aid-fy-2015-19/>.
- Ariana. 2021. "Defending Our Sovereignty: US Military Bases In Africa And The Future Of African Unity."

- Tricontinental: Institute For Social Research*. Retrieved on July 5, 2023. <https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-42-militarisation-africa/>.
- Balzacq, Thierry. 2005. "The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context." *European Journal of International Relations* 11(2): 171-201.
- Beeson, M. (2018). Geoeconomics with Chinese characteristics: the BR land China's evolving grand strategy. *Economic and Political Studies*, 6(3), 240–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20954816.2018.1498988>
- Brown, David Edward. 2013. AFRICOM at 5 years: the maturation of a new US combatant command. Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College Press.
- Brunnermeier, Markus, Rush Doshi, and Harold James. 2018. "Beijing's Bismarckian Ghosts: How Great Powers Compete Economically." *The Washington Quarterly* 41 (3): 161–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2018.1520571>.
- Buzan, Barry. 1997. "Rethinking Security after the Cold War." *Cooperation and Conflict* 32(1): 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836797032001001>.
- Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde. Security: A new framework for analysis. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998.
- BP *Statistical Review of World Energy*. June, 2021. Available: <https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/business-sites/en/global/corporate/pdfs/energy-economics/statistical-review/bp-stats-review-2021-full-report.pdf> [Accessed February 7, 2023]
- Chen, H.(2016). China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative and its implications for Sino-African investment relations. *Transnational Corporations Review*, 8(3), 178–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19186444.2016.1233722>
- Conteh-Morgan, Earl. 2018. "The United States and China: Strategic Rivalry in Africa." *IT* 20(1): 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2018201.03>.
- Conteh-Morgan, Earl. 2021. "Strategies of Sino-American Rivalry in Africa: From 2000 to COVID-19." *Vestn. Ross. Univ. Družby Nar., Ser. Meždunar. Otnoš.* 21 (2): 265–78.
- Craddock, Bantz J. 2006. "Posture Statement of General Bantz J. "In Craddock, United States Army Commander, United States Southern Command Before the 109th Congress Senate Armed Service Committee. USS Command, Department of Defense, vol. 1427.
- Dahl, Erik J. 2001. *Naval innovation: from coal to oil*. National Defense UNIV Washington DC Inst. for National Strategic Studies, 2001. Available: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA524799> [Accessed 8 January, 2023]
- Dobbins, James, Howard Shatz, and Ali Wyne. 2019. "Russia Is a Rogue, Not a Peer; China Is a Peer, Not a Rogue: Different Challenges, Different Responses." <https://doi.org/10.7249/pe310>.
- Department of Defense. 2020. "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020." Annual report to Congress. <https://media.defense.gov/>
- Department of Defense. 2021. "U.S. Engagement Needed to Build Security, Prosperity on African Continent." <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2568996/us-engagement-needed-to-build-security-prosperity-on-african-continent>
- Duffield, Mark. 2014. Global governance and the new wars: The merging of development and security. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Dzirutwe, McDonald. 2022. "EU Looks To Replace Gas From Russia With Nigerian Supplies." Reuters. July 23, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/eu-looks-replace-gas-russia-with-nigerian-supplies-2022-07-23/>.
- Edel, Charles, and Hal Brands. 2021. "The Real Origins Of The U.S.-China Cold War." *Foreign Policy*. June 2, 2021. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/02/the-real-origins-of-the-u-s-china-cold-war-big-think-communism/>.
- Efebeh, V. E. (2022). The War on Terror and Securitization of Africa. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Africa and the Changing Global Order* (pp. 745–758). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77481-3_36
- Efebeh, Eseghe Vincent. 2008. Terrorism: A plague of the 21st Century, *Journal of Social Policy and Society*, Vol.3(3), 39–47.
- Gavin, Michelle. 2021. "Major Power Rivalry in Africa." *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/report/major-power-rivalry-africa>
- John J, Mearsheimer. 2001. "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics.", 213–48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511816635.007>
- Hass, Ryan. 2020. "U.S.-China Relations: The Search for a New Equilibrium." *Brookings* (blog). October 24, 2023. <accessed from: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/u-s-china-relations-the-search-for-a-new-equilibrium/> .
- Halloran, Richard. 2004. "The Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet." *Parameters* 34, no. 3: 146.
- Hoffmann, Stanley. "What should we do in the World?." *The Atlantic Monthly* 264, no. 4(1989): 84-96.
- Hodkinson, Phil, and Heather Hodkinson. 2001. "The strengths and limitations of case study research." In *learning and skills development agency conference at Cambridge*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 5-7. Leeds, UK: University of Leeds.
- Huysmans, Jef. 1998. "Revisiting Copenhagen: Or, on the creative development of a security studies agenda in Europe." *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 4 (1998): 479-505.
- Hong, Zhao. 2007. China-US oil rivalry in Africa. No. 2007-24. Copenhagen Discussion Papers.
