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# The U.S informal empire: US African Command (AFRICOM) expanding the US economic-frontier by discursively securitizing Africa using exceptional speech acts

Khaled Al-Kassimi

Department of Political Science, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

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The mission statement of US African Command (AFRICOM), articulated by President George Bush in 2007, declared African underdevelopment and human insecurities as a threat to US national security. Since 10 years have elapsed from the time of AFRICOM's inauguration, this paper seeks to highlight that the organization has fallen short in realizing its mission statement. This unnerving reality has given credence to intellectuals who adopt an apocalyptic position vis-à-vis the organization. Intellectual skeptics disconcerted with AFRICOM located in the Global South and Global North have come to the conclusion that AFRICOM's actuality as an organization primarily advanced American economic interest and perceived issues of African development as trivial. In the 21st-century, US security experts discursively shifted Africa from being a politicized issue to a securitized issue thereby constructing the continent as posing an existential threat not only to American geostrategic interest, but also American identity of exceptionalism. By using the work of New Left historian William Appleman Williams and by referencing speech actors with political capital, this paper highlights that the process of securitizing Africa using exceptional speech acts to expand corporate capitalism is not unique to Africa since there are historical discursive parallels between early and current speech acts deliberated during junctures involving US foreign ventures.

**Key words:** US African Command (AFRICOM), African Union (AU), securitization, speech act, exceptionalism, expansionism, economic-frontier, security-development discourse, US informal empire, William Appleman Williams, apocalyptic-complementary positions.

## INTRODUCTION

The United States of America's *stratégie de grandeur* during the Cold War has traditionally treated the African continent as a politicized issue rather than a securitized

issue. The Anglo-American field of international relations, along with its subfield of security studies, which positions the state as the main referent object being secured, did not

E-mail: [alkassk@mcmaster.ca](mailto:alkassk@mcmaster.ca).

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deliberate a speech act that securitized Africa in terms of being a valued strategic frontier and a threat to national security. That is not to say that US hegemony did not covertly influence internal politics in Africa in terms of funding what was then called “anti-communist” guerilla movements as Africa was stigmatized as the prime example of peoples incapable of modernity (Mamdani, 2004). Newly decolonized countries in Africa were labelled as “Third World” countries because they refused to adhere to the two camp theory of the Cold War and decided to adopt a non-aligned position which was not simply perceived as a “shortcut to suicide” (Prashad, 2009: 82), but also as being on “wrong” side of history because it contested the “natural” epistemological evolution of humankind informing the liberal-capitalist ethos. Motivated thus, the majority of traditional Cold War strategic studies deliberated by the west were mainly concerned with first world issues of bipolarity and nuclear deterrence. Third world issues were only addressed as security issues when they exclusively impacted superpower relations (Buzan and Hansen, 2009).

The peripheral status Africa occupied amongst American defense strategists in IR and security studies, and the neglect that ensued for several decades during the Cold War came to an end with the collapse of the Berlin wall. The period that followed recognized as the “widening and deepening” era of security studies challenged the dominant military-state centric security discourse and demanded that IR scholarship incorporate sectors to be secured other than the state such as the environment, immigration, disease, and development by deepening the referent object being secured from exclusively being the state to the individual (Buzan and Hansen, 2009). At this juncture, in the 1990s, and more so after the Global War on Terror commenced, US foreign policy began discursively speaking of Africa by utilizing a nexus of security-development which allegedly addressed the remedy for African underdevelopment and instability. By the beginning of the millennium, security strategist and military commanders articulated speech acts that spoke of developing a single unified command for Africa (Loveman, 2004). By the year 2006, President George Bush had authorized and approved the Department of Defense’s plan to develop AFRICOM (Schogol, 2006). AFRICOM is the first central command structure to be erected since the end of the Cold War by the United States of America and undoubtedly emphasizes Africa being elevated in significance amongst US international military, political and economic circles.

Prior to AFRICOM, African security issues were discussed and divided amongst three different commands structures: European Command (EUCOM), Central Command (CENTCOM) and Pacific Command (PACOM), this clearly represented Africa lacking strategic importance amongst US foreign policy makers (Mansbach, 2010). The advent of AFRICOM resulted in a single command structure commanding an area spanning 53 African

nations, except Egypt, leading Ryan Henry, the Principal Deputy Secretary Defense for Policy to emphasize “rather than three different commanders who have Africa as third or fourth priority, there will be one commander that has it as a top priority” (Rozoff, 2010). On October 1st 2007, President George Bush established AFRICOM, directly recognizing Africa’s importance as a geostrategic frontier in promoting, according to him, a more secure and stable global environment. President Bush, a security speech act expert, announced and securitized Africa through the establishment of AFRICOM as following.

“Today, I am pleased to announce my decision to create a Department of Defense Unified Combatant Command for Africa. I have directed the Secretary of Defense to stand up US Africa Command by the end of the fiscal year 2008. This new command will strengthen our security cooperation with Africa and create new opportunities to bolster the capabilities of our partners in Africa. Africa Command will enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa. Consultation will be done with African leaders to seek their thoughts on how Africa Command can respond to security challenges and opportunities in Africa. We will also work closely with our African partners to determine an appropriate location for the new command in Africa (Francis, 2010).

With 10 years elapsing since AFRICOM’s inaugural<sup>1</sup>, this manuscript seeks to initiate a scholarly debate that seeks to analyze the consequences of US Grand Strategy fundamentally reorienting its relation with Africa by simply securitizing the continent. The first section of this paper elaborates on the theoretical approach of securitization which informs the conceptual framework of this research. African securitization, as mentioned in the end-note of this manuscript<sup>ii</sup>, is a process that culminated with the initiation of AFRICOM and is noticed with the increased propensity of speech actors speaking of the continent in terms of threatening national security. Furthermore, Africa was further pushed into the realms of “emergency politics” when speech actors socially constructed Africa as posing an existential threat to the identity of US exceptionalism. The second section seeks to locate the historical contours of securitization by revitalizing the works of historian William Appleman Williams. His work highlights that since the founding, the US has applied the process of securitization by articulating exceptional speech acts thereby justifying US foreign expansionism in the name of securing ideas that emanated from the “city on the hill”, and the *belief* that the US has a *mission* to protect these ideas and expand them globally. The third section highlights discursive parallels between early American speech actors and contemporary American speech actors by discussing Africa in a securitization (threatening). This is reflected in US speech actors adopting a language of security-development by socially constructing Africa as

discursively exceptional or a threatening “other”. The fourth section highlights how security experts used oppositional discursive binaries to construct Africa as a threat, thus justifying the inauguration of the center and the expansion of the US economic-frontier in Africa. It is in this section that securitization is highlighted as being composed of an unstable mix of exceptionalism and expansionism by highlighting the difference between two opposing AFRICOM scholarly positions known as Complementary and Apocalyptic. The former believes AFRICOM compliments the AU, while the later perceives AFRICOM being detrimental to African development because of its “Heart of Darkness” discourse. The final considers the detrimental results securitization had on African development by recommending AFRICOM policies that could rectify its poor performance in developing and eliminating human insecurities in Africa. One of the several proposed recommendations is suggesting a (de)securitized approach in addressing African issues of security and development. (De)-securitization moves away from the traditional approach to security performed by AFRICOM which is based on a state referent object that prioritizes (realist) military solutions as the means to attain development and security. To produce a synergistic relationship between the AU and AFRICOM, and for a rapprochement to occur between AFRICOM skeptics and appraisers, a development approach that considers African solutions to African problems is recommended, which prioritizes cooperating and consulting African leaders in developing mutual South-North solutions to eliminate the development of underdevelopment.

## METHODOLOGY

The modality of securitization forms the conceptual framework of this manuscript. Securitization, according to its developers at the Copenhagen School (Peoples and Williams, 2014), is a new framework for analysis that allows us to judge what is and what is not a security issue (Peoples and Williams, 2014). Buzan and Waever (1998) define securitization - since it is fundamentally concerned about survival - as an issue being represented as an existential threat to the survival of a referent object. Peoples and Williams (2014: 93), Buzan and Waever (1998:36) define a referent object as that “to which one can point and say it has to survive, therefore it is necessary to...” The referent object in this manuscript is denoted as the US informal empire. The threat to its continual survival according to US policymakers is Africa being ungovernable, prone to disease, a hub for terrorists, and a failed continent. To further understand how Africa became securitized with the inception of AFRICOM, it is important to first highlight the process in which securitization occurs thus grasping how Africa shifted from being simply a politicized issue to a securitized issue.

