



U.S. Africa Command and AU Agenda 2063: Aligning Security Cooperation with Human Security and Development

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Received: 20 May 2026 | Revised: 22 June 2026 | Revised: 27 June 2026 | Published: 26 July 2026

Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the relationship between United States Africa Command (U.S. AFRICOM) and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, focusing on how security cooperation can contribute to sustainable human development through social policy alignment. The study explores how AFRICOM's security activities may support African development priorities while preserving African ownership.

Research Methodology: The study employs a qualitative documentary research design. Data were obtained from AU Agenda 2063 documents, the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2024–2033), AFRICOM policy materials, international development reports, and relevant security literature. The collected documents were analysed thematically based on four themes: security cooperation, social policy, human security, and African institutional ownership.

Results: The findings indicate that AFRICOM's primary mandate remains security cooperation and should not replace civilian development institutions. However, its activities in institutional capacity-building, professional military education, humanitarian assistance, crisis response, and partner-capacity development can indirectly support Agenda 2063 when aligned with African priorities. Effective alignment requires accountable security institutions, social investment, community resilience, and strong African coordination.

Conclusions: The strategic value of AFRICOM should be assessed by its contribution to human security, institutional accountability, and sustainable development rather than military assistance alone.

Limitations: The study relies on documentary sources and does not include empirical perspectives from African stakeholders.

Contributions: This study proposes an Africa-led Security–Social Policy Alignment Framework integrating security cooperation, human security, and development objectives while strengthening African ownership and strategic autonomy.

Keywords: AFRICOM, African Union, Agenda 2063, Human Security, Security Cooperation

How to Cite: Otakwu, A. A. (2026). U.S. Africa Command and AU Agenda 2063: Aligning Security Cooperation with Human Security and Development. *Advanced Studies in Law, Policy Innovation, and Institutional Reform (ASLPI)*, 1(3), 151-164.

1. Introduction

Africa development trajectory cannot be separated from the continent's security environment. The African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 was designed not merely as an economic development strategy but as a long-term transformation framework connecting prosperity, peace, governance, human development, gender equality, youth empowerment, and Africa role in global affairs. The AU identifies Agenda 2063 as a strategic framework for achieving inclusive and sustainable development,

continental integration, self-determination, and collective prosperity through an Africa-driven vision ([African, 2015](#)). This approach is increasingly relevant because contemporary insecurity in Africa occurs within environments characterised by unemployment, inequality, institutional weakness, displacement, food insecurity, limited access to education and healthcare, environmental pressures, and restricted opportunities for young people. Although these conditions do not directly cause terrorism or violent conflict, they may weaken household resilience, reduce state legitimacy, increase vulnerability to shocks, and create conditions that can be exploited by violent or criminal actors ([Mbowa, Eton, & Tushabe, 2025](#); [Kondo, Mustvangwa, & Masere, 2025](#)).

The relationship between security and social development has therefore become increasingly important within contemporary development thinking. Social policy areas such as social protection, education, employment, healthcare, housing, and food security are not merely welfare interventions but also contribute to the capacity of communities to absorb shocks and maintain stability ([Van, 2018](#)). The World Bank highlights that significant gaps in social protection coverage remain concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected environments, where populations experience greater exposure to poverty, displacement, and insecurity. Consequently, social policy should be understood as part of a broader resilience framework that complements security institutions by addressing the underlying vulnerabilities that allow crises to deepen ([Cárdenas, Fuentes, Ferrer, Urbina, Olivares, Vidal, & Rasmussen, 2025](#); [Mukhlis, Fahmi, & Umayasari, 2026](#); [Njuguna & Musya, 2025](#)).

This perspective is embedded within Agenda 2063. Aspiration 1 emphasises inclusive growth, sustainable development, poverty reduction, decent employment, social security, education, healthcare, and resilient communities, while Aspiration 4 focuses on peace and security through conflict prevention, stronger institutions, and responses to emerging threats. Aspiration 6 places people, particularly women, youth, and children, at the centre of development, while Aspiration 7 highlights Africa role as a strong and influential global partner capable of shaping its own development priorities ([African, 2015](#)). These aspirations demonstrate the interconnected relationship between security cooperation and social policy. Security creates the conditions necessary for development, while inclusive development strengthens the social foundations required for sustainable peace #st.