- Isikoff, Michael, and David Corn. 2006. *Hubris: The inside story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War*. Crown.
- Ilaria Carrozza, Nicholas J. Marsh. 2022. "Great Power

- Competition and China's Security Assistance to Africa: Arms, Training, and Influence", *Journal of Global Security Studies*, Volume 7, Issue 4, December 2022, ogac027, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogac027>
- Johnson, Keith. 2013. "Drill Down." *Foreign Policy*. December 23, 2013. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/23/drill-down/>
- Kaplan, Robert. 2020. "Bloomberg – Are You A Robot?" *Bloomberg.com*. July 26, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-07-26/china-doesn-t-want-to-conquer-just-do-business>.
- Klare, Michael T. 2001. "The New Geography of Conflict" 80(3): 49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20050150>.
- Klare, Michael. 2006. "Fueling the Dragon: China's Strategic Energy Dilemma" 105(690): 180–85. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2006.105.690.180>.
- Klare, Michael, and Daniel Volman. 2006. "America, China & the Scramble for Africa's Oil." *Review of African Political Economy* 33(108):297–309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056240600843048>.
- Kronsten, Gregory. 2022. "US Trade With Africa In Decline, But Aid Remains Stable-African Business." *African Business*. November 30, 2022. <https://african.business/2022/11/finance-services/us-trade-with-africa-in-decline-but-aid-remains-stable>.
- Kaplan, Robert D. 2020. "China Doesn't Want to Conquer, Just Do Business." *Bloomberg* September 26, 2022. <accessed from: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-07-26/china-doesn-t-want-to-conquer-just-do-business>>
- Kofman, Michael. 2018. "Great Power Competition in the 21st Century." *Valdai Discussion Club*. October 17, 2022 <accessed from: <https://valdaiclub.com/a/valdai-papers/great-power-competition-in-21st-century/>
- Langan, Mark. 2018. "Emerging Powers and Neo-Colonialism in Africa," 89–117. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58571-0_4.
- Large, Daniel. 2008. "Beyond 'Dragon in the Bush': The Study of China Africa Relations." *African Affairs* 107 (426): 45–61. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adm069>.
- Liautaud, Alexa. 2018. "U.S. Military Presence In Africa Grew Again, But 'We're Not At War,' Top U.S. Commander Says." *Vice News*. March 6, 2018. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/j5b3pb/us-military-presence-in-africa-grew-again-but-were-not-at-war-top-us-commander-says>.
- Luft, Gal, and Anne Korin. 2013. "The Myth Of U.S. Energy Dependence." *Foreign Affairs*. October 15, 2013. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2013-10-15/myth-us-energy-dependence>.
- Leffler, Melvyn P. 2003. "9/11 and the past and future of American foreign policy." *International Affairs* 79, no. 5: 1045-1063.
- Lawson, Letitia. 2007. *US Africa policy since the Cold War*. Naval Postgraduate School Monterey CA Center for Contemporary Conflict.
- Lake, David A. 2018. "Economic Openness and Great Power Competition: Lessons for China and the United States." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 11 (3): 237–70.
- Liautaud, Alexa. 2018. "U.S. Military Presence in Africa Grew Again, but 'We're Not at War' Top U.S. Commander Says," *Vice News*, (March 6, 2018), retrieved from https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/j5b3pb/us-military-presence-in-africa-grew-again-but-were-not-at-war-top-us-commander-says
- Mazarr, Michael J. 2019. "This Is Not a Great-Power Competition," June 1, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-05-29/not-great-power-competition>
- McDonald, Matt. 2008. "Securitization and the Construction of Security." *European Journal of International Relations* 14 (4): 563–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066108097553>.
- Michaels, Marguerite. 1992. "Retreat from Africa." *Foreign Affairs*: 93-108.
- UNDP. 2010. "The path to achieving the Millennium Development Goals: A synthesis of evidence from around the world."
- Meierding, Emily, and Rachel Sigman. 2021. "Understanding the Mechanisms of International Influence in an Era of Great Power Competition." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 6 (4): 1-20.
- Ncube, Mthuli, and Michael Fairbanks. "China in Africa: Myths, Realities, and Opportunities." *Harvard International Review* 34, no.2 (2012): 21.
- Ohaegbulam, Festus Ugboaja. 2004. *US Policy in Postcolonial Africa: Four case studies in conflict resolution*. Peter Lang.
- Okolo, A. L., and Akwu, J. O. 2016. China's foreign direct investment in Africa's land: hallmarks of neo-colonialism or South-South cooperation? *Africa Review*, 8(1), 44–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09744053.2015.1090662>
- Ortiz, Milady. *US Africa Command: A new way of thinking*. Institute of Land Warfare, Association of the United States Army, 2008.
- Peel, Michael. 2010. *Swamp Full of Dollars*. Chicago, Illinois: I. B. Tauris.
- Porter, Patrick. 2019. "Advice for a Dark Age: Managing Great Power Competition." *The Washington Quarterly* 42 (1): 7–25.