Africa became securitized when it was no longer politicized in terms of requiring minor strategic planning, or minor government decision planning and resource allocations. In other words, it became a security issue<sup>iii</sup> that is no longer debated as a political question but is rather a security question that needs to be dealt with in an accelerated pace and in ways that may violate normal legal and social rules (Buzan and Hansen, 2009). Waever argues that speech act is the discursive component which initiates the process of securitization. A speech act is a securitization move articulated by

speech actors when an issue not previously thought of as a security threat (threatening a referent object) begins being spoken of as a security issue by an official with high political capital (Peoples and Williams, 2014). It is important to note that a speech act has the power to construct an issue using the contours of security when in reality the issue does not innately possess any threatening qualities (Waever, 2000). Effective securitization is constituted by an intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient enough to have political repercussions. Securitization requires acceptance between the perpetrator of the speech act and the relevant audience that it is being spoken to. This means that a speech act is not a sufficient component to successfully securitize an issue rather it additionally requires what Waever calls “felicity conditions” (Waever, 2000). These are conditions that increase the likelihood of successful securitization. The first condition as outlined previously is presenting and speaking of an issue in threatening terms which legitimize the use of extraordinary measure. The second condition is the capability of security experts or persons who have political capital and political authority to convince an audience of the existence of an existential threat. The third condition stipulates that an issue has a higher chance of being securitized if it historically connotes threats, danger, harm, and anarchy (Peoples and Williams, 2014).

Adopting the modality of securitization to highlight the performativity of AFRICOM is not suggesting that Africa was an afterthought in American politics until the inception of AFRICOM in 2007. However, this article is highlighting the social-economic ramifications of Africa shifting from being simply a politicized issue to a securitized issue. With AFRICOM activated in 2008, there was an increase in the propensity of security experts, such as the American president, CIA directors, military commanders and think tanks, to characterize Africa as threatening international stability and American national security. Speech acts verbalized Africa as being an existential threat using security-development language. This language compounded with the third felicity condition facilitated African securitization since Africa in American political discourse has historically connoted the “Heart of Darkness” and a continent that is infested with “failed states” because of its ungovernable traditional predispositions. What is noteworthy about the process of African securitization through AFRICOM is that the peoples who proposed to remedy the African “threat” comprised exclusively Global North interlocutors who spoke on behalf of Africa and ignored the African voice.

## THE HISTORY OF US EXPANSIONISM USING EXCEPTIONAL DISCOURSE

With the inception of security studies (Buzan and Hansen, 2009) after WWII, the coordinates of the US informal empire that crystallized had a long history that echoed the exceptionalist character that embodied the United States of America. This is not surprising when it was realized that the originating coordinates of empire were coeval with the nation (Anderson, 2015: 3). Unlike any other nation-state that emerged, the US Republic is a geographic continent defended by two oceans, allowing a settler economy free from any Old World feudal characteristics, to develop the purest form of nascent capitalism. Further to the advantage of the republic, two subjective legacies of culture and politics were added : the idea derived from the initial Puritan settlement in the New World of a nation that enjoys divine favour and a sacred calling in proliferating the natural virtues of man; and the belief derived from the

War of Independence that the US Republic is endowed with a constitution of liberty that stands all trials and is a compelling example to all man (Anderson, 2015:3).

The amalgamation of geography and economy, culture and politics developed early in American historiography the ideological repertoire of an American Nationalism that “afforded seamless passage to an American Imperialism, characterized by a complexio oppositorum of exceptionalism and universalism” (Anderson, 2015:3). Exceptionalism is understood as the US empire perceiving itself as unique amongst all nation states, because of an idea which resulted in the US becoming a special nation that embraces a mission to expand its virtuous qualities to all persons. An exceptionalist line could be traced in America’s cultural DNA from the seventeenth century Puritan social thought, to J. O’Sullivan’s eighteenth century Manifest Destiny Doctrine adopted by Andrew Jackson, to Cold War mutual assured destruction, and finally to George W. Bush establishing AFRICOM and Barrack Obama’s unilateralism in defining the contours of African security by authorizing the bombing of the Libyan Jamahiriya.

During the founding, the radiance of American exceptionalism has been deliberated in a moral form thereby directly justifying territorial or commercial expansionism. The communiqué between Jefferson and Monroe makes the case by stating that “our present interest may restrain us within our limits, it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our multiplication will expand beyond those limits, and cover the whole northern, if not the southern continents, with people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws” (Anderson, 2015: 4). In another instance in 1813, Adam informs Jefferson that “our pure, virtuous, public-spirited, federative republic will last forever, govern the globe and introduce the perfection of man” (Anderson, 2015: 4). Exceptional speech acts correspondences between executive members following Independence resulted in an associate of Andrew Jackson, John O’Sullivan coining the famous slogan of the US having “the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and possess the whole continent that providence has given us for the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government. A land vigorous and fresh from the hand of God who could doubt the far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American Greatness” (Anderson, 2015: 4). The third largest land acquisition in American history soon followed with half the surface of Mexico being annexed in 1845, followed by the Mexican Cession of 1848 in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which extended the American frontier by usurping land from Mexico (Gray, 2016).

Following the Mexican-American war, US security experts also adopted an exceptionalist discourse that addressed the need to expand the economic-frontier of the republic thus justifying commercial rather than territorial expansion. Secretary of State William H. Seward

encouraged Lincoln to notice that “You are already the great continental power of America. But does that content you? I trust it does not. You want the commerce of the world. This must be looked for on the pacific. The nation that draws most from the earth and fabricates most, and sells the most to foreign nations, must be and will be the great power of the earth” (Anderson, 2015: 5). The treaty of Kanagawa soon followed with the United States of America headed by Naval Commodore Matthew Perry threatening to use force if Japan was not to halt its two-century isolationist policies. Similarly, President Theodore Roosevelt<sup>v</sup> believed that Panama needed to be carved out of Colombia because of its commercial prize which linked both seas (Anderson, 2015: 5). China was also dealt with in similar ways following the Opium War with US security experts demanding an Open Door policy<sup>v</sup>. US diplomat John Ward sought to achieve through diplomatic negotiations an exchange of treaty ratifications in 1859. The agreements reached between western powers and China following the Opium Wars came to be known as the “unequal treaties” because in practice they gave the US privileged status and extracted concessions from the Chinese<sup>vi</sup>.

It should be noted that some opponents of American expansionism were cognizant of the megalomania of Manifest Destiny, the plunder of Mexico, the seizure of Hawaii, and the slaughter in the Philippines, by attacking racism and imperialism as a betrayal of the anti-colonial birthright of the Republic (Anderson, 2015: 5). Foreign adventures, whether annexations or interventions, were not a break with national values, but always a possible version of them for the reason that from the beginning of the founding, exceptionalism and expansionism formed a potentially unstable compound. The conviction of the former developed the belief that the US could preserve its unique virtues only by remaining a society apart from a fallen world, and commitment to the later authorized its uniqueness as possessing a messianic mission and activism to redeem “that” world (Anderson, 2015: 6).

The nineteenth century was a critical moment for US expansionism using exceptional discourses because it is at that juncture where the idea of a mission began influencing American foreign policy. The mission was summarized in the 19th century in the Manifest Destiny political program, declaring that US growth and prosperity is dependent on foreign market opportunities and the acquisition of foreign territory. Walt Whitman, a participant in the Young Americans Movement along John O’Sullivan, invoked in the 19th century the idea of an American mission being linked to expansionism by affirming American racial superiority in addressing the Mexican War. He says “what has miserable, inefficient Mexico, with her superstition, her burlesque upon freedom, her actual tyranny by the few over the many, what has she to do with the great mission of peopling the world with a noble race? be it ours, to achieve that mission” (Howe, 2009: 769). From the 19th century onwards, America’s mission began

evoking social Darwinism logic, thereby admitting cultural relativism along with cultural Imperialism (Said, 1994)<sup>vii</sup> in the American discourse of exceptionalism. This racialized logic legitimized expansionism in a period that was dubbed by President Polk as the “Era of the American Empire”.

Josiah Strong, a leading clergyman of the 1880's comprehended American uniqueness by defining its special mission as “God, with infinite wisdom and skill, is training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world's future. The time is coming when the world will enter upon a new stage of history, the final competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled. And can any one doubt that the results of this competition of races will be the survival of the fittest?” (Ceaser, 2012: 17). A major theme that justified American expansionism was American exceptionalism applying biology to politics, thereby producing “civilizing missions”. Charles Robert Darwin was the prophet who sanctified the American mission. His “natural selection” and “categorization” of races developed an anthropology which rationalized exploitation and imperialism because non-Anglo-Saxon peoples were studied as if they lived in a primitive past or were denied coevalness<sup>viii</sup> by anthropological western scholars (Helliwell and Hindess, 2013) who were on a mission “improving lower races” (Ceaser, 2012). The prevalence of socio-political figures akin to Darwin, Strong, and Fiske points to anthropological racism that some schools of American political thought adopted in justifying their expansionism.

