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## **Securitization of Development in Africa: Challenges of Building Security and Development**

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## Securitization of Development in Africa: Challenges of Building Security and Development

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### Introduction

The African continent's historical trajectory reveals how colonial powers replicated and imposed the nation-state concept. These powers sought to align state structures with their economic and strategic interests, as well as with the prevailing international political balance in Europe and the aspirations for colonial empire-building. The contradictions accompanying state formation have created significant obstacles to achieving development goals and establishing a modern state capable of fostering growth and development.

Following the events of September 11, Africa's importance from a security perspective has grown, mainly due to the continent's areas of instability—characterized by fragile states, weak governing institutions, and limited state control over territorial borders—which provide fertile ground for terrorist activities. Consequently, development policies now necessitate adjustments, with a preference for security-oriented strategies that align with the post-Cold War environment.

The concept of securitizing development has emerged in the discourse surrounding the relationship between security and development. This approach emphasizes the integration of security dimensions into development policies, focusing on areas like social development and human rights. Security agendas and Western aid policies increasingly adopt a "military" security focus, as seen in the enhanced funding for security sector reform programs and regional peacekeeping operations in fragile and ungoverned regions. Through a securitization and discourse analysis approach, this study aims to elucidate the challenges of securitizing development in Africa.

### 1: Security and Development: Broadening Perceptions and Priorities

In the 1994 *Human Development Report* issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the concept of human security was introduced as a critical element for sustaining development. This notion of human security emphasized safeguarding populations during conflicts and the need to protect and uphold development achievements. This approach proposed reframing fundamental human needs under the broader and evolving idea of "security." While human development traditionally centers on well-being, human security emphasizes preserving development gains. (ShahrbanouTajbakhsh, p.105).

This framework of human security contributed new dimensions to the discourse on human development:

- **Firstly**, traditional human development efforts have focused primarily on improving the conditions of the world's impoverished populations, often targeting absolute levels of deprivation. However, such an approach needs a robust strategy for addressing sudden and adverse shifts in well-being. Human security, in contrast, considers the risks of rapid deterioration and acknowledges that human insecurity often stems from existing power structures. As such, it advocates for a protective framework for the most vulnerable, ensuring that social safety nets are in place to respond effectively to sudden losses or disruptions.
- **Secondly**, human development is about expanding individual choices and enabling people to lead fulfilling lives. In that case, human security identifies and addresses the conditions that endanger survival, daily living, and human dignity. These threats include extreme poverty, environmental degradation, deteriorating health, and illiteracy. Therefore, human security serves as both a "precondition" for human development and a guarantee of sustainability. Gaspar notes that human

security emphasizes the "sustainable stability" of resources and services essential to humanitarian development.

- **Thirdly**, human security prioritizes critical aspects of human development by focusing policies on essential goods that promote security and well-being. Reducing threats to human security—whether related to physical safety, economic stability, or environmental health—can enhance overall quality of life. While human development offers a broad array of capabilities, human security targets those most urgently tied to survival, livelihood, and dignity.
- **Finally**, where human development champions “freedoms to” (i.e., expanding choices and opportunities), human security emphasizes “freedoms from”—freedom from fear, poverty, and other existential threats. (Caroline Thomas, p.15)

## 2: Challenges of Building Security and Development in Africa

The interdependence between development and security is often acutely evident, particularly in regions with weak governance. In Africa, fragile governmental structures impact regional stability, limit the capacity to address poverty, and exacerbate rising security threats. These issues challenge practical cooperation and consistently delivering humanitarian and development assistance across the continent. Several critical factors must be considered to sustain security and development in Africa.

### 2-1. Determinants of State Functionality and Challenges to Political Integration

Many scholars argue that the modern African state emerged as an adaptation of the Western colonial system, characterized by an elite-dominated government and an absence of separation between state and government. This concentration of political power has often led to authoritarianism, widespread corruption, and the persistence of colonial-era repression. As a result, many African states have faced persistent political and economic crises, with weakened control over various regions due to internal ethnic, tribal, and regional conflicts. These challenges are further compounded by the rise of ethnic, regional, and religious identities, threatening the state's stability and unity (Al-Nuwayni, p. 58).

Political integration in this context involves the consolidation of legitimate authority over society, the establishment of central governance, and the formation of a cohesive national identity. Jean-Pierre Fogui outlines four critical elements that contribute to successful political integration:

1. The consolidation of central authority to replace fragmented local powers.
2. The promotion of a unified national identity to enhance community solidarity.
3. The development of a positive relationship between governing authorities and the public.
4. Establishing a minimal level of consensus is necessary to enable a cohesive social system (Menier, p. 44).