Within this context, the role of the United States Africa Command (U.S. AFRICOM) requires careful examination. Established as a unified command responsible for U.S. military activities and security cooperation across Africa, AFRICOM focuses primarily on countering transnational threats, strengthening security partnerships, responding to crises, and supporting regional stability ([United, 2026a](#)). Its activities extend beyond military operations to include security cooperation, professional military education, institutional capacity-building, maritime security, crisis response, and humanitarian assistance. These programmes may indirectly contribute to broader development objectives through support for institutional accountability, rule of law, civilian control, healthcare, education, and humanitarian needs.

However, AFRICOM should not be viewed as a substitute for African development institutions or social-policy mechanisms. The central issue is how a security-oriented institution can contribute to an African-led development agenda without replacing African ownership and decision-making authority. Agenda 2063 explicitly emphasises partnerships that respond to African priorities while encouraging greater responsibility for financing and managing Africa development. Therefore, the appropriate approach is not institutional substitution but strategic alignment, where AFRICOM security capabilities complement the priorities established by African governments, the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and civilian development institutions.

The implementation of the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) 2024–2033 further strengthens the importance of this alignment. The AU describes the second decade as a period of acceleration aimed at transforming broad aspirations into measurable outcomes through seven major development targets. These priorities include expanding social protection coverage, reducing poverty, increasing youth employment, strengthening entrepreneurship, improving skills development, and

enhancing youth participation in governance. Such objectives demonstrate that social development is not separate from security but represents a central component of long-term stability and resilience.

The demographic conditions of Africa further reinforce the need for integrated approaches. With more than 400 million young people aged 15–35, youth development remains a critical governance and development priority ([United, 2026a](#)). The International Labour Organization (ILO) similarly identifies youth employment, decent work, skills development, and social protection as major challenges requiring coordinated policy responses, particularly in African contexts ([Rantanen, Muchiri, & Lehtinen, 2020](#)). These realities suggest that security cooperation should not be evaluated solely through military outcomes but also through its contribution to creating conditions that enable education, employment, resilience, and inclusive development.

Despite increasing recognition of the security-development relationship, an important analytical gap remains regarding how external security partnerships can be aligned with African social-policy objectives. Security institutions often focus on threats, operational capabilities, and military readiness, while development institutions concentrate on poverty reduction, employment, healthcare, and social protection. In fragile contexts, however, these domains are interconnected. Insecurity can disrupt education, livelihoods, healthcare systems, and social networks, while weak development conditions can reduce community resilience and increase vulnerability to instability ([Sumberg, Fox, Flynn, Mader, & Oosterom, 2021](#)).

The challenge for AFRICOM is therefore determining how security cooperation can support the objectives of Agenda 2063 while maintaining African ownership and institutional responsibility. External security assistance that is disconnected from local priorities may become overly militarised or perceived as external influence. Conversely, cooperation based on African priorities, institutional accountability, capacity transfer, and social resilience may contribute to stronger strategic autonomy and sustainable development. Recent scholarship has similarly highlighted the need to critically examine the relationship between militarised approaches and humanitarian objectives in AFRICOM engagement in Africa ([Mujana, Chakunda, Chindoga, & Mugari, 2026](#)).

Against this background, this study examines the strategic relationship between U.S. AFRICOM and the security-development aspirations of AU Agenda 2063. Specifically, it analyses the role of social policy in advancing human security and development priorities, examines how AFRICOM security cooperation and humanitarian capabilities may complement African resilience objectives without displacing African ownership, and develops an Africa-led framework for aligning security cooperation, social policy, and Agenda 2063 implementation.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis/es Development

2.1 U.S. Africa Command

The United States Africa Command (U.S. AFRICOM) represents the institutional mechanism through which the United States conducts security engagement across Africa. Established as a geographic combatant command of the U.S. Department of Defense and becoming fully operational in 2008, AFRICOM is responsible for military operations, exercises, and security cooperation across Africa, except Egypt, and surrounding maritime areas ([Telci & Sefkatli, 2024](#)). Its stated mission focuses on countering transnational threats, strengthening partner security capabilities, supporting crisis response, and promoting regional security and stability. However, AFRICOM role extends beyond conventional military operations through activities such as professional military education, institutional capacity-building, maritime security cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and partner-force development ([Oyosoro, & Herbert, 2021](#); [Stephan, Mohtar, Daher, Hillers, Ganter, & Sarni, 2018](#)).