Another foreign venture that reveals racial superiority as pointed by Madsen (1998) is the concept of Manifest Destiny being utilized to justify the United States annexing Mexican territory because “the acquisition of more land, then, was necessary to keep the American experiment in democracy going, this was the visible manifest destiny of the United States” (Madsen, 1998: 89). The unstable compound of exceptionalism and expansionism which upheld a racist logic of expansion had devastating consequences on native Americans, however, it was justified as alluded by Senator John Dix of New York, because “The aboriginal races which occupy a portion of California and New Mexico, must there, as everywhere else, give way before the advancing wave of civilization, either to be overwhelmed by it, or to be driven upon perpetually contracting areas, where, from a diminution of their accustomed source of subsistence, they must ultimately become extinct by force of an invincible law, it is the behest of providence that idleness, and ignorance and barbarism, shall give way to industry, and knowledge and civilization” (Madsen, 1998: 105).

American “New Left” historian, William Appleman Williams, elaborated extensively throughout his career on the historical relationship between US expansionism and exceptionalism (William, 1959, 1961, 1969). He attacked the United States as an imperialist power, deplored the inequalities and alienation bred from corporate capitalism, and advocated socialism. William amongst other American

scholars deprecate US exceptionalism because it not only leads to the performance of imperial politics of cultural and social subjugation but taints the legacy of noble patriots who did not believe that acquisition of more external economic-frontiers was necessary to keep the American mission of democracy alive.

Before we delve into the reservations William Appleman Williams possessed concerning the US considering expansionism necessary for prosperity, it is vital to briefly recall Frederick Jackson Turner's essay entitled, *The Significance of the Frontier In American History*, presented at the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1893. Turner's thesis held that throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries an ever-extending frontier across the North American continent distinguished the United States from its European counterparts. The American frontier nurtured America's unique traditions and institutions whereby the East Coast cities harbored the aristocrats and conservatives reminiscent of the Old World. The frontier settlement advanced and carried with it individualism, democracy, and nationalism<sup>ix</sup>. The process of self-transformation from corrupted European to perfected American has been central to the New World mythology since the seventeenth century (Madsen, 1998). In this manner, Turner's thesis “offers historical justification for a concept of the west that is informed by the imperialist assumptions of the ideology of Manifest Destiny (Madsen, 1998: 123). Madsen (1998: 124) espouses Turner's view in insisting that US academia and media speak today to the continuing powerful imagery of the “civilization of the frontier and the creation of new shining cities upon hills”, while bearing in mind that “the values celebrated in the western include: territorial expansion, liberty, democratic levelling, national identity, racial white superiority, and violence” (Stephanson, 1996). The hero, in this case, the US empire, is often admired and respected by westerners who espouse frontier ideals to celebrate the triumph of civilization over savagery and primitiveness.

William Appleman Williams discerned the vitality of Turner's frontier thesis in explaining the routine of American foreign policy but also the ambiguity of the term “frontier”. When one ponders the concept of frontier they imagine a limit, however, William rightfully points that the term is misleading because it obscures the “expansionist thrust that acquired the sequence of frontiers throughout American history” (William, 1969: xiii). Thus, the frontier was an ontological double requirement because it espoused that only continued expansionism justified through exceptionalism could “sustain the dynamic relationship between, prosperity, democracy, and domestic well-being and order” (William, 1969: xiv). William also conveys in *Roots of the Modern American Empire*, that from the late 19th century the American executive elite “applied the frontier-expansionist thesis to the problems of the late nineteenth and twentieth century” thereby extending the “open-door” policy in an attempt to perpetuate American expansion beyond the North

American continent (William, 1969). He argues that since the mid-19th century there has been a perpetuated American ethos that considers national economic well-being directly reliant on the perpetual expansion of international markets. This developed Williams notion of the United States of America being an “informal empire” (William, 1959). US financial and political domination of Cuba and Philippines, China and Central America by the end of World War II, and of the world during the cold war is case in point.

The issue with “informal empire” according to William (1959) is that it assumes an ethos of self-righteousness that perceives economic expansionism of the US as directly producing an atmosphere of freedom, democracy, and self-determination throughout the world. The historical unequal engagement of the US with countries labeled as Third World dictates otherwise. William (1959) elucidates that the tragedy of American diplomacy is that it benefited the developed world at the expense of the exploited majority, resulting in the deterrence of freedom and democracy while fueling internal violence and war in the receiving country. In *Contours of American History*, William categorized the history of the US in three periods, however, the period pertinent to this manuscript is the period of 1882-1960's entitled, the age of corporate capitalism, because it is germane to the US securitizing Africa by establishing AFRICOM (more on this below). The connection between all three periods according to William is economic-expansionism; first across the North American continent, then through an ever-extending western frontier, and then throughout the world. The age of corporate capitalism according to Williams developed the American economy at the expense of the suffering of indigenous peoples throughout the world and national communities in the Third World. The domestic ramifications according to William undermine the development of a “true American community” that was once upon a time voiced by the founding fathers<sup>x</sup>. America's informal empire has decimated the true ideals of exceptionalism and was displaced by an American capitalism based upon private property, excessive individualism, and corporate profits (Fogo, 1996: 4). Woodrow Wilson personified the contours of American corporate capitalism when he informed Congress in 1916 to “lift your eyes to the horizons of business, and with the inspiration of the thought that you are Americans and are meant to carry liberty and justice and the principles of humanity wherever you go, go out and sell goods that will make the world more comfortable and more happy and convert them to the principles of America” (Anderson, 2015:8). In another address, Wilson states that the American people are “prominently chosen to show the way to the nations of the world and how they shall walk in the paths of liberty”; in 1917, Wilson plunged the US into WWI, a conflict which “America had the infinite privilege of fulfilling her destiny and saving the world” (Anderson, 2015:9). Thus, while Tragedy revealed the most important

question facing the US in the past and present which is “how to sustain democracy and prosperity without imperial expansion?” (William,1959: 9). In *Contours* Williams (1969: 488) asserted that the primary objective of the US should be to develop a true American community based on mutual cooperation and coexistence because the United States always had the potential to create the “first truly democratic socialism in the world” (Fogo, 1996: 6).

It is important to note that American entry into WWI highlights the expansion of the US economic/corporate-frontier because the claim was that American goods now required outlets abroad that only Open Door could assure (Anderson, 2015). The rhetoric of exceptionalism naturally accompanied and justified American expansionism which had typically projected markets overseas as if they were essentially an “external frontier” (Anderson, 2015: 10). Similarly, Roosevelt's New Dealism according to Schurmann's *Logic of World Power* was an imperial quest that located fertile ground after WWI to reorganize the world along US lines and to the advantage of the informal empire. Schurmann states that what “Roosevelt sensed and gave visionary expression to was that the world was ripe for one of the most radical experiments in history: the unification of the entire world under a domination centered in America” (Schurmann,1974: 64).

In sum, this section was interested in revealing that what characterizes and justifies US expansionism is the belief that the world should be engineered in its image and that the destiny of the US is to civilize and democratize the world over. Most importantly, this section located the contours of the US informal empire by highlighting historical junctures that accentuate the belief that US exceptional identity can only survive and rejuvenate itself through economic-expansionism. The following section will highlight the securitization of Africa using speech acts, and examine how AFRICOM facilitated the expansion of the US economic-frontier.

