

*Militarism, Global Order and Africa's Security Landscape: Rethinking the Securitization Theory*  
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Rethinking the Securitization Theory***

By

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## **Introduction**

Africa's security landscape (structure, governance and influence) has been experiencing many forms of change and attention since the "global war on terrorism" (GWOT) was declared by the United States (US) after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack.<sup>1</sup> For many scholars and security experts, the post-September 11 or 9/11 attention on Africa, especially from the US regarding the continent's role in reshaping the global order with emphasis on the so-called "global war on terrorism" continues to raise questions of interest in the security studies literature. For example, questions on the rising nature and use of hard state power, securitization and militarism appear to dominate the security discourse on Africa since 2001. This militarist mindset, especially among the ranks of political and military elites and the role of continental bodies such as the African Union (AU) on how Africa's future security landscape would look like have been the subject of debates in recent years.<sup>2</sup>

As the extant scholarly literature has underscored, Africa's place in international affairs has historically been marginalized to the extent that the continent's security challenges (e.g., new wars and civil conflicts) did not receive the needed global attention prior to 9/11. But this changed as the continent became the center of gravity for the renewed attention on the "global war on terrorism."<sup>3</sup> As a result of this renewed global attention, as some experts have observed, Africa's posture on unbridled militarism appears to becoming the "new normal" in terms of political priorities and policy choices on terrorism issues.<sup>4</sup> In effect, there has been a growing interest on what could be described as the twofold arrangement or the "joint efforts" idea (Africa and its global partners) where the continent supports the US and its allies in fighting the war on terrorism. Consequently, the culture of militarism and counterterrorist activities aimed at maintaining the Western-framed threats to the global order from terrorism appear to be growing in Africa. In this case, as Paul Williams<sup>5</sup> has reminded us, one might ask (*key puzzle*): Is Africa a "haven for terrorists" or a dangerous place that needs strong governments, robust state presence and huge security apparatus to "check the spread of terrorism" and other security threats to the rest of world?

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<sup>1</sup> Carmody 2005; Wiley, 2012

<sup>2</sup> Luckham 1994; Aning, 2008

<sup>3</sup> Carmody 2005

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Williams 2007

The aforementioned puzzle further highlights two major questions that seem unresolved in the scholarly/policy literature. First, how is the growing emphasis on militarism in the so-called “global war on terror” changing the way security analysts, scholars and political elites think and engage in critical analysis on the long term implications of these issues on Africa? Second, is the global construction of security threats on terrorism which happens to be conceptually grounded on the ideas of the securitization theory useful to how security threats are framed or constructed within the African context? My interest in exploring answers to the above questions informs the rationale for this paper. Moreover, the paper is also guided by one of the central questions of the workshop which deals with whether the concept of militarism is sufficient to capture the challenges facing African peace/security governance in the modern era.

To find answers to the above empirical questions, this paper draws on the conceptual ideas of the securitization theory in making the case for a new perspective or a shift in our attempt to understand the security landscape in Africa. In other words, the paper examines the securitization theory within the context of its usefulness to the future directions of Africa's security architecture and governance. Although the theory is unable to provide a complete picture of the phenomenon being studied, the theory has, from a broader perspective, provided a persuasive framework to help us better understand the factors that have shaped the securitization of Africa in the post-9/11 era. The paper is structured in three main parts in the attempt to find answers to the above questions. The first part provides a critical overview on the existing debates in the scholarly literature on the evolutionary phases of militarism in Africa over time and space. The second part examines the securitization theory within the context of its significance to the African context. The final part advances a conceptual idea on a new perspective (*dualistic approach*) with respect to the discourse on African peace and security governance.

### **Militarism in Africa: An Overview**

As previously stated, many scholars would agree with Pádraig Carmody's argument that Africa's role or what I will describe as “perceived importance” in world affairs has been on the decline since the end of the Cold War. But the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US changed the attention calculus toward Africa. Thus, the African continent has become one of the key centers of focus in the post-9/11 security discourse with special attention from global powers, such as the US and its

allies engaged in the global terror war.<sup>6</sup> While the 9/11 terrorist attack on America and the subsequent growth in militarization of the African continent appears as a new phenomenon, Robin Luckham,<sup>7</sup> and other scholars, will be quick to remind us that the militarization of Africa is not a new phenomenon. One could, in essence, argue that Africa's militarism has been part of the continent's evolutionary phase to statehood in the post-colonial era. Thus, the evolutionary period of Africa's statehood from European colonial domination was punctuated by militarism as well. This paper therefore discusses the trajectory of Africa's militarism prior to the global war on terrorism and the subsequent consequences of the current militarization of the continent. With this in mind, one wonders whether we can describe the African continent as susceptible to militarism. To explore this question within the context of the evolutionary phases of Africa's militarization terrain, I draw on the existing scholarly literature in exploring Africa's landscape of militarism in the independence era from two standpoints.

First, the historical conception of the military in post-colonial Africa was typically seen as an institution that has been characterized by the legacies of colonial norms/ideas in the statehood or independence project.<sup>8</sup> Second, the conception of the military as the "manager of modernity" introduced an important element to the broad discussion on the post-colonial military. This element (*manager of modernity*) which appears to be uncharacteristic of the traditional role of the military's place in a democratic setting (*total civilian control*) became a key feature of Africa's post-colonial terrain where some military elites/establishment "assumed" the status of "watchmen or guardian" of the post-colonial states.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, as Robin Luckham has captured, the African military in the post-colonial years was perceived as a bulwark against social unrest and the last stand-by force to preserve the territorial integrity/political order of the newly established states. While the military's sacrosanct role (to defend/preserve state sovereignty/democratic order) are traditionally accepted in developed democracies, the problem arose, in the case of Africa, when the military, especially in the late 1960s throughout the 1980s drifted from this sacrosanct role for a space on the "political dinner table" designed for civilian political engagements. The outcomes of this misguided position

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<sup>6</sup> Prestholdt 2011; Wiley, 2012