In contemporary security studies, AFRICOM engagement reflects the increasing interaction between traditional security approaches and broader human-security concerns. While AFRICOM remains fundamentally a security institution, its programmes may influence wider governance and development outcomes through strengthening institutional accountability, professional standards,

civilian control, and crisis-response capacity ([Demmers & Gould, 2018](#)). Therefore, this study does not conceptualise AFRICOM as a development institution but examines its potential contribution within a broader security-development framework. The analytical focus is on how security cooperation can complement African-led development priorities without replacing the authority of African institutions.

2.2 Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063 is the African Union's long-term strategic framework aimed at transforming Africa into an integrated, prosperous, peaceful, and self-determined continent. Unlike a narrowly economic development agenda, Agenda 2063 incorporates multiple dimensions of transformation, including inclusive growth, governance, peace and security, social development, youth empowerment, gender equality, and Africa's global position ([African, 2015](#)). The framework recognises that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing the structural conditions that influence peace, stability, and human welfare ([Osimen, Okpere, Dele-Dada, Oladipo, Odeigah, & Ade-Ibijola, 2025](#)).

This study particularly focuses on Aspirations 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7 because they provide the strongest connection between security cooperation and social policy. Aspiration 1 emphasises inclusive development, poverty reduction, employment, education, healthcare, and resilient communities. Aspiration 4 focuses on peace and security through conflict prevention and stronger institutions. Meanwhile, Aspirations 6 and 7 highlight people-centred development, youth empowerment, and Africa's role as an active global partner ([African, 2015](#)). These dimensions demonstrate that Agenda 2063 approaches security not only through military capability but also through social resilience, institutional effectiveness, and human development.

2.3 Social Policy

Social policy refers to public strategies and institutional interventions designed to improve welfare, reduce vulnerability, expand access to essential services, and promote inclusive participation in society. It encompasses areas such as social protection, education, healthcare, employment, skills development, food security, housing, and access to basic services. Within development studies, social policy is increasingly recognised not only as a welfare mechanism but also as an instrument for strengthening resilience and reducing structural vulnerabilities ([Bonvin & Laruffa, 2018](#)).

In the context of Africa's security challenges, social policy has an important relationship with stability and human development. Limited access to employment, education, healthcare, and social protection can increase community vulnerability, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected environments. Agenda 2063 reflects this perspective by placing social development at the centre of continental transformation, particularly through its emphasis on poverty reduction, decent employment, social protection, and resilient communities ([African, 2015](#)). Therefore, this study examines social policy as a complementary dimension of security cooperation, where improvements in social conditions may contribute to stronger community resilience and sustainable peace.

2.4 Human Security

Human security provides an alternative perspective that expands security analysis beyond the protection of territory and state institutions toward the protection of individuals and communities. The concept, introduced through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, emphasises freedom from fear, freedom from want, and the protection of human dignity as essential components of security ([United, 1994](#)). This approach challenges traditional security perspectives that focus primarily on military threats by highlighting social, economic, health, and environmental dimensions of insecurity ([Marson, Eagly, & Russell, 2023](#); [Nwosu, Obalum, & Ananti, 2024](#)).

Within the African context, human security aligns closely with the objectives of Agenda 2063, which connects peace and security with prosperity, education, healthcare, social inclusion, and people-centred development. Human security therefore provides an important analytical lens for

understanding why security cooperation should consider broader social conditions rather than focusing exclusively on military capabilities. In this study, human security serves as the conceptual bridge connecting AFRICOM's security activities with Agenda 2063's development objectives ([Daoudy, Sowers, & Weinthal, 2022](#)).