## THE SECURITIZATION OF AFRICA BY AFRICOM

### **Speech actors discursively shifting Africa from being a politicized issue to a (securitized) threatening issue**

When Africa was discursively a politicized issue, US foreign relations and military engagements with Africa had been characterized through joint military exercises; training programs with African militaries; covert military operations, counter-terrorism operations; peacekeeping; and peace support operation deployments (Francis, 2010: 10). The Department of Defense (DoD), according to Theresa Whelan a former US national intelligence director of Africa between the years 2003 to 2011, has never focussed on Africa in the same level of consistency it has on other regions of the world (Francis, 2010). This is reaffirmed by Robert Putman explicitly stating that

“Despite historic ties with the continent, US policy towards Africa has generally been marked by indifference and neglect” (Francis, 2010: 11) because the dominant theme which characterized “US foreign relations in Africa was driven by US exceptionalism (Francis, 2010: 11). Post-9/11 we begin noticing the repositioning of Africa into the discourse of US strategic national interest. African securitization was acknowledged by explicating to the international community that Africa poses an international security threat to the US in terms of violent wars, armed conflicts, the proliferation of underdevelopment and HIV/AIDS, and finally failed states serving as terrorist havens (Francis, 2010: 12). Thus, in the last six decades, US-African relations have never been dominated by one single security sector. Rather the complexity of the relationship more so after the Cold War and further since the GWOT was marked by “selective engagement, neglect, contradictions and retreat” (Francis, 2010: 12). This labyrinth of complexities was captured in a report released in 2005 by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

“The region [Africa] starkly illustrates both the challenges and the promise of efforts to foster democracy, respect for human rights, poverty alleviation, counterterrorism, regional conflict prevention and peacekeeping, and to curb HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, organized crime, corruption, and instability. Also at stake are rising US interests in the region’s energy sector, already prominent and set to expand even further in the coming decade. At the same time, many countries in the region are vulnerable to instability and violence, stemming from vast internal disparities in wealth, poor governance, a lack of state capacity, and rising criminality” (Morrison and Goldwyn, 2005).

In the year 2000 President Bush stated that “while Africa may be important, it does not fit into the national strategic interest as far as I can see them” (Francis, 2010: 10). After 9/11, the threat to US energy security and the new scramble for Africa pressed the Bush administration in 2007 to regard African oil resources as a “strategic national interest” (Francis, 2010: 10). It should be noted that the perception of Africa being perceived as a strategic hub for American resources was a “politicized thought process” published in 1997 by AFRICOM which states that the alteration in US interest towards Africa was “the culmination of a ten-year thought process within the Department of Defense” (Keenan, 2010: 113). The year 1997 was a critical year for the US informal empire because it reached the psychological critical 50% resulting in President George Bush uttering a speech act, in the year 2000 during his election campaign making energy security a top priority (Keenan, 2010). This securitization led to the publication of the Cheney Report in 2001 by the National Energy Policy Development Group (Cheney and Powell, 2001).. The report forecasted that by 2020 US oil consumption would increase by 32% and that sub-Saharan Africa was the future source of US oil

supplies (Cheney and Powell, 2001). The Cheney report (Keenan, 2010: 113) highlighted African oil as a “strategic national interest” thus an “economic-frontier” that the United States might choose military force to control (Volman, 2003). The continuation of AFRICOM’s thought process produced the African Oil Policy Initiative Group (AOPIG, 2002) which included members such as Don Norland, former US ambassador to Chad, and Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski of the US Air Force who is tied to the DoD African policy unit (all security experts who possess political capital). They published another geostrategic study highlighting Africa’s increased importance entitled “African Oil: A Priority for US National Security and African Development” (Forte, 2012). In 2002, AOPIG weaved military and economic goals by stating that the US required a command structure that is strictly dedicated to the African continent to protect US investments and interests because by 2015 the study postulated, Africa would be the main supplier of US oil imports instead of the Persian Gulf (Forte, 2012). AOPIG not only alluded to the importance of fossil fuels but also the deposits of critically important strategic minerals such as “chromium, uranium, cobalt, titanium, diamonds, gold, bauxite, phosphate, and copper” (African Oil Policy Initiative, 2002: 12; Cope, 2016: 256). The US is imperative in securing strategic minerals in Africa as mentioned by Harry Magdoff (2003: 55) because “the Defense Department operates with a list of strategic and critical minerals as a guide to the stockpiling program. These are the materials which are assumed to be critical to the war potential of the US. We must note that the US depends on 80 to 100% on importing strategic minerals”. Mozambique produces 18% of the supply of columbium; South Africa produces 31% of the supply of chromium, and the Congo produces 60% of the supply of Cobalt (Magdoff, 2003).

Unified protest across Africa took place when President Bush announced in October 2008 the activation of the United States African Command (AFRICOM). Firstly, the establishment is a fundamental shift in the way the US engages with Africa on foreign policy terms because for more than four decades the responsibility of the continent was divided amongst two departments: The Department of Defense (DoD) and the US international agency for development (USAID), as well as three separate military commands EUCOM, CENTCOM and PACOM (Francis, 2010). Thus, the establishment of a command center that is specific to the African continent would naturally instigate debates about the motivations and intentions of such structure. Disapproval has been expressed by the African Union (AU) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) by refusing to host the location of AFRICOM on African territory; Liberia was the sole country that expressed interest in hosting AFRICOM (Francis, 2010). This refusal is fueled by the belief that AFRICOM is an extension of the US informal empire which amounts to the militarisation of US foreign policy towards Africa to achieve US strategic economic interest on the continent.

This belief holds veritas when we remember that President Obama stated that US strategy in Africa is linked to benefit and promotion of corporate interests. Forte (2012: 196) reminds us of Obama's corporate capitalist character when he stated that by expanding "Africa's capacity to access and benefit from the global markets, promote regional integration, and strengthen economic governance" US corporations, "can and should play a role in this process". This corporate-expansionist mindset is facilitated through the Young African Leaders Initiative program launched in 2012. The program is dedicated to raising African technocrats and politicians that are more prone in dealing comfortably with US thereby advancing their corporate ventures (Forte, 2012).

AFRICOM, being perceived as a military command structure of the US informal empire which seeks to expand its economic-frontier, possesses currency amongst scholars of security studies. Academics argue that AFRICOM is an attempt to counter-balance China's relation with the continent which by 2009 had invested over US\$100 billion and possessed more than 2000 companies working across the continent (Forte, 2012). Not only that, Africa provides one-third of Chinese crude oil imports, and la pièce de résistance is China providing an alternative bilateral monetary mechanism that provides loans to weak African economies rather than requesting loans from the IMF and the World Bank (Francis, 2010). Furthermore, critical voices characterize AFRICOM as a strategic attempt to protect the oil and energy security of the United States which according to Swart "is increasingly becoming important to the world energy supplies even as the region remains under threat from lawlessness and piracy" (Francis, 2010: 6). Military command structures have historically been established to intimidate or coerce rival powers and there is not a reason to believe that AFRICOM will alter such perception. Editors (2002) of the Monthly Review stated that US global reach through the projection of foreign bases and command structures are but a means to access, protect, and control US strategic national interests in the world. The quote is a reminder that Williams "age of corporate capitalism" still characterizes American US foreign policy and that military command structures persist in expanding the economic-frontier of the informal empire. The Editor's note that:

"The projection of US military power into new regions through the establishment of US military bases should not, of course, be seen simply in terms of direct military ends. They are always used to promote the economic and political objectives of US capitalism. For example, US corporations and the US government have been eager for some time to build a secure corridor for US-controlled oil and natural gas pipelines from the Caspian Sea in Central Asia through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Arabian Sea. What is clear at present and bears repeating is that such bases are now being acquired in areas where the United States had previously lost much of its "forward

presence" such as in the Middle East and Africa. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the last remaining superpower is presently on a course of imperial expansion, as a means of promoting its political and economic interests, and that the present war on terrorism, which is in many ways an indirect product of the projection of US power, is now being used to justify the further projection of that power."

The securitization of Africa during President Bush and Obama was successful since Africa has historically been associated with all three felicity conditions mentioned earlier. Africa was "othered" in political discourse thereby justifying the establishment of AFRICOM and its mission. The following section will highlight how Africa became fully securitized using exceptional speech acts.

### **Realizing US strategic interest in Africa by means of exceptional speech acts**

The aforementioned analysis discussed why the US established a command center strictly dedicated to the African continent. However, to further understand the significance of intersubjectivity in the process of securitization, it is vital to analyze how security experts used oppositional discursive binaries to construct Africa as a threat thus justifying the inauguration of the center and the expansion of the US economic-frontier. According to Doty (1993), if we simply ask *why* questions to analyze foreign policies, we presuppose a particular subjectivity, in this case, the anarchic African continent which produces a political environment that welcomes AFRICOM indisputably<sup>x</sup>. By asking *how* AFRICOM was established and how was it capable of securing the interest of the informal empire, we problematize the simple "why" questions and the "taken for granted discourse" of US security actors. This section is concerned in revealing *how* the discourse of US exceptionalism "othered" Africa, thereby facilitating the success of the securitization process and US economic expansion.