<sup>7</sup> Luckham 1994

<sup>8</sup> Luckham 1994:14

<sup>9</sup> Ibid 1994; Mama and Okazawa-Rey 2012

by the military were the widespread cases of military coups, counter-coups and other insurgences which have occupied the political orbit of many African countries in the post-colonial era.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, Amina Mama and Margo Okazawa-Rey's assessment of militarism in Africa offers another significant insight into this paper's susceptible argument. For these scholars,<sup>11</sup> as shared by others,<sup>12</sup> the legacies of the African colonial armies could help explain part of the susceptible argument with respect to the speed at which the continent became and still vulnerable to military expansionism from internal and external forces. In this case, as Mama and Okazawa-Rey have noted, the armies that were established during the colonial era not only differed from the conventional armies of most Western countries, but the colonial armies were trained and conditioned by European colonizers to fight anti-colonial dissents and revolts that may arise among the colonized people.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the colonial soldiers were used to fight battles for their European colonizers in and outside of Africa. It could be argued, on the basis of the preceding analyses, that the colonial ideas of the military and its structural foundation carried by African elites in their efforts to build the post-colonial state were problematic from the onset. That is to say that the ideas of the military as the guardian of the post-colonial democratic project, as this paper articulates, were improperly instituted. I should caution that by advancing this argument is certainly not to suggest that Africans were passive agents with no role in the establishment of the post-colonial military structures. They were indeed active participant, but minimal efforts were made afterwards by African elites (political and military) in reshaping the inherited military structures which were by default characterized by repressive colonial ideas and institutions.<sup>14</sup>

It is on the basis of this imbalance, as this paper argues, that these historical complexities of Africa's post-colonial structures provide some explanations in our efforts to understand the continent's decades of vulnerabilities to internal (e.g., military coups) and external militarism. We maintain that the concept of militarism is certainly not new to the African experience and the ongoing "global war on terrorism" and its subsequent culture of militarism in Africa constitute an extra layer of the historical legacies of militarism on the continent.

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<sup>10</sup>Mama 1998; Agyeman-Duah 1990

<sup>11</sup> Mama and Okazawa-Rey 2012

<sup>12</sup> Decalo 1990; Mama and Okazawa-Rey 2012

<sup>13</sup> Mama and Okazawa-Rey 2012

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

## **Militarism and the Global War on Terror**

Africa's security landscape, as earlier stated, changed and continues to experience changes after the GWOT was declared by President Bush in 2001. Although the vulnerability argument, as earlier advanced, offers a reasonable framework to explain the growing militarist narrative on the continent, Elizabeth Schmidt's<sup>15</sup> argument that the tactics used by the West during the Cold War era seem to be similar to the current war on terrorism might be useful to the discussion at this point. Schmidt has argued that the fear of communist aggression was extensively used by the West to frame the Cold War era which increased global attention on the African continent. In a similar vein, as Schmidt has noted, the US and its allies have been framing the ongoing global terror fight to the point where many countries' security policies are constantly being shaped by the global terror war. In expanding on these ideas in her book entitled: *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, Schmidt posits that Africa was low on America's radar during the first decade of the post-Cold War era to the extent that the US was less engaged with its former client countries like Liberia, Somalia and Zaire as these countries descended into political violence and social decay.<sup>16</sup> But 9/11 redirected America's focus with its interest in reengaging with these client countries and other parts of the continent.

Thus, the so-called "impoverished nations" across Africa that were ignored by the global community prior to 9/11 are now being considered as "trusted partners" for re-engagement in the global fight against terrorism. As Schmidt has further argued, America's security policy toward Africa after 9/11 were seen through the lens of what the literature describes as the "impoverished nations effect" on terrorism. In this case, the "impoverished nations" reasoning views fragile and impoverished states as possible breeding grounds for political extremism and terrorist activities.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Mark Malan's piece on post-9/11 and Africa's security agenda offers a useful insight into the impoverished nations' argument. For Malan,<sup>18</sup> the post-9/11 national discourse in the US centered on the belief that "Africa, as a whole, should be regarded as one of the most fertile seedbeds of terrorism in the world and that certain African countries are likely targets for intervention." For example, an editorial by the Chicago Tribune in December 2001, as quoted in

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<sup>15</sup> Schmidt 2013

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Schmidt 2013:213

<sup>18</sup> Malan 2002:56

Malan's work, reveals how large number of Americans wanted the US to fully turn its attention on Africa after flushing the Taliban and Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan. For those who share the impoverished nations' argument, as other students of security studies might endorse, disorder and poverty, they argue, harbor extremism and Africa appears to have a lot of those undesirable social conditions. Cyril Obi's<sup>19</sup> similar argument that the US-led counterterrorism initiatives in West Africa were partly driven by the fact that societies in conflict and those emerging from civil wars are more likely to create the incentives for terrorist activities and the abode for other criminal networks provide additional support for our discussion. Like scholar Obi, who is one of the leading experts on African security/peace issues has suggested in the case of West Africa, I will add or perhaps argue that similar conditions (conflict-prone societies and those from civil wars) might apply to other countries, especially in East Africa.

It is clear that the foregoing analysis has revealed two important points worth reiterating at this point. First, the discussion has shown that the growing emphasis on militarism in the era of the war on terror has not only altered the way political elites think about security issues, but the way these actors (political and policy) engage in security policy design, implementation and the general discourse on Africa's security governance. Second, the discussion has also revealed that the renewed focus on Africa regarding the global war on terror was partly driven by Africa's complex vulnerabilities as discussed within the framework of the susceptible and/or impoverished nations' argument. What is equally clear, as this paper contends, is the point that the preceding discussions provide utility in explaining why Africa became one of the main targets for the US-led war on terrorism and why the US and its allies seem to be successful in targeting Africa.

What is unclear, on other hand, is the extent to which the construction of the security threats, in this case, the GWOT which appears to be conceptually grounded on the securitization theory is useful in the African context. In other words, the question on the significance or insignificance of the securitization theory to the African security landscape constitutes the next task to be explored in this paper. Before we undertake this next task, it would be ideal to first examine the central ideas or core tenets of the securitization theory.