However, more than these elements are needed to guarantee the effectiveness of political integration. Building on this foundation, Claude Ake proposed seven additional criteria to assess political integration and measure state stability:

- **Degree of Legitimacy:** Reflects the public's confidence in their representatives and how individuals identify with the nation's core values. Legitimacy implies a vision for unifying citizens in the process of nation-building.
- **Adherence to Constitutional Values and Standards:** After independence, some African countries saw constitutional values manipulated by political leaders to consolidate personal authority rather than serve democratic principles.
- **Level of Political Violence:** This criterion gauges political integration by examining obstacles to accessing power through legitimate channels, such as the frequency of military coups, rejection of political pluralism, and factionalism within political parties.
- **Diversity of Political Representation:** This involves ethnic representation in government, political parties, central administration, and civil society. Ethnic mobilization has often been a driver of conflict in Africa, prompting many countries to adopt federal systems that promote sociopolitical balance, thereby enhancing public trust in the state.
- **Degree of Bureaucracy:** Paul Biya, in *For a Liberal Society*, outlines criteria for assessing bureaucracy, including a competitive, accountable public administration and efforts to institutionalize authority, reducing reliance on personalized rule (Claude E., p. 55).
- **Effectiveness of Authority:** This measures the state's legitimacy and acceptance within its borders, a concept often referred to as the degree of political penetration within a country.

### 2-2. Determinants of the State's Functional Failure at the Governance Level

The determinants of state failure are often derived from an analysis of governance across financial institutions. Good governance is considered a fundamental condition for development, as it strengthens the rule of law. The quality of governance plays a critical role in managing instances of failure by observing global facts, which allows for the classification of state failure in terms of the relationship between international engagement, respect for fundamental rights, and internal governance. According to Sandra Eugene, any state seeking to

establish genuine international responsibility must first create material preconditions. Therefore, governance is a system that encompasses various spaces for managing human security.

### 2-3. Determinants of the State's Functional Failure at the Level of Personal (Individual) Security

State failure is viewed as the status granted to individuals within security systems, particularly in the context of emerging threats amidst a complex blend of security, development, and individual survival. This is based on essential human development criteria, such as education rates, illiteracy levels among youth in marginalized areas, and poverty levels.

In association with *Foreign Policy* magazine, the "Fund for Peace" classification remains the most widely used classification by researchers studying failed states. This system provides an annual report on the classification of these countries based on studied criteria. It opens the door to discussions on the phenomenon, such as Why countries fail. What should be done to save them? (Abu Amra, p. 43). These discussions are critical in developing solutions to state failure, and the classification is based on the following indicators:

#### A. Social Indicators

Social indicators of state failure include increasing demographic pressures, refugee movements, internal displacement, and the legacy of hostility that fuels the desire to influence oppressed groups. These elements contribute to widespread migration and instability. Key social indicators include:

- High population density impacts the distribution of essential resources such as food and water.
- Population density in urban areas affects human freedoms, including economic productivity, freedom of movement, social interactions, and religious practices.
- Pressures resulting from population distribution, including age demographics and competing groups.
- The forced extermination of large groups due to conflict or repression led to shortages in food and water and the spread of diseases.
- Inequality and injustice within society.
- Crimes against specific groups or sects remain unpunished.
- The institutionalization of political exclusion.
- The control of a minority over the majority.
- The brain drain is where intellectuals and political opponents flee due to persecution or repressive policies.
- Voluntary migration of the middle class, particularly economic sectors like contractors, business people, and traders, due to deteriorating economic conditions and growing internal alienation. (The Fund For Peace)

#### B. Economic Indicators

Irregular economic development is marked by the continued deterioration of the national economy at varying levels of severity, an increase in corruption rates, and the spread of informal economic transactions. The economic indicators include:

- Inequality between groups in education, wealth distribution, and employment.
- Varying poverty levels, declining education levels, and increasing child mortality rates.
- Comprehensive economic deterioration affects individual incomes, resulting in high bankruptcy rates.
- Sudden and rapid economic collapse, including sharp declines in prices, business revenues, foreign investment, and imbalance in the balance of payments.
- Increased economic deprivation due to austerity measures imposed by the government.
- A rise in illegal activities, such as drug trafficking and smuggling of goods and capital abroad.
- Increased levels of corruption and illegal interactions in various public sectors.
- The state's inability to pay government employees and the armed forces or meet its material obligations to citizens, such as pensions.