Richard Gott wrote in January of 2001 that there is a growing belief within the ranks of liberal missionaries in the West that appears to favor the reconquest of Africa even though "no one really suggests how this would come about, nor is there a "plan" available for discussion" (Gott, 2001). He further explicates that "imperial intervention might indeed be welcomed by peoples threatened with mayhem, anarchy, and civil war" (Gott, 2001). This quote is pertinent for several reasons. First, it reveals that intervention in Africa is justified using a speech act entailing humanitarian protection to restore order to a helpless nation. It further expands a discourse of exceptionalism for it retains a suggestion that "intervention may occur simply and only because *we* believe that *our* actions are conducted in order to benefit *them*" (Forte, 2012: 17). The result is a highly Eurocentric foreign policy

for it renews ethnocentric discourses of cultural imperialism (Forte, 2012). It suggests that the developed superior West has the right to intervene in Africa, and Africans should be barred from even intervening in their own affairs (Forte, 2012). Humanitarianism is but another US exceptional myth which is great at producing symbols and ideals of Freedom, Liberty, and Democracy; however, is almost never realized as actual facts on the ground (Forte, 2012). In other words, humanitarianism is always brought about by the West, the “self-appointed messiah that has the right to determine which is the right side of history [using] the American military as savior” (Forte, 2012:237). These myths create further opposing binaries such as the US being the helper because it is independent while Africans are helpless because they are dependent. According to AFRICOM security experts, the organization promises to fulfill the exceptional role of a rite of passage “carrying a society from crisis, through war, and then reintegration into the world system as a newly fashioned object, something that is reborn” (Forte, 2012: 238).

The security of Africa being in the hands of the West is a relationship that has characterized both interlocutors for centuries. The perception of African security issues being dealt with using Western remedies has been prevalent for so long that it is legitimate to describe the situation as one of intellectual hegemony (Chuter, 2010). For instance, Western intellectual hegemony has prescribed Africa as a “continent without history, thus nothing useful could develop without denying Africa’s past” (Chuter, 2010: 146). The belief that Africans can only develop by shedding away their identity is not simply the fault of the west. African intellectuals and nationalist leaders have unfortunately internalized the scientific relativist discourse which demands from Africans the rejection of their past and the adoption of European models of development and governance (that are incompatible with African based political conditions) merely to become labeled as “truly” modern and part of the “democratic international community” (Chuter, 2010). It is for this reason that academics cast the creation of AFRICOM as the imposition of Western discernments always knowing what is best for the African continent. They believe that AFRICOM represents the construction and homogenisation of a particular version of a Liberal security project “whereby African security is now defined and constructed according to Western values, norms, expectations and policy preferences which are embedded in the dominant economic, political, cultural and intellectual preferences and interests” (Francis, 2010; Forte, 2012).

As a result, what we notice, as mentioned in earlier sections, is that there is not one dominant discourse that characterizes the securitization of Africa in US foreign policy but rather a myriad of different discourses.

However, as David Chutter declares, these different discourses reveal that it is “arguments among westerners, rather than debates among Africans which determine what

Africa’s security priorities are seen to be” (Chuter, 2010: 149). Ironically, the answer to these arguments is provided by Western NGO’s who are on a mission to market their exceptional ideas which are usually resented by locals as mechanisms for indirect US and European influence. NGO’s reinforce “othering” binaries that perceive Africans as waiting for foreigners to identify and solve their problems (Chuter, 2010). Presently, the work of NGO’s in Africa is reminiscent of the discourse of the “white man’s burden” which was taken up by missionary organizations in earlier centuries such as the London Missionary Society of 1795. Similarly, to the Puritan missionaries that proliferated the Manifest Destiny, these organizations embark on a mission to save souls and reform morals situated in African regions. AFRICOM’s organizational paradigm rejuvenates ethnocentric hierarchical discourses which construct Africa as requiring foreign intervention because it is an irrational space. AFRICOM’s mission statement implicitly casts Africans as incompetent in defining their problems, and inept at finding solutions by adopting a discourse that constructs Africa as posing an existential threat to international stability.

It is true that US policy towards Africa has generally been marked by indifference and neglect; however after the events of 9/11, a discourse of security-development emerged from Downing Street in March of 2005 and made its way to Washington following a publication by Prime Minister Blair entitled the Commission for Africa (Keenan, 2010). This commission revives the notion of intellectual hegemony by embracing the ontology of African security being in the hands of the West. The discourse utilized in the commission shifts the discourse from development/humanitarianism to risk and fear, thus casting Africa as an “outside” continent that expands risk and fear to the rest of the international community. The commission securitized Africa by merging development and security agendas into one nexus thereby identifying poverty and underdevelopment as national security threats thus blurring the line between both agendas (Keenan, 2010). This nexus is dangerous because it associates underdevelopment and insecurity as an intrinsic element of African society by using the “failed states” hypothesis to recast Africa as the “Heart of Darkness”. While dangerous, the nexus enables securitization because it stimulates the third felicity condition. Tiekou (2010) makes the point clear when he states that AFRICOM’s thinking is driven widely by the “so-called failed state hypothesis” which assumes that Africa is an ungovernable space with disorder everywhere. Tiekou (2010) further highlights that over 60 percent of African territories are governed by non-centralized government actors such as chiefs which are less coercive and more peaceful. This fact falsifies the speech act which claims Africa as a threat because it possesses failed states that are a hub for terrorists (Tiekou, 2010).

Descriptive statistical work revealed by Tiekou (2010) illustrates that terrorist groups do not find territories of

so-called failed states to be safe havens or conducive to their work; however, African states are vulnerable because external powers in the international community “find it easy to set aside the international norm of the territorial integrity of states when it comes to weak states” (Tieku, 2010:136). Ironically, according to Keenan (2010), security experts chose to adopt a security-development discourse instead of terrorism because Africa was not a hub for terrorists. This was a calculated securitization shift in the language since the success of securitization depends on the audience accepting that the threat is real. Unfortunately, prior to the shift in discourse, the US reverted to fabricated terrorist stories<sup>xii</sup> with the help of the Algerian secret service (DRS) to justify AFRICOM'S military presence across the region (Keenan, 2010).

The security-development discourse adopted by AFRICOM merged traditional US military thinking with humanitarianism and development activities thereby successfully securitizing Africa as a global threat to security and US national interest. The shift in discourse enabled the US military to substitute the aggressive and militaristic image EUCOM displayed towards Africa post/9-11 with a discourse that was more development and humanitarian based (Keenan, 2010). The discourse is exceptional since the US has taken it upon itself to remedy the insecurity and underdevelopment of Africa because disorder and anarchy are assumed to characterize the continent. Also, Africa needing exceptional saving is deliberated in the Economist Magazine in the year 2000 which described it as a “Hopeless Continent” (Francis, 2010). This was also reinforced by PM Blair when he said that Africa is a “scar on the conscience of the world” (Francis, 2010: 16) that needs saving.

The last issue that will be uncovered in this section is US security experts not finding it necessary to engage with the African Union in establishing AFRICOM. This reality is understandable when we remember that the US is exceptional, self-righteous and the only nation that has a God given duty to expand its manifest destiny to the world. An exceptional nation does not take advice or suggestions from other nations. The US *gives* while the rest of the world is expected to *take*.

### **AFRICOM not consulting or cooperating with the AU**

AFRICOM's ethnocentricity becomes more conceivable as an embedded organizational structural component when we realize that Africa already possessed a command structure that was dedicated to the security and development of its nations. However in the eyes of US security experts and AFRICOM “how can a hopeless continent, that is destined to failure, succeed without the help of the West?”

Academics and scholars who loathe AFRICOM and perceive it as an instrument that is designed to help expand the US liberal project and economic-frontier by

exploiting Africa's resources have posed the most important question to legitimize their reservations. That question is “what relationships exist between AFRICOM and the African Union (AU) security institutions?” (Tieku, 2010). The protest in Africa towards President Bush announcing the establishment of AFRICOM in 2007 is intrinsically linked to the fact that the US established and designed AFRICOM without the consultation of the AU which already possessed existing proposals<sup>xiii</sup> and developed a continental peace and security paradigm (Francis, 2010). The AU had already established the African Standby Force (ASF) for peacekeeping and conflict management by dividing Africa into five combat-ready deployment sections: NASBRIG for North Africa, EASBRIG for East Africa, ECOBRIG for West Africa, FOMAC for Central Africa, and SADCBRIG for Southern Africa (Francis, 2010). Even though Theresa Whelan stated that AFRICOM would “work in partnership with regional actors” it seems according to Francis that “the development and operations of AFRICOM will not only potentially conflict with the mandate of the ASF but also duplicate their operational activities” (Francis, 2010).