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<sup>19</sup>Obi 2006:92

## **Securitization Theory**

The concept of security as we generally understand it tends to focus on the traditional view of security where emphasis is often placed on states as entities that need to survive in a complex and anarchical international system. This traditional view of security has for several decades been at the core of the study of security in the field of International Relations (IR). While the traditional security-focused theories in the field of IR such as realism and neorealism have enjoyed a considerable attention on issues of security and survival of states for decades, these traditional theories have been subjected to criticisms on their “home turf” in the past couple of years as Michael Williams<sup>20</sup> has observed. According to Williams, as other scholars<sup>21</sup> have noted, the securitization theory which was pioneered by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde and commonly known as the Copenhagen School has become one of the most influential new theoretical ideas on the concept of security in the field of security studies and IR in the last couple of years. There is no doubt, as this paper argues, that the Copenhagen School has somehow succeeded in disrupting the traditional ideas and conception of security in IR from two outlooks.

First, not only did the theory introduce a radical idea where security as a concept has been broadened as traditionally conceptualized by classical IR theorists, but Buzan and his colleagues, as Claire Wilkinson<sup>22</sup> captures it, presented a far-reaching conceptual reasoning where culture and identity are recognized as part of the core elements of security studies. Second, the Copenhagen School has also been transformative in nature because of the way security has been conceptualized by the Copenhagen thinkers not as an “objective condition but as the outcome of a specific social process: the social construction of security issues”...which relates to who or what is being secured and from what.<sup>23</sup> The gargantuan scholarly step by these Copenhagen thinkers was certainly not a new wave in the broader field of international politics and security studies. Scholarly works on constructivism where issues such as identity, culture and social construction have become part of the critical elements and unit of analysis in the study of how the world works set the tone to the emergence of what could be described as the “dissenting theorists” in international politics. For example, Nicholas Onuf’s groundbreaking work which is entitled: *World of Our Making: Rules*

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<sup>20</sup> Williams 2003

<sup>21</sup> Williams 2003:511; Abrahamsen 2005; Holdbraad and Pedersen 2012; Stritzel 2007; McDonald 2008

<sup>22</sup> Wilkinson 2007

<sup>23</sup> Williams 2003:513

and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations,<sup>24</sup> and the follow up work by Alexander Wendt with the title: "Anarchy is What States Makes of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,"<sup>25</sup> deserve mention at this point for being the forceful "foot soldiers" of the "revisionist movement" in altering the theoretical terrain of IR and security studies. Of course, I do agree with Wilkinson<sup>26</sup> who suggests the need for scholars not to forget, let alone exclude other theoretical movements such as the feminist thinkers who also constitute part of the new generation of theorists committed to challenging the state-centric IR theories. What then constitutes the fundamental tenets of the securitization theory?

### ***Tenets of the Securitization Theory***

As previously stated, the Copenhagen School redefined and actually broadened security to include new security-related issues (threats) such as migration, transnational crime and intrastate conflicts that emerged on the global scene in the post-Cold War era.<sup>27</sup> In their work: *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde argue that their comprehensive new framework on security studies "attempts to widen the security agenda by claiming security status for issues and referent objects in the economic, environmental and societal sectors as well as the military-political ones that define traditional security studies."<sup>28</sup> In effect, as these Copenhagen thinkers have observed, the new trend of the debate on security studies in the post-Cold War era centers on the aspects of the "wide" (new conception of security) versus the "narrow" (traditional/military) conception of security.<sup>29</sup>

As other advocates of the securitization theory have suggested, the traditional state-centric IR theories were unable to theoretically explain the new threats in the post-Cold War era because of their limited focus on the state/military as the central unit of analysis.<sup>30</sup> To this end, as Michael Williams has argued, the Copenhagen School conceptualizes security beyond objective condition that is defined within the parameters of existential threats to an outcome shaped by specific social processes and construction. Here is how Buzan and Wæver put it:

We tried instead to revise the basic, traditional conception of security so that it could still

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<sup>24</sup> Onuf 1989

<sup>25</sup> Wendt 1992

<sup>26</sup> Wilkinson 2007

<sup>27</sup> Ibid: 6

<sup>28</sup> Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998:1

<sup>29</sup> Ibid: 2

<sup>30</sup> Buzan and Wæver 1997; Wilkinson 2007

say the old things but also include the new things in their own right. We tried to show how 'societies' defined in terms of identity could be seen as the referent object for some cases of securitization, where that which could be lost was not sovereignty but identity. The two share the role of being the definition of existential threat: for a state, sovereignty defines when a threat is existential, because if a state is no longer sovereign, it is no longer a state; and similarly identity is the defining point regarding existential threats for a society because it defines whether 'we' are still us.<sup>31</sup>

The above quotation reveals an important point about the Copenhagen thinkers in their conceptualization of security. That is the idea of the *referent object* which has traditionally been confined to the state-centric conception is now being extended to include other elements or sectors of a society. In other words, different sectors of a society such as political, economic, social, collective identity, and environmental can be socially constructed as referent objects. The commonality with the redefined referent objects is the fact that any of these objects, as the theory suggests, has the potential to be designated or framed as an existential threat that requires urgent/extraordinary attention and action.<sup>32</sup> It is evident, as the theorists have underscored, that the broadening elements of the securitization theory provide the flexibility for a society to carefully choose to define and/or not to define issues as existential threats that demand urgent attention and extraordinary action. Michael Williams actually echoes the conceptual ideas of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde on the broadening idea and describes it as shifting agendas of security with emphasis on the social construction of security through speech-acts. Generally speaking, the speech-acts, as the "founding fathers" of the theory and other later "disciples" have argued, deal with utterances that can be interpreted in two important ways.