#### C. Political Indicators

Political indicators of state failure revolve around the legitimacy and credibility of the ruling system, the state's declining ability to provide public services, the disruption or suspension of the rule of law, the spread of human rights violations, and the growth of a dual security responsibility, where other parties enjoy authority comparable to that of the state. These indicators also reflect political instability, particularly at the institutional level, and the increasing intensity of external interference by state or non-state actors. Key political indicators include:

- Lack of transparency, accountability, and adherence to good governance standards.
- Loss of trust in political institutions, leading citizens to boycott elections.
- Severe deterioration in the provision of essential public services, such as education, healthcare, and transportation.
- There is a rise in political prisoners and increased political violence against civilians.

- Restrictions on rights and freedoms, such as freedom of the press and religious opinion and practice.
- The presence of state-backed militias targeting opposition groups.
- A deepening division between ruling elites and state institutions. (The Fund for Peace)
- Military or paramilitary interventions in the internal affairs of states by various units or actors are often aimed at influencing the local balance of power or preventing the resolution of specific conflicts.
- Over-reliance on external donor intervention and peacekeeping forces.

### **3: Strategies for Securitizing Development in the African Continent**

#### **1. Playing the Role of Agent: "African Solutions to African Problems"**

Following the disastrous failure of the U.S. Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1993 and the international recriminations after the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Western donors quickly withdrew from direct involvement in African peacekeeping operations. In response, the Ugandan, Ethiopian, and Rwandan regimes strategically advocated for the "African solutions to African problems" agenda. This initiative, supported by African nationalist rhetoric, saw these regimes consistently volunteer troops for peacekeeping missions in regions of strategic interest to international donors.

For instance, Uganda contributed troops to peacekeeping efforts in Liberia, volunteered for missions in Sudan, and, since 2007, has been the most significant contributor to the African Union Mission in Somalia. Similarly, Ethiopia has been involved in peacekeeping in Burundi and maintained a steady intervention in Somalia against Islamist extremists with tacit U.S. approval since the late 1990s, becoming a formal participant in the African Union Mission in Somalia in 2014. Rwandan troops have also played a leading role in both African Union and United Nations missions in Darfur since 2004, receiving high praise from senior U.S. military officials.

These actions raise important questions regarding whether these activities should be interpreted as a proactive effort to promote and strengthen security relations with international donors or as the actions of proxies complicating the notion that African states are simply a "bridge" to a pre-established Western security agenda.

#### **2. Privatization of Security and Socialization of Development:**

A second primary strategy African regimes use to secure relationships with donors is the deliberate privatization of security and the socialization of development. Several governments, including those of Sudan, Eritrea, and Zimbabwe (prior to 2008), have sought to limit donor involvement in policymaking, while others have allowed donors a more significant role, particularly in the social development and economic sectors. This has included explicit consent for donors to take a significant role in policymaking in these sectors, effectively "socializing" development while simultaneously "privatizing" other sectors, particularly defense and security.

Over the past decade, the growing role of private military and security companies in African countries has been critical in increasing the region's political, economic, and military influence. Several factors have contributed to the proliferation of these companies:

- Weak State Capacities:** The weakness of the state and the lack of national capabilities at various levels have resulted in the inability of local military forces to address numerous challenges, such as separatist movements and terrorist groups. This has necessitated using private entities to ensure security and maintain control.
- The Spread of Armed Conflicts:** Since the end of the Cold War, widespread armed conflicts, civil wars, and coups in many African countries have created instability, escalated internal problems, and increasing arms trafficking. This has further contributed to the militarization of societies.
- Emergence of Armed Groups and Militias:** The rise of armed groups, warlords, rebels, and militias has posed significant challenges to governments. Often numbering in the thousands, these groups may control parts of their countries or spill over into neighboring states.
- International Companies and the Need for Security:** The growing presence of international companies in African countries and an increasing awareness of security risks have led these companies to rely on private security firms for protection.
- The Role of Global Institutions and Economic Pressures:** International institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have pressured African governments to reduce the size and cost of the public sector, including outsourcing security services. Structural adjustment programs, implemented over several decades, have weakened the administrative capacity of African states, particularly in the security sector. Economic austerity measures led to declining police and military wages, prompting officers to exploit their authority for personal gain. This has resulted in widespread corruption, bribery, and criminal collusion, eroding public confidence in state security forces.
- F. The Resources of Private Actors:** Private actors, such as security companies and development organizations, often possess resources that exceed the state's. This enables them to exert significant influence over security governance, surpassing the capacity of governments in countries with weak bureaucratic structures.