The AU security architecture was established in May of 2001 in order to reflect a shift in the focus of the pan-African project which focused on legitimizing and institutionalizing statehood in Africa. More importantly, the new Pan-African AU ideals sought to deploy indigenous African solutions to challenges facing ordinary Africans and not import remedies or paradigms that are not based on the conditions of African (Tieku, 2010). One of the most important aspects of the AU was Article 4(h) which permitted the continental organization to intervene in member states in order to “prevent war crimes, genocides, and crimes against humanity” (Tieku, 2010: 131). AFRICOM has considered the same mantra by stating that its mission is to “prevent problems from becoming crisis, and crisis from becoming catastrophes” (Francis, 2010: 4). Furthermore, Article 4(h) created space for the establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) organ in July 2003 at an assembly meeting in Maputo. The PSC was a major accomplishment in the development of an African based security paradigm because it absorbed the work and structures of the AU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention and Management Resolutions, providing collective security and early-warning arrangement for AU members (Tieku, 2010). The mission statement of PSC, similar to AFRICOM, is concerned with the “promotion of peace, security, and stability in Africa, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, the development of a common defense policy, prevention and combating of international terrorism, and promotion of respect for the sanctity of human life and protection of human rights” (Tieku, 2010: 132). When AU policymakers deliberated their security paradigm, they were explicit in stating that they are counting on the support of advanced industrial societies to help them develop various elements located in the security regime of the AU (Tieku, 2010: 132).

Tieku (2010) states that scholars and NGO's who adopt an "apocalyptic position" oppose the position stating that AFRICOM and the AU are "complementary" organizations. The former position believes that there is no synergy between the AU and AFRICOM because US policymakers have failed to outline how AFRICOM will enhance already-established AU security institutions, in particular, PSC objectives (Tieku, 2010). This belief has led scholars to classify AFRICOM as a continuation of a broader US strategy to militarize its foreign policy in Africa which will directly hinder efforts by AU security institutions to foster defense cooperation among African states. The claim is that if AFRICOM is not about the militarization of the continent then why did the US not reform its development agencies in Africa? Dr. Wafula Okumu from South Africa's Institute for Strategic Studies rightfully declares "why use the military? why not use other effective methods, like USAID or even the Peace Corps who used to be very effective in winning the heart and minds of the African people" (Tieku, 2010: 135)? The South African Development Community (SADC), according to Tieku (2010: 135), was explicit in aligning itself with the "apocalyptic position" by stating that AFRICOM is an intelligence-gathering facility. In addition, non-complementary scholars argue that the command center will undermine the ability of the AU to engage in a proactive intervention using its own stand-by force. This is a legitimate argument because historically the US including the United Nations in areas like Rwanda not only did not act but evicted their troops from the theater of genocide (Francis, 2010; Forte, 2012)

Three activity areas: counter-terrorism, narcotic trade, and AFRICOM outsourcing its missions to Private Military Contractors (PMCs), will further demonstrate the lack of synergy between both security institutions. Firstly, while the AU defines terrorism similarly to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as an act of violence designed to create fear, intimidation, and coerce governments and society in pursuit of political social and ideological goals, the AU explicitly characterizes terrorist groups as sub-national groups rather than global networks (Tieku, 2010). For the AU it is nation-states who fund these "global networks". This difference might seem meager at first, however, the AU has made it a point to highlight how the lack of synchronization between both institutions in relation to conceptual definitions has complicated security affairs in the region. According to the Council on Foreign Relations (Kaplan and Bloom, 2007), the AU gave support to the Ethiopian government to pursue members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) who have links with Al-Qaeda and were accused of killing 77 civilian Chinese and Ethiopian oil workers. Members of Congress in the US threatened to impose sanctions on Ethiopia because the administration classified the pursuit as a violation of human rights (Gaerba, 2008). Here, we notice the rhetoric of US exceptionalism which seeks to define how Africa should perceive its security issues in relation to terrorism.

The AU has criticized the bilateral link between AFRICOM and the DoD which left African organizations in the dark when AFRICOM adopted key counter-terrorism programs such as Operation Enduring Freedom-TransSahara (OEF-TS) (Tieku, 2010). The US unwillingness to work with African organizations further strengthen negative attitudes towards AFRICOM from AU members (Tieku, 2010). AFRICOM replicating work conducted by the AU, and refusing to cooperate and consult African leaders regarding issues of development and security, legitimize the "apocalyptic" position adopted by scholars who believe that AFRICOM was brought into Africa to undermine previously established African security solutions and expand US interests (Tieku, 2010).

Narcotics trade is another activity area where both security institutions should have been synchronized. Africa represents a narcotic corridor that ships over one-quarter of Europe's cocaine. The UN estimates that at least 50 tons of cocaine are shipped through the West African region every year (Tieku, 2010). The AU has been capable of keeping a consistent number of seizures from 1998 to 2003 at around 600 kg each year; however, by 2006, this number has increased to 30000 kg in West Africa (Tieku, 2010). AU leaders have pursued the AU to use its Pan-African security paradigm to deal with this narcotic corridor; however, AFRICOM is only willing to comply with the Counter Narcotics and Terrorism (CNT) programs which have shown little interest in dealing with African security institutions. The CNT has not been willing to engage with the AU on narcotic issues because the AU counter-narcotic program aims at providing funds to African domestic police to fight drug smugglers rather than incorporating the African narcotic program into a more elaborative bilateral AFRICOM-DoD led program (Tieku, 2010).

The exceptional character of the third activity renders the success of the first two activities bleak. With AFRICOM pledging to implement security and development, cease narcotic trafficking, and eliminating terrorist threats on the African continent, the logical question that follows is to ask how will these operations be conducted? Or more specifically, what type of individuals will engage in rectifying these issues? In 2008, the US House of Representative Subcommittee on Natural Security and Foreign Affairs said that AFRICOM does not have the means to accomplish its mandate and lacks the "appropriate policy framework, the depth, and balance of professional expertise, and the required funding mechanisms to deliver on active security" (Keenan, 2010: 126). The "exceptional" solution provided by the administration to implement security-development programs since 2004 is to outsource EUCOM and AFRICOM's missions to Private Military Contractors which are known to have a propensity towards corruption and violation of human rights (Keenan, 2010). McFate has rightly argued that the privatization of AFRICOM's missions is keeping with the US commitment to

neoliberalism and opens Africa to mercenary forces who then turn Africa into a plundered economy (Keenan, 2010). These three activities have all revealed the lack of synergy between the AU and AFRICOM. However, the last activity<sup>xiv</sup> seems to remind us of colonial subjectivity binaries of (in)capabilities. AFRICOM regards Africans as incapable of safeguarding their nations, therefore, hires mercenaries to do the job.

This section was interested in validating scholarly apocalyptic criticism geared towards AFRICOM. The process of securitization deceptively constructed Africa as a threatening continent that is incapable of governance and development thereby justifying the expansion of the US economic-frontier. It also alluded to the consequences incurred by AFRICOM continuously ignoring African suggestions and solutions to security and development. The final section is interested in providing policy recommendations to AFRICOM.

### **CONCLUDING RESULTS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO AFRICOM**

At this point, it should be clear that US foreign ventures have in most cases always been approached using primarily a process of securitization; although it includes an unstable mix of exceptionalism and expansionism that has detrimental results in eliminating underdevelopment and human security issues. The securitization of Africa through AFRICOM is a case where speech actors constructed (African) subjects in threatening terms followed by the US informal empire expanding its economic-frontier or in the words of William the “age corporate capitalism”. This final section is interested in recommending US security experts, who speak on behalf Africa, policies that seek to produce a rapprochement between both prominent scholarly positions assessing AFRICOM (complementary and apocalyptic), thereby creating synergy between the AU and AFRICOM.

The House of Representatives’ Appropriation Committee (HRAC) stated that AFRICOM’s “traditional US military operations are not an appropriate response to most or many of the challenges facing Africa” (Keenan, 2010: 126) which begs the question, how can AFRICOM win the hearts and minds of Africans thereby becoming a command structure that reflects African conditions of insecurity and underdevelopment? One attempt at this answer would entail the US renouncing its informal empire which at its core retains a belief that it has a mission to proliferate its exceptional character globally. Another answer would entail US security experts speaking of Africa as an equal partner in the international community and seek to cooperate with African organizations on issues of security and development and not perceive African solutions irrelevant *a priori*. However, the most important realization required to create a harmonious relationship between AFRICOM and Africa is for security experts in

Washington to remember that security as an ontology should not exclusively be theorized using a traditional-realist approach to security. African perception of security has historically been flexible in co-opting a “widening and deepening” approach to security depending on the security sector<sup>xv</sup> of the issue (Buzan and Waever, 1998).