First, the utterances or what could also be considered as issue framing describes an existing security situation for attention and exigent action. Second, the description of the utterances must be successfully engineered to bring the issue being framed and defined into reality as a security threat for attention.<sup>33</sup> From an ordinary viewpoint and for lucidity purposes, I would argue that Rita Floyd's interpretation of the theory provides a useful insight in illuminating the complexities of the theory. To Floyd, the securitization theory, as Buzan and his colleagues have also articulated, focuses on how security threats are socially constructed beyond the mundane politics. In this case, security, as the theory emphasizes, is not an objective condition but the outcome of specific social

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<sup>31</sup> Buzan and Wæver 1997:242

<sup>32</sup> Buzan et. al. 1998; Wilkinson 2007

<sup>33</sup> Williams 2003; Abrahamsen 2005

processes.<sup>34</sup> As Holger Stritzel has also pointed out, the Copenhagen School has attempted to essentially construct a comprehensive model that rests on the complex interactions of speech acts, securitizing actors, the audience as well as conducive conditions that influence the success of a given securitizing move.<sup>35</sup>

I argue that the broadened idea of security which focuses on social construction by political actors suggests that the very notion of security in terms of what it ought to be (defined) and what it ought not to be (not defined) has essentially been “democratized” with access and the possibility of political manipulation. That is to say that this “democratization of security,” as this paper argues, could create venues for needless elevation of referent objects to the level of existential threats for extraordinary attention and action. While the pioneers of the theory have somehow accounted for concerns about the likelihood of “anything” being socially constructed as a security issue, we should equally be mindful that some other possibilities could exit for political elites to socially manipulate the construction of “anything” as a security issue for attention. For example, in many African countries where political competition for power is often characterized by what Susanne Mueller describes as “dying to win” or what Staffan Lindberg calls “it’s our time to chop”<sup>36</sup> or be part of the political process in order to partake in the national cake, can be problematic when the definition of security issues is excessively broadened. This is where political elites could employ fair or foul methods and or say “anything” to get elected to power regardless of whether their messages (issue framing) intimidate, divide or incite violence.<sup>37</sup> We are also very much aware that the securitization theory reinforces the idea of “us against them” as a vital distinction of a particular threat.<sup>38</sup> For others, the “us against them” distinction is actually about fear and a relationship exists between fear of the known/unknown and existential threats.<sup>39</sup> This is where I find the securitization theory quite problematic when it comes to its application to Africa and might need a rethinking.

It is clear from a theoretical standpoint and from the above interpretive discussions that the securitization theory has not only transformed the conceptual field of security studies in its efforts toward a new thinking on security construction, but the theory has attracted and effectively retained many of its “old disciples” well as the “new ones” who are determined to either advance the theory

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<sup>34</sup> Floyd 2011:1; Abrahamsen 2005: 57

<sup>35</sup> Stritzel 2007: 358

<sup>36</sup> Mueller 2011; Lindberg 2003

<sup>37</sup> Kumah-Abiwu, 2017: 4

<sup>38</sup> Abrahamsen 2005

<sup>39</sup> Williams 2011

or critique its tenets and/or usefulness. Let me also note that Holger Stritzel's interpretation of the securitization project as one of the most important and controversial contributions to the field of security studies epitomizes the "love-hate" relationships with the theory.<sup>40</sup> From the leading chief critic in the person of Bill McSweeney<sup>41</sup> who fundamentally disagrees with the theory's emphasis on identity and society (*he calls it sub-state groups*) in the construction of security and his lamentation about the theory's abandonment of the state primacy, to Claire Wilkinson and other scholars who have expressed various criticisms about the unsuitability of the theory to billet non-Western phenomena are a few examples of the scholarly criticisms on the theory.<sup>42</sup>

In view of the above theoretical analyses, it might be useful to re-visit our central research question of interest which deals with whether the growing wave of unbridled militarism in Africa, which appears to be based on the conceptual ideas of the securitization theory provides a sufficient framework to understand Africa's security landscape and the discourse on global security order. To put it differently, how will Africa's security architecture and the debate on new approaches to African peace and security governance look like in the near future? The next section explores some answers to these pertinent questions.

### **Rethinking Africa's Security and Securitization Theory**

As revealed in the earlier discussion, the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US and the subsequent declaration of the global terror war by America and its terror fighting allies have put the spotlight on terrorism or the T-word phenomenon as Annette Hübschle describes it in her work titled: "The T-word: Conceptualising Terrorism." For Hübschle, as other security experts would argue, the T-word problem has since 2001 been elevated to the apex of global security agenda to the extent that it might be difficult, if not impossible, for politicians, lawmakers, scholars, and ordinary people not to talk about the T-word, especially in Africa.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the key global actors, particularly the US and its allies who are actively involved in "taking charge" of framing and reframing the nature and tempo of the "T-war" are surely not excluded from the broader T-word discourse. As some security scholars have argued, one of the consequences of the terror war was the manner in which

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<sup>40</sup> Stritzel 2007

<sup>41</sup> McSweeney 1996

<sup>42</sup> Wilkinson 2007

<sup>43</sup> Hübschle 2006

the security landscape of Africa has been securitized and transformed since 2001. Let me address the nature of this securitization from two positions (exogenous and endogenous).

### ***Exogenous Securitization of Africa***

As we know, the global terror war was announced by President George W. Bush after the 9/11 attack. Although scholars are divided where to categorize the “war declaration” with respect to the conceptual definition of a war, it could be argued that President Bush’s statement marked the post-9/11 new global security order and the starting point, I will argue, of the securitization of Africa. In her analysis on the US security policy toward Africa in the early years of the post-9/11 epoch, Schmidt<sup>44</sup> has, for example, argued that US policy-makers, including the political class and the security establishment were effective in framing terrorism as the new and dangerous threats to America’s national security. What is interesting about this framing is the fact that some of the foreign organizations that were branded as terrorist groups to attract US attention, especially in Africa, had a rather complex interlocking local political grievances with nothing to do with the US or global terrorism in the first place.<sup>45</sup> However, the framing of the global terrorist threats by the US security establishment/political elites through the mainstream media was done to paint a collective picture of a “monolithic global conspiracy” from terrorist groups who are determined to harm America (the homeland) and its interests around the world.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the rapid securitization of the continent in the name of fighting terror, one of the direct effects (securitized environment) was the strengthening of repressive regimes in many parts of Africa. Many of these regimes played up the global terrorist threat or “terror card” as a means of obtaining American support (funds and military assistance), just as other African governments did by exaggerating communist threats during the Cold War era.<sup>47</sup> This aspect of the discussion would be advanced later in the paper in the section on the endogenous securitization of the African continent.