### **3. Security Sector Governance in Africa and Legitimizing Security Arrangements**



Promoting security sector reform (SSR) in post-conflict states is a critical task for the African Union (AU), which is aligned with the frameworks set by the United Nations, the World Bank, and other donors. These efforts aim to create consensus around the rational and legal version of the Western Weberian state model, which emphasizes the state's monopoly on the use of force (African Union Commission, 2014).

Gaps in SSR implementation often arise from an inadequate assessment of the post-conflict security environment. By analyzing recurring patterns in SSR efforts across Africa, the failure of these initiatives can be attributed to several key elements:

- **Failure of Security Assessment and National Ownership:** A prerequisite for the success of any proposed SSR program is the support of the national government. However, consultations with relevant community stakeholders, or even with the government itself, are often not conducted in a way that addresses real security needs. For instance, in Guinea-Bissau, civil society was excluded from the process to guarantee self-determination, with minimal local co-determination implemented through selective consultations (Detzner, 2017, pp. 116, 162). Similarly, in Liberia in 2006, years after security sector reform efforts had begun, the U.S. government, tasked with rebuilding the army, ordered a comprehensive security review with the RAND Corporation. However, the Liberian government was not involved in broad national consultations, which were later integrated into the Liberia Post-Conflict Development Strategy (Spatz, p. 12).
- **Failure of Disarmament and Force Integration Processes:** This issue arises from the need for more attention to long-term considerations in many peace agreements, compounded by limited donor timelines (Donor Timescales), which diminishes the incentives for combatants to maintain peace after aid ends. In cases such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Libya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, inadequate funding has led to the exclusion of combatants from the process, resulting in the resumption of attacks and recruitment (Ball, 2014, p. 17).
- **Formatting Failure:** The need for a comprehensive strategy for security sector reform underscores the importance of coordination in the success or failure of African SSR efforts. For example, as the primary donor, the United States took responsibility for reforming the army but delegated the police reform to other UN agencies and donors, resulting in uneven outcomes. Similarly, the failure of coordination within the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has hindered its ability to reform the security sector in Africa effectively. AMISOM has called on each contributing country to train and equip its security forces according to its needs and standards, raising concerns about the Somali National Armed Forces' ability to operate cohesively.
- **Neglected Parties and the Exclusion of Non-State Actors:** Human security threats are central to SSR, given the destabilizing effects of everyday insecurity. However, the security sector agencies most involved in addressing these threats—the police, prisons, and judiciary—have consistently been neglected in post-conflict efforts across African countries. In Liberia, for example, the exclusion of the judiciary and prisons squandered the opportunity to build public confidence in the government's ability to prosecute criminals. This challenge is also evident when governments resist including non-state actors in SSR efforts despite their capacity to provide vital security services. Donors must consider normative approaches (Normative Avenues) and engage in discussions that promote security sector reform abroad while recognizing that there is no singular template for statehood and security sector reform in post-conflict states.

## Conclusion

Securitization theory has emerged as a practical conceptual framework for understanding and explaining the behavior of authoritarian regimes in Africa, which attempt to control their populations through language and discourse. By invoking exceptional situations, these regimes justify the imposition of undemocratic measures. This theory has illuminated the broader implications of these actions, particularly about the changing development dynamics across the African continent. Through the securitization process, international development aid has been redirected away from its original objectives, instead funneling resources into military and security sectors. This shift has been justified under the pretext of combating international terrorism and organized crime, masking hidden agendas and economic interests tied to international actors.

A range of official international players, including Western governments (donors), various international financial institutions, and African governments and regimes, have been complicit in this systematic process. This has led to significant coordination among these parties, who have utilized a dual securitization approach, combining total securitization with localized forms.

The consequences of this process have been profoundly detrimental to Africa's development trajectory, particularly in financing and fostering the economic dynamics necessary for achieving the continent's desired renaissance. Instead of promoting growth and progress, this approach has exacerbated the state of underdevelopment in many African countries, deepening dependency while simultaneously protecting and empowering authoritarian regimes. This highlights the urgent need to dismantle securitization, restore focus on the African development agenda, and neutralize it from political considerations. Furthermore, Africa must seek

new partnerships with emerging international powers such as India and Turkey while fostering independent development dynamics and promoting internal cooperation.

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