2.5 Security Cooperation

Security cooperation refers to structured engagements between states and institutions aimed at strengthening security capabilities, improving institutional effectiveness, enhancing interoperability, and addressing shared security challenges ([Grgić & Wilkins, 2025](#)). Such cooperation may include capacity-building, information exchange, professional training, joint exercises, crisis preparedness, and institutional development. Contemporary security cooperation increasingly incorporates governance and institutional dimensions, recognising that sustainable security depends not only on operational capacity but also on accountable and effective institutions ([Narra, 2025](#)).

AFRICOM's security cooperation activities include professional military education, partner-capacity development, institutional strengthening, humanitarian assistance, and cooperative military engagements. However, effective security cooperation requires alignment with local priorities and institutional ownership ([Elnaiem, Mohamed-Ahmed, Zumla, Mecaskey, Charron, Abakar, & Dar, 2023](#); [Sundram, 2025](#)). In the African context, cooperation must therefore support, rather than replace, African-led mechanisms established through the AU and Regional Economic Communities. This perspective positions security cooperation as a potential contributor to human security and development when implemented through principles of partnership, accountability, and strategic alignment.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory provides the primary theoretical foundation for this study by expanding the understanding of security beyond traditional state-centred and military-oriented perspectives. The concept emerged prominently through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, which argued that security should focus not only on the protection of states from external threats but also on safeguarding individuals and communities from conditions that undermine human dignity and well-being ([United, 1994](#)). Human security encompasses multiple dimensions, including economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. This broader perspective is particularly relevant to Africa, where insecurity is often interconnected with poverty, unemployment, weak institutions, displacement, limited access to basic services, and social vulnerability ([Ferris, & Weerasinghe, 2020](#); [Koundouri, & Dellis, 2023](#)).

Within the context of Agenda 2063, Human Security Theory provides an important framework for understanding the relationship between peace, security, and development. The AU's development vision does not separate security from human welfare but recognises that sustainable peace requires improvements in education, healthcare, employment, social protection, gender equality, and institutional governance ([African, 2015](#)). Therefore, security cooperation should not be evaluated solely through military effectiveness but also through its contribution to creating conditions in which communities are protected, institutions function effectively, and individuals can pursue sustainable livelihoods ([Ashara, 2025](#)).

Applied to U.S. AFRICOM, this theory does not suggest that military institutions should replace development actors. Rather, it provides a framework for assessing whether security cooperation contributes indirectly to human security outcomes. Activities such as professional military education, institutional capacity-building, crisis-response mechanisms, and humanitarian assistance may support human security when they strengthen accountability, civilian protection, institutional effectiveness, and community stability. Consequently, AFRICOM's relevance is assessed not by its transformation

into a development institution but by its ability to contribute to an enabling environment for broader social and development objectives.

2.6.2 Resilience Theory

Resilience Theory complements Human Security Theory by explaining how individuals, institutions, and communities develop the capacity to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from social, economic, environmental, and security-related shocks. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, resilience is increasingly recognised as an essential component of sustainable development because communities often face repeated crises that cannot be addressed through short-term security responses alone. Resilience therefore emphasises the importance of institutional capacity, adaptive systems, social networks, and access to resources that enable societies to maintain essential functions during periods of disruption ([Elmakki, 2025](#)).

This perspective is highly relevant to Agenda 2063 because the framework places significant emphasis on resilient communities, inclusive development, social protection, youth empowerment, and institutional strengthening. The Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2024–2033) highlights the importance of expanding social protection systems, improving livelihoods, strengthening human capital, and increasing community capacity to manage vulnerabilities. From this perspective, security cooperation can contribute to resilience when it supports institutions capable of preventing crises, protecting populations, maintaining stability, and facilitating recovery ([De, 2021](#)).

In relation to AFRICOM, Resilience Theory helps explain how security cooperation may contribute beyond immediate threat reduction. Capacity-building initiatives, institutional reforms, crisis-response capabilities, and cooperation with African security institutions may strengthen the ability of states and communities to respond to emerging challenges. However, resilience outcomes depend on factors beyond security assistance, including African ownership, civilian governance, social investment, and coordination with development institutions.