From a theoretical perspective, one could see evidence of the “widened idea of security” or the securitization concept<sup>48</sup> on display as the US recognized other referent objects (*monolithic*

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<sup>44</sup> Schmidt 2013:213-214

<sup>45</sup> Schmidt 2013

<sup>46</sup> Ibid: 214

<sup>47</sup> Ibid: 215

<sup>48</sup> Wilkinson 2007; Buzan et. al. 1998

*framing of terror groups*) across Africa in the construction of the terror threat. Another significant element of the exogenous securitization was the modification of the ban on America's involvement in the political assassination of foreign leaders.<sup>49</sup> This policy was changed when President George W. Bush issued an executive order allowing the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pentagon (U.S. Military Headquarters) to capture or kill al-Qaeda militants worldwide. This is how Elizabeth Schmidt captures it in her book:

In the spring of 2004, the Bush administration authorized the U.S. Special Operations Command to conduct covert military operations to capture or kill suspected terrorist leaders anywhere in the world. The executive order granted U.S. forces the authority to engage in such activities in countries that were not at war with the United States- and without those countries' consent. The Pentagon subsequently sent Special Operations troops into Africa and Asian Nations to collect intelligence and capture or kill alleged terrorists-a practice that continued in the Obama administration<sup>50</sup>

Beside the efforts to socially construct the global terror campaign which was believed and broadly interpreted as existential threat to the US homeland for urgent action, it was not long when the security policy outcomes (from the social construction) were realized in many parts of Africa. I shall address these outcomes from three perspectives. First, a renewed focus on counterterrorism activities in the name of fighting terror emerged across Africa, especially in East Africa (Horn of Africa). For example, the US established its first military base since the Cold War era in Djibouti to coordinate the terror fight in East Africa and other parts of the continent. Second, the US followed up in 2003 with the launch of the East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative (EACTI) aimed at dealing with terrorism issues in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Eritrea, Djibouti and Ethiopia with about USD\$100 million support.<sup>51</sup> A similar counterterrorism initiative known as the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) was earlier established in 2002 to cover the Sahel region with focus on nations such as Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad.

The Sahel region are some of the places designated as the "ungoverned" territories of Africa where terror cells are believed to flourish. The recent death of four American soldiers in Niger is a reminder of the long history of US counterterrorism activities in the Sahel. According to Searcey and Schmitt,<sup>52</sup> about 6,000 American troops are currently in Africa with most of them

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<sup>49</sup> Schmidt 2013

<sup>50</sup> Ibid: 214-215

<sup>51</sup> Schmidt 2013; van de Walle 2009

<sup>52</sup> Searcey and Schmitt 2017

in Djibouti. One-third of these troops are Special Forces working on advise-and-assist missions like the patrol in Niger. Many of the Special Forces are also engaged in military training exercises with countries in the region. The Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is another element of the counterterrorism initiative that was established in 2010. It was later expanded in scope to cover countries in the Northern and Western sections of Africa.<sup>53</sup> Third, the culmination of Africa's militarization/securitization process in the name of defending the American homeland from attack and protecting the global security order occurred when President Bush announced the creation of the joint military command unit for Africa or the US Africa Command (AFRICOM).<sup>54</sup> While counterterrorism constitutes the centrality of AFRICOM's role, it should be noted that the security-development discourse which intensified in the post-9/11 became part of AFRICOM's major mission as well. As these scholars<sup>55</sup> have noted, the idea of linking security-humanitarian issues with emphasis on the reduction of abject poverty, corruption and the promotion of good governance/development are believed to reduce the incentives for terrorism. While this claims can be theoretically appealing, it might be difficult to completely embrace these ideas since the evidence on the ground suggests otherwise, especially after a decade of the terror war. This might explain, as this paper argues, why the security-development issues are still being debated more than a decade after the 9/11 attack and the subsequent emergence of Africa's growing militarism.

What is clear from the preceding analysis is fact that the exogenous perspective of Africa's securitization through the active military engagements of the US was transformative in terms of the ongoing military consequences. It is also clear, as the discussion has shown, that the exogenous aspect of the securitization process of Africa appears to fit the tenets of the securitization theory. For example, the constant framing of the terrorism issue by the US, as this paper suggests, was a social construction of the security threats through speech-acts<sup>56</sup> that were engineered by America's political, policy and military elites for continued public support for the war on terrorism. Rita Abrahamsen has articulated these ideas very well on Britain's role in the global terror campaign. According to Abrahamsen, Tony Blair's (ex-Prime Minister of Britain) role in the securitization of Africa was partly rooted in the fear that terror activities could take hold in Africa which might in tend affect the international community. In effect, as Abrahamsen has suggested, "securitization

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<sup>53</sup>Schmidt 2013

<sup>54</sup>LeVan 2010; van de Walle 2009

<sup>55</sup> Schmidt 2013; Prestholdt 2011; Carmody 2005; van de Walle 2009; Lyons 2006

<sup>56</sup> Buzan et. al. 1998; Wilkinson 2007

can be seen as a powerful political strategy that shapes and maintains the unity of a political community.”<sup>57</sup>

I draw on Abrahamsen's ideas, especially the phrase “powerful political strategy” to advance the argument that the political strategy of Tony Blair and George W. Bush were part of a broader narrative that was employed to draw the global public attention to the terror problem. I further suggest or advance the argument that the framing acts (*global social construction*) or issue framing<sup>58</sup> by these global political leaders (Blair and Bush) were not only speech-acts as consistent with the securitization theory,<sup>59</sup> but the framing of these speech-acts were successful engineered in securitizing Africa. In essence, the global social construction, as this paper argues, has enhanced our understanding of how the global framing strategy helped sustained the unity and commitment of the international political community<sup>60</sup> on the global fight against terrorism for more than a decade. Similarly, this paper posits that the manifestations of the military-centered initiatives which were camouflaged as strategic-humanitarian interests on the African continent appear to align with the broadening/shifting agenda logic of the securitization theory.<sup>61</sup> One can also argue that the central elements of the securitization theory which underscore the significance of “who or what is being secure, and from what” as Abrahamsen,<sup>62</sup> has rightly captured, seem to be evident throughout our analysis. I extend these conceptual ideas and interpret the “who or what is being secure” as the US and its allies and/or the global order. And “from what,” as the terrorist activities across the world, especially in Africa.