For instance, traditional security studies scholars reify the military as the means to survive a security threat and deem the state as the main referent object to be secured. African organizations have no trouble broadening or expanding the analytical horizon of the study of security beyond the military sector to encompass all other sectors. They are also reflexive in deepening the referent object of security beyond simply the state to incorporate other actors such as institutions and individuals (Peoples and Williams, 2014). Put simply, US security experts need to (de)securitize the African continent. Buzan and Waever (1998) argue that most issues that are securitized should in most cases be (de)securitized issues. In other words, African security and development should not be placed in the realm of emergency politics but should be dealt with using the normal bargaining process of the political sphere (Peoples and Williams, 2014). (De)securitization according to Buzan and Waever (1998) reminds us that it is not intellectually competent to append the term security to a variety of issues, such as development in the case of Africa, without altering the traditional ontology of security which is traditionally linked to the military.

Africa's perspective on dealing with (in)security has been historically less militarized than the United States of America because the continent still struggles to manage mere survival as noted in the Millennium Development Goals Report. The report reveals Africa's real problems are hunger and malnutrition, poverty and infant mortality, and avoidable deaths from remediable diseases (UN Report, 2008). The African perspective of security has had success stories which highlight that Africans have been capable of working out solutions and identifying their “own” human security issues. For instance, the New Partnership In African Development (NEPAD) is an African home-grown initiative that perceives peace and security as part of a “new development conception concerned with human development-cum-human security issues” (Salih, 2010: 85) that seeks to address the issues revealed in the MDG report. Salih (2010) further highlights how the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980 adopted a project-based approach which extended the responsibility of specific sectors to each member of the AU (that is, Angola for energy; Mozambique for transport), with the objective of alleviating poverty, enhancing the standard and quality of life, and supporting the socially disadvantaged through regional integration. Also, the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) was founded in 1996 and set itself as the primary regional organization to achieve “food security and environmental protection,

promotion and maintenance of peace and security and humanitarian affairs” (Keenan, 2010: 127).

All regional African organization success stories were made possible because Africa developed its own approach to security in cooperation and coordination with other AU actors which harnessed the promotion of joint development strategies. Coordination and cooperation between AU members is a vital component that contributed to the success of African regional programs. It seems AFRICOM is not yet willing to enhance its relationship with African organisations since it has facilitated the welcoming of British and the French commercial and intelligence endeavours into the continent, British intelligence plays a major role in the TSCTP program and French corporate investors such as Total, Areva, Lafarge, France Telecom, and Vinci entered the continent, without the consultation of the AU (Keenan, 2010). It should also be noted that when a situation demanded a militarized response, the AU did so successfully without the help of EUCOM or Western agencies since the US government and the UN track record in Rwanda failed to prevent genocide and was met with hostility in Somalia (Chuter, 2010). For example, the restoration of peace in the Congo using African forces from Malawi, South Africa, and Tanzania highlights the success of the African PSC and the African Union’s established security mechanisms. The AMISON mission of the African Union in Somalia was a success story. It not only established a parliament, elected a president, and opened up international embassies, but it also removed the terrorist organization known as Al-Shabab from Mogadishu (Campbell, 2012). AFRICOM’s former General Carter Ham acknowledged the importance of African solutions in dealing with development and civil strife when he stated that “it was not the international community and certainly not the United States, it was regional states making that decision” (Campbell, 2012).

Since the Pentagon perceives Africa as the “battlefield of tomorrow” (Karlin, 2015), the future of AFRICOM will be based on its willingness to adopt and yield to African based solutions and rid itself from “othering” Africa<sup>xvi</sup>. Keenan (2010) stresses that the US administration linking terrorism with development issues has rejuvenated a colonial image of Africa being negative, suspicious, and hostile. General Carter Ham is of the opinion that it is time to have a debate about how the issue of countering terror in Africa should be a “domestic law enforcement matter rather than a military [AFRICOM] counter-terror matter” (Campbell, 2012). The US has to be willing to cooperate and coordinate with African organizations in addressing their own individual insecurities by not simply outsourcing security issues to Private Military Contractors which are not accountable to any security organization. AFRICOM needs to trust present African capabilities in securing their own borders.

As of this moment, AFRICOM has not honored its 2007 professed mission statement and has given credence to

apocalyptic criticism which states that AFRICOM’s objective is the expansion of the US economic frontier using the rhetoric of exceptionalism. Several authors (Forte, 2012; Boyle, 2013; Vermeiren, 2013; Campbell, 2013) have published literature that highlights AFRICOM being detrimental to African development because it prioritized US national interest and persistently acted without consulting or cooperating with African organizations. For instance, the missions conducted in Libya in 2011 and 2012 in Mali by AFRICOM, have been categorized as “blowback” (Turse, 2015b). Libya has collapsed into a morass of militia fiefdoms which have made their way to Nigeria, Chad, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Senegal, and Togo (Campbell, 2012). Similarly, in Mali, the US conducted a military coup to oust democratically elected President Amadou Touré and placed US trained officer Amadou Sanogo as ruler of Bamako (Turse, 2015c).

The case of Libya is of high importance because it actualizes the argument of AFRICOM ignoring the AU. The UNSC adopted the discourse of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) through information acquired by politicized NGO’s and enacted Article 1970 in February and 1973 in March. This resulted in a No-fly zone and military intervention in Libya while denouncing any alternative solution suggested by the African Union. Not only that, AFRICOM and western news outlets made sure that alternative solutions were not broadcasted on western news outlets further deepening the rhetoric of US exceptionalism knowing what is best for Africans (Forte, 2012). Since the U.N suspended Libya and was barred from pleading its case it was not until June 15th of 2011 that the AU Mediation Committee (AMC) was capable of presenting its case at a meeting with the UNSC (Forte, 2012). The case presented by Uganda’s permanent U.N representative, Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda, reveals the necessary modifications required by AFRICOM. Rugunda stated explicitly that such meeting “should have happened much earlier because Libya is a founding member of the AU. An attack on Libya or any other member of the African Union without expressed agreement by the AU is a dangerous provocation that should be avoided” (Forte, 2012: 275). He continued by stating that “the U.N is on safer ground if it confines itself to maintaining international peace and deterring war among member states” (Forte, 2012: 275). Rugunda reminded the UNSC that AFRICOM ignoring the dialogue extended by the AU towards solving the Libyan crisis in April 10th 2011 has been “high-handed, arrogant and provocative” because “it is unwise for certain players to be intoxicated with technological superiority and begin to think they alone can alter the course of human history towards freedom for the whole of mankind. Certainly, no constellation of states should think that they can recreate hegemony over Africa” (Forte, 2012: 276). Libya’s revolutionary leader Muammar Al-Ghaddafi was assassinated on October 20th 2011, a week later on October 28th British defense minister Philip Hammond

met with the National Transitional Council in Tripoli to discuss economic ventures which the AU rejected as the representatives of the Libyan people (Forte, 2012). Hammond urged a delegation of 80 European companies to “pack their suitcases and head to Tripoli” (Shane, 2011) while Trango Special Projects opportunely stated on their website “are you and your business ready to return to Libya?” (Forte, 2012: 62). These statements reveal that AFRICOM can only benefit Africa if it develops synergy with the AU and decides to abandon its exceptional “corporate capitalist” identity which prioritizes US economic security over African development.

AFRICOM was ostensibly established in 2007 during the same period African leaders were attempting to develop their own continental security paradigm to promote development on the continent. Since then, the continent has been plundered by “Islamic” terrorist groups which were not a feature of the African continent if we are to consider the US Strategic Report published in 2000 which examined the security environment of Africa by making no mention of Islamic extremism or major transnational terrorist threats (Metz, 2000). Furthermore, it seems the DoD’s watchdog agency is accurate in stating that AFRICOM has failed in winning the hearts and minds of Africans because it “did not adequately plan or execute” missions designed to win over Africans deemed vulnerable to the lures of violent extremism (Turse, 2015c). In 2012, General Carter Ham<sup>xvii</sup> enacted the first step towards winning the hearts and minds of Africans by presenting a speech at the Achebe Colloquium. His speech highlighted how AFRICOM could shift from being viewed as “apocalyptic” to “complementary” organization. His discourse was welcomed by African intellectuals and scholars because the General was entering the space of intellectuals from Africa. He was not dictating remedies to African problems from his ivory tower in western capitals. He praised the patient and consultative mechanism embedded in the African Union and spoke of future coordination and cooperation with African states (Campbell, 2012).