2.6.3 Theoretical Application to the Study

The integration of Human Security Theory and Resilience Theory provides the analytical framework for examining the relationship between AFRICOM's security cooperation and Agenda 2063's development objectives. Human Security Theory explains why security outcomes should be evaluated based on their effects on individuals and communities, while Resilience Theory explains how institutions and societies develop the capacity to sustain stability and recover from disruptions.

The theoretical relationship applied in this study can be represented as:

Security Cooperation → Institutional Capability → Civilian Protection → Social Stability →
Community Resilience → Agenda 2063 Outcomes

However, this relationship is not assumed to be automatic. Security assistance may strengthen operational capacity without necessarily producing improvements in human development or social conditions. The transition from security cooperation to sustainable development depends on several mediating factors, including African ownership, civilian oversight, institutional accountability, coordination with development actors, effective social-policy implementation, and measurable outcomes ([Hosseini & Seilani, 2025](#)).

Therefore, this study conceptualises AFRICOM as an enabling actor within a broader African security-development ecosystem rather than the primary driver of Agenda 2063 implementation. The achievement of Agenda 2063 outcomes remains dependent on African institutions, national governments, regional organisations, and communities that determine development priorities and translate security conditions into sustainable human development.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative documentary research design. Documentary research is appropriate because the subject concerns policies, strategic frameworks, institutional mandates and long-term development objectives rather than primary measurement of individual behaviour. Data were drawn from AU Agenda 2063 documents, the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2024–2033, AFRICOM institutional publications and posture materials, World Bank and ILO reports, UNDP human-security literature and relevant scholarly studies. The analysis was conducted thematically around four themes: security cooperation, social policy, human security and African institutional ownership. Particular attention was given to the relationship between the objectives of Agenda 2063 and the functions that AFRICOM can legitimately perform within its military mandate.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Africom and the Security Dimension of Agenda 2063

The establishment of AFRICOM reflected the growing strategic importance of Africa to U.S. foreign and security policy. When the command was created, the United States presented it as a mechanism for coordinating military engagement with African partners while contributing to peace, security and development. Since becoming operational, AFRICOM has developed a broad security-cooperation architecture involving partner militaries, exercises, professional military education, maritime security, counterterrorism cooperation, institutional capacity-building and crisis response.

This mandate corresponds most directly with Aspiration 4 of Agenda 2063, which calls for a peaceful and secure Africa, stronger conflict-prevention mechanisms and effective continental peace and security institutions ([African, 2015](#)). AFRICOM can therefore complement, but should not replace, the AU Peace and Security Council, African Peace and Security Architecture, RECs and national security institutions. The appropriate relationship is one of capacity reinforcement and interoperability rather than institutional substitution. African security institutions must remain responsible for defining threats, priorities and operational requirements within their jurisdictions.

The distinction becomes especially important because Agenda 2063's peace-and-security aspiration is not restricted to military power. It includes governance, accountability, transparency, reconciliation and the addressing of structural causes of conflict ([African, 2015](#)). AFRICOM's own security-cooperation programmes recognise the importance of accountability, rule of law, professional military education and civilian control. This creates an important area of convergence: security cooperation can strengthen African defence institutions while simultaneously reinforcing professional standards that protect civilian authority and constitutional governance.

4.2 Social Policy as a Security and Development Instrument

Social policy occupies a central position within Agenda 2063. Aspiration 1 identifies poverty, inequality, hunger, employment, social security, education, health, economic transformation and community resilience as interconnected priorities ([African, 2015](#)). The Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan reinforces this orientation by setting targets for social protection and youth employment. It proposes expanding social-protection coverage by 30%, reaching at least half of people below the poverty line, increasing domestic social-protection financing by 60% and improving continental social-security frameworks. These commitments demonstrate that social protection is not merely an afterthought to security policy; it is part of the continent's transformation strategy.

4.3 Education and Human Capital

Education is a critical component of Agenda 2063's human-capital strategy. Aspiration 1 seeks an educated population and a skills revolution based on science, technology and innovation, while Aspiration 6 emphasises opportunities for youth and children ([African, 2015](#)). Education can improve

employability, social mobility and civic participation, while prolonged exclusion from education can deepen vulnerability to exploitation and marginalisation. It would therefore be inappropriate to treat education merely as a social-sector responsibility when insecurity itself can destroy schools, displace teachers and interrupt learning.