It is quite certain from the theoretical discussion that some of the tenets of the securitization theory have provided us with good analytical and persuasive lens through which we can explain the exogenous aspect of the securitization of Africa. What is uncertain, on other hand, is the extent to which the securitization efforts by the global North (in the post-9/11 era) have rather created incentives for the growth of many terror cells and havens, human right abuses in countries, and the decay in democratic gains by some African countries. I admit that these questions might not have straightforward answers and/or explanations. Nevertheless, we still need to ask these thought-provoking and complex questions as scholars since asking hard and complex questions constitute

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<sup>57</sup> Abrahamsen 2005: 68

<sup>58</sup> Kumah-Abiwu 2017

<sup>59</sup> Buzan et. al. 1998; Wilkinson 2007

<sup>60</sup> Abrahamsen 2005: 68

<sup>61</sup> Williams 2003

<sup>62</sup> Abrahamsen 2005: 58

what we know to do best. The next section of the paper which examines the endogenous (internal) aspect of Africa's securitization might help answer some of these pertinent questions.

### ***Endogenous Securitization of Africa***

As previously discussed, many countries in Africa are not new to the dominance of the military in national political spaces. We have also seen from the previous discussion that the security landscape of Africa was securitized in the post-9/11 era due to the vulnerability argument I earlier advanced in the paper. We should be reminded that the current "weakened position" of Africa, as some might argue, is the product or direct outcome of historical factors such as slavery, the European colonial project and the endless systemic struggles for freedom from neo-colonial structures and impediments.<sup>63</sup> It is important not to also forget the effects of the global ideological war (Cold War) between the East and West where Africa became the battleground for global superpowers like US and its Western allies and the former Soviet Union.<sup>64</sup> The going war on terror occupy another layer of the many foreign interventions in Africa.

This paper is of the view that these externally-driven historical events that have occurred to Africa have not only disrupted and continue to disrupt societies and political systems, but greater parts of the continent, if not all, have become susceptible to all forms of manipulation, including Africans themselves (political/military elites). While the exogenous securitization has provided us with some persuasive explanations for Africa's woes, it is imperative to be reminded that African nations, as earlier noted, also took advantage to frame the terror campaign to their own benefits. I would argue, in this case, that one of the main outcomes of the endogenous securitization of Africa has been the abuse of human rights in some countries by political/military leaders. As the case during the Cold War era, the Western world was deeply concerned about the spread of communism in Africa to the point where these Western countries, especially the US supported authoritarian regimes across the continent in the name of checking the spread of communist influence.<sup>65</sup>

The post-9/11 era appears not to differ from the Cold War era. Schmidt has, for example, argued that the failure of US political leaders and the security establishment to fully understand the complex situation on the ground (in Africa) made the US to be more concerned about the short-

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<sup>63</sup> Kumah-Abiwu 2016

<sup>64</sup> Schmidt 2013

<sup>65</sup> Schmidt 2013

term gains of supporting African countries that are “committed” to counterterrorism regardless of the repressive nature of those regimes.<sup>66</sup> The US support for the repressive regime in Chad under Idriss Deby is one of the cases in point. According Schmidt, the Deby military regime was not only corrupt and repressive, but a 2010 report by Transparency International indicates that the regime engaged in human right abuses such as arbitrary arrests, torture and murder. Surprisingly, the US continued to support such a brutal regime on the basis of the regime’s help and commitment to US counterterrorism efforts in the region.<sup>67</sup> The literature describes this arrangement (security for aid initiatives) as part of the broader discourse on development-security issues in developing countries. Africa’s version of the development-security strategy took off in the early years of the post-9/11 era with increase in US military support and other forms of security aid to countries committed to fighting the global terror war.<sup>68</sup> For instance, the US foreign assistance to sub-Saharan African countries grew from \$2.5 billion in the year 2000 to about \$7.5 billion in 2007. In the fiscal of 2008, five countries from Africa were part of the 15 leading recipients of US foreign assistance.<sup>69</sup> Nicolas van de Walle got it right when he argues that the ability to link development to security issues helped increase political support for foreign assistance to many countries in Africa in the post-9/11 era.<sup>70</sup>

A recent report with the title: “Counterterrorism and Human Rights: Abuses in Kenya and Uganda,” provides a key element to the broader debate on the challenges of counterterrorism and human right abuses in some countries in Africa, especially in East Africa. Although governments in the East African region, as the case in other parts of Africa, have the constitutional right to fight terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab<sup>71</sup> in a lawful manner, the report notes that counterterrorism operations in Kenya and Uganda have led to the rising cases of human right violations in these countries.<sup>72</sup> We also know that the US Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), a critical component of AFRICOM has provided significant military assistance to the region’s peace efforts in Somalia where Al Shabaab, a local affiliate linked to Al Qaeda have been operating for many years.<sup>73</sup> In other cases, some governments in East Africa and

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Schmidt 2013:216

<sup>68</sup> van de Walle 2009

<sup>69</sup> Ibid: 8

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Ploch 2010

<sup>72</sup> Horowitz 2013

<sup>73</sup> Ploch 2010

other parts of the continent have been cracking down on political opponents, people with lawful dissenting views as well as defenders of human rights in the name of engaging in counterterrorism.<sup>74</sup> Horowitz's report provides a summary of the problem in Kenya and Uganda this way:

The Kenyan and Ugandan governments and their security forces are the main parties responsible for any human rights abuses they commit. But other states whether donors, collaborators, or providers of technical assistance—are responsible for ensuring that their security assistance does not aid or abet those abuses. The United States and United Kingdom have increased their support for counterterrorism activities in Kenya and Uganda in recent years; with that increased support comes increased responsibility to ensure the recipients act in accordance with the law and refrain from human rights abuses that can backfire and inadvertently erode the rule of law and fuel public resentment.<sup>75</sup>

Asare and Sekyere's<sup>76</sup> recent work on Ethiopia's anti-terrorism activities and human rights abuses provide addition support for the argument. Their study reveals that eleven journalists were, for instance, convicted with each sentenced to at least 10 years in imprisonment since Ethiopia's anti-terrorism law came into effect in 2009.<sup>77</sup> As observed by Asare and Sekyere, this paper shares a similar view that the problematic definition on what constitutes terrorism and how it should be framed and defined will continue to be influenced by the parochial interpretation of anti-terrorism laws in African countries. This is where, as this paper suggests, the African Union (AU) can play its role by bringing the needed attention to the growing human rights abuses as a result of the terror fighting campaigns in Africa. I will also suggest that the aforementioned issue surrounding human rights abuses and counterterrorism should constitute one of the engaged areas of attention on the new approaches to African peace and security governance.

