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 deliberate a speech act that securitized Africa in terms of being a valued *strategic frontier*[i] and a threat to national security. That is not to say that U.S 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" evolution of humankind— 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 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. At this juncture, in the 1990's, and more so after the Global War On Terror commenced, U.S 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 (Shogol, 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: European Command (EUCOM), Central Command (CENTCOM) and Pacific Command (PACOM)—this clearly represented Africa lacking strategic importance amongst U.S 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 follows:

> 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 U.S. Africa Command by the end of the fiscal year 2008. This new command will strengthen our <u>security</u> 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 <u>security</u> to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa. We will be consulting with African leaders to seek their thoughts on how Africa Command can respond to <u>security</u> 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[ii], this manuscript seeks to initiate a scholarly debate that seeks to analyze the consequences of U.S 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 opening quote of this manuscript – 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 U.S 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 U.S has applied the process of securitization by articulating exceptional speech acts thereby justifying U.S foreign expansionism in the name of securing *ideas* that emanated from the "city on the hill", and the *belief* that the U.S 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 securitized (threatening) manner. This is reflected in U.S speech actors adopting a language of security-development by socially constructing Africa as discursively *unexceptional* 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 U.S economic-frontier in Africa. It is in this section that we highlight securitization 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** section 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

severalproposed recommendations is suggesting a (de)securitized approach in addressing issues 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 by considering African solutions to African problems. To produce a synergistic relationship between the AU and AFRICOM, and for a rapprochement to occur between AFRICOM skeptics and appraisers, we recommend a development approach that does not impose itself on the continent and/or *tells* Africans what to do, rather, the section concludes by recommending an approach that prioritizes cooperating and consulting African leaders in developing mutual South-North solutions to eliminate the development of underdevelopment.

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[i] I use Frederick Jackson Turner's term "frontier" which he expanded in his thesis entitled *"The Frontier In American History"* to denote that the U.S has expanded its continental frontiers internationally.

[ii] I do not use the term anniversary because AFRICOM has not honoured its mission statement.