AFRICOM's role should nevertheless remain carefully bounded. It should not design African curricula or control education policy. Its contribution can instead occur through areas where military capability intersects with educational resilience: protection of educational infrastructure in conflict-affected environments, disaster-response training, engineering assistance, logistics, medical support, professional military education and partnerships that strengthen the capacity of African security institutions to operate in ways that protect civilian educational spaces. Humanitarian assistance programmes already include education and infrastructure-related activities.

4.4 Youth Employment and Productive Inclusion

Youth empowerment represents one of the strongest intersections between Agenda 2063 and security policy. Africa has more than 400 million people aged 15–35, and the AU regards investment in this population as essential to capturing the continent's demographic dividend. The STYIP's target of reducing youth unemployment to 14% and increasing youth-owned businesses by 10% recognises that economic inclusion must accompany demographic growth. The AU–ILO Youth Employment Strategy similarly places decent employment, entrepreneurship, skills and multi-stakeholder action at the centre of youth development.

The security relevance is indirect but important. Young people without meaningful opportunities are not automatically security threats; nevertheless, prolonged unemployment, exclusion and lack of social mobility can weaken social cohesion and create environments in which criminal or violent organisations can exploit grievances. Social policy should therefore focus on productive inclusion rather than securitising youth. AFRICOM can complement this agenda through technical training linked to disaster management, maritime safety, engineering, logistics, cyber security, communications and other legitimate skills where military institutions possess specialised expertise. Such initiatives should be designed with civilian ministries, universities, technical institutions and private-sector partners so that training produces transferable civilian capabilities.

4.5 Social Protection and Shock Resilience

Social protection provides another direct connection between Agenda 2063 and security. The World Bank reports that more than two billion people in low- and middle-income countries lack adequate social protection and that over one billion uncovered people are concentrated in Africa and South Asia. In fragile and conflict-affected areas, social protection can help households absorb economic shocks, protect consumption, preserve human capital and facilitate recovery. The AU's STYIP consequently treats social protection as a mechanism for building resilient individuals, households and communities.

AFRICOM cannot substitute for national social-protection systems. Cash transfers, pensions, food assistance, employment programmes and social registries properly belong to civilian governments and development institutions. Its legitimate contribution is to help create security conditions in which these systems can reach vulnerable populations. During crises, military logistics, engineering, transport, medical and disaster-response capabilities can help protect humanitarian corridors and support emergency operations where civilian capacity is overwhelmed. The principle should be that military capabilities enable humanitarian and social-policy delivery without militarising civilian welfare systems.

4.6 Health and Humanitarian Assistance

Health is another Agenda 2063 priority. Aspiration 1 calls for healthy and well-nourished citizens and expanded access to quality healthcare, particularly for women and girls ([African, 2015](#)). AFRICOM's humanitarian-assistance activities include healthcare, education, infrastructure and humanitarian

supplies, particularly where humanitarian conditions threaten stability and prosperity. Such programmes can be valuable in remote or crisis-affected communities, especially when local civilian capacity is severely constrained.

However, humanitarian assistance should remain needs-based and coordinated with civilian authorities. It should not be used primarily as a mechanism for winning political allegiance or expanding military influence. This is particularly important because the intersection between militarism and humanitarianism can create questions about neutrality, perception and local ownership ([Mujana et al., 2026](#)). The appropriate approach is therefore to ensure that AFRICOM humanitarian assistance complements AU, national and humanitarian-agency systems, follows locally identified needs and strengthens local capacity rather than creating parallel structures.

4.7 Africom, Women, Youth and Community Resilience

Agenda 2063's Aspiration 6 provides perhaps the strongest social-policy foundation for linking security and development. It envisages an Africa whose development is people-driven and specifically identifies women, youth and children as central to the continent's transformation ([African, 2015](#)). The aspiration calls for gender equality, elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls, youth empowerment, access to education, health and employment and the protection of children.