It is apparent that the security landscape in Africa is without question at crossroads and the crossroads seem to present different quagmires on how the continent can effectively balance the securitization/militarization process while maintaining its democratic project where governance is promoted with safeguards for human rights and rule of law. The discussion has also shown that the unchecked militarism and other challenges facing Africa's peace and security governance have been addressed in the affirmative given the effects of the exogenous and endogenous factors that

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<sup>74</sup> Horowitz 2013:26-39

<sup>75</sup> Ibid: 41

<sup>76</sup> Asare and Sekyere 2016

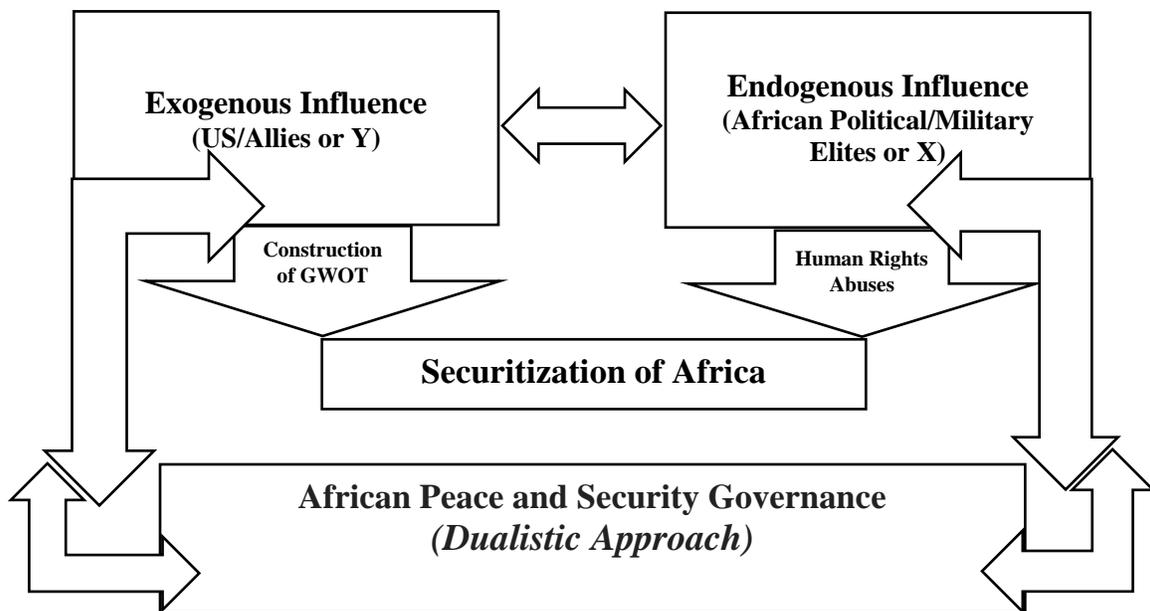
<sup>77</sup> Ibid: 352; Human Rights Watch 2012

have shaped and continue to shape the culture of militarism on the continent. Another way we can reflect on the question on Africa's growing militarism and the puzzle on the securitization theory is to rethink African's current position within the broader context of the theory's usefulness.

In view of the clarion call on the need to rethink Africa's security future, this paper proposes the idea of a *dualistic approach* in our attempt to better understand the usefulness of the securitization theory to the African experience. My central thesis on the conceptual proposal is based on the underlying assumption that the ongoing securitization of the continent is not likely to end anytime soon given the vested interests in the militarism project by African countries in collaboration with their Western allies who seem to be committed to fighting the global terror war.

**Figure 1**

**Model Showing the Influence (Exogenous/Endogenous) of Africa's Securitization**



**Source:** Model designed by the author of this paper

In this case, I advance the argument that the dualistic approach involves X and Y (dualistic or balanced partnership). X is defined, in this context, as African countries (political/military elites) while Y is defined as the US and its allies involved in the terror campaigns across the continent. Figure 1 (above) shows a model on Africa's securitization process and the dualistic approach as part of the new approaches to African peace and security governance.

As shown in figure 1, I argue that both Africa and the US with its allies have in their respective ways securitized the continent hence the need for the dualistic approach. That is both Africa and its global partners (e.g., US) must each play their critical and unique roles in reducing the growing culture of militarism on the continent. In the case of Africa, one good starting point the continent can play a positive role toward peace and security governance is with human rights abuses that connect to counterterrorism. This is where the African Union and the emerging idea of collective security governance<sup>78</sup> could serve the continent very well toward a new approach to Africa's peace and security governance. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the AU and the collective efforts being made by some African governments to be actively involved in conflict prevention/management<sup>79</sup> are useful and positive steps that must be supported. I share Desmidt and Hauck's view,<sup>80</sup> as other observers would argue,<sup>81</sup> that the shift from non-intervention to non-indifference (with the former Organization of African Unity-OAU, which is transformed into the AU) to the establishment of an elaborate security institutional architecture where the AU is now more committed to making sure that member states respect democratic principles, human rights, rule of law and good governance principles are extraordinary steps in the right direction. Of participant importance is the right of the AU (Article 4h) to intervene in a member countries in grave circumstances such as war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. These occurrences are positive developments for the continent. It might also help address the growing concern on the endogenous aspect of Africa's securitization.