Finally, AFRICOM could win the hearts and minds of Africans when the US ceases to use the organization to rival China in the new scramble for Africa. AFRICOM should adopt the Chinese or Japanese character of performing politics through dialogical rather than exceptional terms as personified in the FOCAC (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation) summit and TICAD (Tokyo International Conference on African Development). These organizations stress the importance of Africa “owning” its development, as well as the importance of perceiving the actors involved as partners instead of securitizing them as threatening subjects. The reason Africa is comfortable with Chinese investment in the continent is founded on China cooperating and coordinating with the AU (Forte, 2012). In *More than Humanitarianism* published in 2006 by the Council on Foreign Relations, the US and Europe continue to perceive Africa as an economic-frontier to be acquired

by stating that Africa “cannot be considered as [our] *chasse gardé*. The rules are changing as China seeks not only to gain access to resources but also to control resource production and distribution”, Chester Crocker continues by stating that it is “wistfully nostalgic for an era when the United States was the only influence and could pursue its objectives with a free hand” (Lake et al., 2006: 131). AFRICOM can only become perceived as a trusted party in African development and not the extension of the US informal empire once the US redefines its *contours* which have led to a *tragedy* in international diplomacy. The US security apparatus needs to redefine its contours by ejecting itself from the “age of corporate capitalism” which as William deliberated, betrays American Founding principles because it is a flawed belief that postulates that the only course to US domestic prosperity is through the US expanding its economic-frontier globally. The US should alter its exceptionalism idea with a belief that performs politics by considering that “the rational and equitable use of its own human and material resources at home, and interdependent cooperation with all other peoples of the world [will develop a] democratic, equitable and straightforward loving community” (William, 1961: 489).

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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## End Notes

<sup>i</sup>I do not use the term anniversary because AFRICOM has not honored its mission statement.

<sup>ii</sup>Ole Waever states “What then is security? With the help of language theory, we can regard “security” as a speech act. In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act. By saying it [security] something is done. By uttering ‘security’, a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use what-ever means are necessary to block

it”

<sup>iii</sup>According to William and Peoples (2015) an issue that is *politicised* is located in the realm of “normal politics” and an issue that is *securitised* shifts into the realm of “emergency politics”

<sup>iv</sup>In 1897, President McKinley appointed Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Roosevelt's enthusiastic support for intervention is revealed when he says “I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one”, this was based on the belief that his generation of young men needed to test their mettle in battle (Anderson, 2015). Roosevelt greatly admired naval officer and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan and supported his theory that the United States needed a modern navy to protect its growing interests around the world. Although he served as the Navy's Assistant Secretary for only a year, Roosevelt was instrumental in preparing the U.S. Navy for a future war with Spain. During his tenure with the Navy, Roosevelt developed contacts with noted naval strategists, planned future strategies for a naval war with Spain, and appointed George Dewey to command the Asiatic Squadron.

<sup>v</sup>Secretary of State John Hay first articulated the concept of the –Open Door in China in a series of notes in 1899–1900. These Open Door Notes aimed to secure international agreement to the U.S. policy of promoting equal opportunity for international trade and commerce in China, and respect for China's administrative and territorial integrity. British and American policies toward China had long operated under similar principles, but once Hay put them into writing, the Open Door became the official U.S. policy towards the Far East in the first half of the 20th century.

<sup>vi</sup>Hay proposed a free, open market and equal trading opportunity for merchants of all nationalities operating in China, based in part on the most favored nation clauses already established in the Treaties of Wangxia and Tianjin. Hay argued that establishing equal access to commerce would benefit American traders and the U.S. economy, and hoped that the Open Door would also prevent disputes between the powers operating in China.

<sup>vii</sup>Said (1994:4) of *Culture and Imperialism* states “so influential has been the discourse insisting on American specialness, altruism and opportunity, that imperialism in the United States as a word or ideology has turned up only rarely and recently in accounts of the United States culture, politics and history. But the connection between imperial politics and culture in North America, and in particular in the United States, is astonishingly direct”

<sup>viii</sup>Helliwell and Hindess (2013) highlight the anthropological racism embedded within western modernity when we analyse the Western anthropologist in dialogue with the non-western. The western interlocutor discusses the non-western using an “othering” tone that is superior in racial terms because the non-western is perceived as not being in the present, but stuck in the past. They are denied coevalness because they are incapable of comprehending the ethos that constructs the logic of western modernity.

<sup>ix</sup>Turner (1962:35) states that “From the conditions of frontier life came intellectual traits of profound importance. The works of travelers along each frontier from colonial days onward describe certain common traits, and these traits have, while softening down, still persisted as survivals in the place of their origin, even when a higher social organization succeeded. The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil; and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom — these are the traits of the American frontier.”

<sup>x</sup>Anderson (2015) states that when peace was reached in 1919 and Wilson deliberated his 14 points, he stated “the stage is set, the destiny disclosed...the hand of God has led us into this way, the Senate was unmoved and was explicitly insinuating that they are not comfortable in an indefinite extension of regenerative intervention into the affairs of the world at large.”

<sup>xi</sup>Doty (1993:299) states that “Explanations for why-questions are incomplete in an important sense. They generally take as unproblematic the possibility that a particular decision or course of action could happen. They presuppose a particular subjectivity (i.e., a mode of being), a background of social/discursive practices and meanings which make possible the practices as well as the social actors themselves. In contrast to more conventional approaches to the analysis of foreign policy, the approach I take in this article poses a how-possible question. In posing such a question, I examine how

meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects/objects, thus constituting particular interpretive dispositions which create certain possibilities and preclude others. What is explained is not why a particular outcome obtained, but rather how the subjects, objects, and interpretive dispositions were socially constructed such that certain practices were made possible”

<sup>xii</sup>Keenan (2010:116) says that “The first attempt to fabricate terrorism in the Sahara–Sahel region was on 18 October 2002, when alleged Islamists, operating under the protection of the DRS, hijacked and abducted four Swiss tourists near Arak (Southern Algeria). The operation, however, was botched. It is inconceivable, in the light of the very close post-Bowman relationship between US and Algerian intelligence services, that the United States could have been unaware of the Arak operation. Why else were two officials from the State Department's Counter terrorism Office, AF DAS Robert Perry and S/CT Deputy Coordinator Stephanie Kinney, briefing the governments of Mali, Niger, Chad and Mauritania on the Bush administration planned counter-terrorism Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), at the same time as the botched Arak operation? Indeed, even though the PSI forces were not officially brought into the region until January 2004, US Special Forces, believed to be attached to the P2OG, were operating covertly in the region as early as November 2002. The State Department explained the PSI as a program designed to protect borders, track movement of people, combat terrorism, and enhance regional cooperation and stability. It is a State-led effort to assist Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania in detecting and responding to suspicious movement of people and goods across and within their borders through training, equipment and cooperation. Its goals support two U.S. national security interests in Africa: waging the war on terrorism and enhancing regional peace and security.”

<sup>xiii</sup>Forte (2012:200) reveals that an embassy cable (USET/2009/11/2) transmitted from Tripoli to Washington reveals the frustration Libya possessed as head of the AU because AFRICOM'S TSCPT mission duplicated AU security arrangements located in CEN-SAD, PSC, and NASF.

<sup>xiv</sup>Keenan (2010:126) states that “This [PMC] multi-billion dollar industry is looking for the next US-sponsored conflict market once the Iraq and Afghanistan-bubble bursts, and they see that market as Africa, a continent of crisis”

<sup>xv</sup>Buzan and Hansen (2009) mention 5 sectors of security - Military, Environmental, Economic, Societal and Political.

<sup>xvi</sup>National Security Strategy (2002) outlined a blueprint for military operations in Africa by utilizing a discourse which casted Africa in relative terms to the West. The image of Africa was presented through words such as “disease, hub for terrorist cells, porous borders, poverty”. All of these traits were discursively discussed to construct Africa as threatening U.S (exceptional) values of preserving human dignity.

<sup>xvii</sup>Tieku (2010: 132) states that “In the view of a leading US policymaker, AFRICOM complements the desires of the African Union”. The official mission of AFRICOM and the AU security arrangement is to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts on the African continent and advance Africa's development. The leadership of AFRICOM and the AU security apparatus contend that they envision an Africa that is secure, stable and developed, and that the goal is to use the two security institutions to contribute to the realization of that vision. In the words of the first commander of AFRICOM, in the years to come, people will see an Africa that is secure, stable and developed in ways meaningful to its people and our global society”. Publicly, the two security institutions have adopted similar approaches to resolving problems in Africa. AFRICOM officials appear to concur with the AU mantra that African solutions must be regarded as the primary remedy to dealing with African security and developmental problems. AFRICOM may intervene in a crisis when an African solution fails to resolve the problem or when the AU inquires AFRICOM for help. Thus, AFRICOM would not only first seek African solutions to African problems but, as Ryan Henry, a senior US defence official points out, it will be used primarily to support the indigenous leadership efforts that are currently going on”