- Ploch, Lauren. 2011. "Africa Command: US strategic interests and the role of the US military in Africa". CSR Report for Congress. Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service. (2011): 6-17.
- Ploch, Lauren. 2008. "Nigeria: Current Issues." *Library of Congress Washington D.C. Congressional Research Service*. Available: <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA468085/>

- Accessed 3, January 2023]
- Power, Lucy. 2014. "Oil, Terrorism and China. Is There a New Securitization of United States Foreign Policy in Africa?" Master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Reeves, J. 2018. Imperialism and the Middle Kingdom: The Xi Jinping administration's peripheral diplomacy with developing states. *Third World Quarterly*, 39(5), 976–998. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2018.1447376>
- Ross, Michael. 2013. "How The 1973 Oil Embargo Saved The Planet." *Foreign Affairs*. October 15, 2013. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-america/2013-10-15/how-1973-oil-embargo-saved-planet>.
- Roskin, Michael G. 2014. "The New Cold War." *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 44, no. 1 (2014): 3.
- Serafino, Nina M. 2013. *Security Assistance Reform: Section 1206 Background and Issues for Congress. CRS Report for Congress*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service(CRS).
- Sean, McFate. 2008. Briefing: US Africa Command: Next Step or Next Stumble? *African Affairs*, Volume 107, Issue 426, January 2008, Pages 111–120, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adm084>
- Searcey, Dionne, and Eric Schmitt. 2018. "Deal With U.S. Military Sets Off Protests In Ghana (Published 2018)." *The New York Times*. March 28, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/28/world/africa/ghana-us-military-deal-protests.html>.
- Sun, Xuefeng, M. Taylor Fravel and Feng Liu, eds. 2020. "IR Theory and the Future of China-US Competition: A CJIP Reader." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*
- Soulé, Folashadé. 2021. "Zero-Sum? Benefitting from Great Power Rivalry in Africa." *APRI*. October 25, 2022. <https://afripoli.org/zero-sum-benefitting-from-great-power-rivalry-in-africa>.
- Townsend, Stephen. 2021. "Statement of United States Marine Corps Commander United States Africa Command before the United States House of Representative Committee on Armed Services." Retrieved April 20, 2023 at: <https://www.africom.mil/pressrelease/33688/us-africa-command-testimony-to-house-armed-services-committee>
- The White House. 2013. "Remarks By President Obama At The University Of Cape Town." *Whitehouse.gov*. June 30, 2013. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/30/remarks-president-obama-university-cape-town>.
- Turse, Nick. 2020. "Pentagon's Own Map of US Bases in Africa Contradicts Its Claim of 'Light Footprint.'" *The Intercept*. Retrieved from: <https://theintercept.com/2020/02/27/africa-us-military-bases-africom/>
- Turse, Nick. 2020. "Pentagon's Own Map Of U.S. Bases In Africa Contradicts Its Claim Of 'Light' Footprint." *The Intercept*. February 27, 2020. <https://theintercept.com/2020/02/27/africa-us-military-bases-africom/>.
- Vultee, Fred. 2010. "Securitization: A New Approach to the Framing of the 'War on Terror.'" *Journalism Practice* 4 (1): 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780903172049>.
- Varhola, Laura R., and Thomas E. Sheperd. 2013. "Africa and the United States—A Military Perspective." *American Foreign Policy Interests* 35 (6): 325–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2013.855546>.
- Walker, Robin E, and Annette Seegers. 2012. "Securitization: The Case of Post-9/11 United States-Africa Policy." *Sci.Mil.* 40 (2). <https://doi.org/10.5787/40-2-995>.
- Watts, Stephen, Trevor Johnston, Matthew Lane, Sean Mann, Michael J. McNerney, and Andrew Brooks. *Building Security in Africa: An Evaluation of U.S. Security Sector Assistance in Africa from the Cold War to the Present*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2447.html.
- Winton, Douglas W. "China's Economic Statecraft in Africa: Implications for the US Rebalance." (2013). "World Energy Outlook 2013." 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1787/weo-2013-en>.
- Wang, Z. 2014. The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 19(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-013-9272-0>
- Wæver, O. 1998. *Securitization and Desecuritization*. In: Lipschutz, R.D.(ed.) *On Security*. New York: Columbia International Affairs Online; Columbia University Press.
- Wengraff, Lee. 2018. "China's New Imperial Scramble for Africa." *Red Pepper* (2018).
- Brown, William. "Africa and international relations: a comment on IR theory, anarchy and statehood." *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 119–143.
- Yuan, Peng. "Zhongmei Guanxi Xiang Hechu Qu? [Whither Are Sino-US Relations Going?]." *Waijiao Pinglun [Foreign Affairs Review]* 2(2010): 2-7.
- Zhu, Zhiquan. 2013. "China's New Diplomacy: Rationale, Strategies and Significance." (2013). Routledge, Abingdon, New York, pp. 21-51.