The increasing linkage of securitization and development assistance, as previously stated, where some African governments have tapped into the "juicy channel" of receiving development assistance from the US and its allies like the United Kingdom (UK) in the name of fighting against terrorism is another important area that can be addressed by Africa and its international partners. This is where Abrahamsen's discussion on the shifting nature (dealings between the US/UK with Africa) of development/humanitarian issues to the domain of security/militarization as a result of the terror concerns in Africa becomes useful to the analysis.<sup>82</sup> Besides, there are others who have suggested the need for Africa to take the lead in disrupting the growing levels of securitization of

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<sup>78</sup> Aning 2008

<sup>79</sup> Desmidt and Hauck 2017

<sup>80</sup> Ibid: 1-3

<sup>81</sup> Aning 2008; Moolakkattu 2010

<sup>82</sup> Abrahamsen 2005:56

the continent. I share such a view, to some extent, that Africa should take the leading role toward a global security order and governance. While recognizing the importance of this argument, we also need to remind ourselves that the structure of the current global system is still (unfortunately) being influenced by the norms/values of the powerful and dominant players such as the US and Britain, to the extent that it might be extremely difficult for Africa to lead in certain areas (culture of militarism/terrorism) where these powers have vested interests and tend to define/shape the global security discourses to their favor. At the same time, I should note that by recognizing this painful reality of the brutal/unfair global system is certainly not to diminish the importance of Africa's place in world affairs. There is no question that Africa, as this paper contends, has its role in critical areas of security governance, counterterrorism, peace initiatives in helping to maintain a stable global security order.

This paper also posits that genuine partnership that is developed, nurtured and sustained on the foundation of respect and mutual understanding constitute another key element of the dualistic approach that could help Africa achieve its desirable outcome of peace and security governance. What is needed between Africa and the West (X and Y), especially from the US, as we explore ideas on new approaches to the existing institutional security/governing mechanisms regarding Africa's security landscape is genuine partnership. Pertinent questions such as: How involved are Africans and their leaders in setting the agenda on global security issues? Or to what extent are Africans leaders often consulted on matters of security/terrorism on their own soil? Simply put, are Africans at the center of the global construction of security issues? While the answer(s) to these questions are not only obviously in the negative, it appears that minimal efforts are being made to change the status quo. In fact, Schmidt laments on these challenging concerns and suggested that it might be imperative for the voices of African civil society to be heard regarding the debates on foreign involvement and other critical security issues that affect them.<sup>83</sup> Importantly, this paper echoes a similar thought that Africans are overwhelmed by the consequences from the relentless foreign interventions. More importantly, Africa needs to have greater say and consultation on issues, including security matters that directly affect them. In addition to the suggestions to engage Africans in setting the security agenda as the political and policy hallways of Washington and/or London debate these global issues, Africans must equally be proactive in demanding and speaking

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<sup>83</sup> Schmidt 2013: 230

with a strong/common voice on issues that affect the continent as far as the global security policy process is concerned.

Haven examined what could be described as the policy standpoint on the new approaches to African peace and security governance, it is essential to also assess the theoretical element of this paper's stated rationale or objective. That is to find out the extent to which the securitization theory is useful in helping us better understand Africa's security landscape. I describe this element as the *fluidity advantage* of the theory in relation to the African context. I argue that the *fluidity advantage* of the securitization theory offers African countries unique and very crucial opportunity to socially construct, define, and designate what they might consider as their existential threats (new or old) that need urgent attention and extraordinary action. As the Copenhagen thinkers have underscored as well as other scholarly works on the theory, social construction of security or what a society considers as constituting existential threats to their very survival is consistent with the tenets of the securitization theory. In this case, as Buzan and Wæver<sup>84</sup> have argued, the referent object, unlike the traditional conception of security (where an objective referent becomes the center of security), is certainly not the case with the broadened idea of security. To these scholars, military and non-military entities can be defined and socially constructed a security threat once political actors and their audiences (democratic or non-democratic public) have accepted the security designation and willing to support the urgent action that needs to be taken on the issue.<sup>85</sup>

I draw on the above theoretical logic to suggest the need for African governments with collaborative efforts from the AU to assess and construct social issues of concern such as abject poverty, public health problems, underdevelopment, climate change, global drug trafficking through Africa<sup>86</sup> and transnational crime as critical security threats facing the continent. In fact, Paul Williams' work: "Thinking about Security in Africa," which raises some important questions on social construction of security might be useful at this point. To Williams,<sup>87</sup> questions such as whose version of social/security reality is important to Africa? And what is security, and whose security are we talking about? ...are relevant questions to consider. In addition, a similar question of who or what are the most pressing referent objects Africa need to define as eminent security threats must be seriously examined. What Africa needs as we rethink and discuss new approaches

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<sup>84</sup> Buzan and Wæver 1997

<sup>85</sup> Buzan and Wæver 1997; Wilkinson 2007; Williams 2003

<sup>86</sup> Kumah-Abiwu 2014

<sup>87</sup> Williams 2007: 1022

to peace and security governance is to redefine and reframe the externally imposed security threats that had been defined for Africa with little or no consultation with African leaders and civil society groups. It is unfortunate and quite ironic that Africa is imbedded in fighting a globally defined war, in this case the global terror war, that the continent had little to do with in terms of its social contraction. As Buzan and Wæver have reminded us, the ability to socially construct and define what existential threats are and what they are not are central pillars of the securitization theory.<sup>88</sup> From a theoretical perspective, I argue, as consistent with the securitization theory, for Africa to take advantage of the *fluidity idea* to socially construct, frame and define its own security threats. This will constitute another important area of rethinking the securitization theory to the African experience.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

There is no doubt that Africa's security landscape in terms of structure, governance and influence will continue to experience changes as the "global war on terrorism" appears not to slow down from the US and its allies who are committed to fighting the terror war. At the same time, as Williams<sup>89</sup> has reminded us, Africa's image as a haven for terrorist activities and/or a dangerous place that needs strong governments (culture of militarism) with enormous security apparatus supported by the US to help "check the spread of terrorism" would continue to dominate the security discourse in many years to come. In view of this growing culture of militarism across the globe, especially in the post-9/11 era, Africa became one of the focal points for the securitization or militarism in the attempt to sustain and keep the global security order intact.

To understand the dynamics of these issues, especially on the empirical question of whether the wave of militarism is sufficient to capture the challenges facing African peace and security governance, the paper integrated the existing literature (scholarly/policy) with the securitization theory for the analyses. The paper concludes the discussion by underscoring the argument that the securitization theory provides some utility in our understanding of the ongoing securitization of Africa. The paper has also offered some suggestions and policy ideas as scholars, security experts, political/military leaders and ordinary citizens of the continent and outside rethink the continent's

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<sup>88</sup> Buzan and Wæver 1997

<sup>89</sup> Williams 2007

security landscape in terms of new approaches and strategies that can be helpful to Africa's quest for peace and security governance.

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