Security institutions can either reinforce or undermine these objectives. Where security forces are accountable, professional and respectful of human rights, they can contribute to safer environments in which women and young people participate in economic and political life. Where security institutions are abusive or unaccountable, insecurity may deepen even when operational capability increases. AFRICOM's emphasis on professional military education, civilian control, accountability and rule of law therefore has relevance to Agenda 2063's governance and people-centred development objectives.

A constructive model would involve incorporating women and youth into security-sector dialogue, early-warning systems, disaster preparedness, community resilience programmes and peacebuilding. This would operationalise Agenda 2063's people-driven principle while avoiding the tendency to treat communities only as recipients of security. Communities should instead become partners in identifying threats, protecting vulnerable groups, supporting early warning and designing local resilience strategies.

4.8 African Ownership, Partnership and Strategic Autonomy

Agenda 2063's Aspiration 7 introduces a critical principle for evaluating AFRICOM: Africa should be a strong, united and influential global partner and progressively take responsibility for financing its development ([African, 2015](#)). The Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan similarly calls for Africa to refocus partnerships around African priorities while reducing aid dependency. Consequently, the objective of U.S.–Africa security cooperation should not be permanent external dependence but sustainable African capability.

This requires a shift from an assistance model toward a capability-transfer model. Training should progressively create African instructors; equipment programmes should include maintenance and lifecycle planning; intelligence cooperation should strengthen African analytical institutions; exercises should build African command-and-control capacity; and humanitarian projects should strengthen local systems. The relevant performance question is therefore not simply how much assistance is provided, but what African capability remains when external assistance is reduced.

Such an approach is consistent with AFRICOM's own stated objective of helping African states and regional organisations strengthen their defence capabilities so that Africans can address their own security threats. It also aligns with Agenda 2063's emphasis on self-determination, African partnerships and reduced dependency. The partnership is strongest when external resources accelerate African institutional capacity rather than substitute for it.

4.9 An Africa-Led Security–Social Policy Alignment Framework

The study proposes an Africa-led Security–Social Policy Alignment Framework (ASSPAF) to connect AFRICOM engagement with Agenda 2063. The framework consists of four mutually reinforcing pillars.

4.9.1 Pillar One: Capable and Accountable Security Institutions

The first pillar focuses on professional, rights-respecting and accountable security institutions. AFRICOM cooperation should prioritise professional military education, civilian control, institutional planning, logistics, intelligence, counterterrorism, maritime security, disaster response and other areas identified by African governments and regional organisations. The objective should be measurable institutional capacity rather than indefinite external dependence. This pillar corresponds primarily with Agenda 2063 Aspirations 3 and 4, which emphasise capable institutions, rule of law, peace, security and effective continental security mechanisms ([African, 2015](#)).

4.9.2 Pillar Two: Social Investment in Vulnerable Populations

The second pillar links security environments with social-policy priorities. Security cooperation should be coordinated with civilian institutions responsible for education, health, employment, social protection, food security and humanitarian affairs. In conflict-affected areas, stabilisation planning should include restoration of schools, health facilities, markets, livelihoods and social-protection systems. This directly advances Aspiration 1 and the STYIP's social-protection and youth-employment targets.

4.9.3 Pillar Three: Community Resilience and Civilian Protection

The third pillar recognises communities as security actors rather than passive beneficiaries. Local authorities, traditional institutions, women, youth, civil society, religious organisations and community-based organisations should participate in early warning, peacebuilding, disaster preparedness and civilian-protection systems. This corresponds with Agenda 2063's emphasis on people-driven development, peace education, conflict prevention and community resilience ([African, 2015](#)).

4.9.4 Pillar Four: African Ownership and Joint Accountability

The fourth pillar establishes governance arrangements for external partnerships. AU institutions, RECs and national governments should define priorities, while U.S. agencies provide support within agreed mandates. Joint monitoring should assess capability transfer, civilian protection, social outcomes, institutional sustainability and local ownership. This pillar is essential to Aspiration 7's objective of strategic partnerships that respond to African priorities and reduce dependency.

Table 1. Alignment of AFRICOM engagement with agenda 2063

Agenda 2063 Priority	Relevant Security Interface	Potential AFRICOM Contribution	African Lead
Poverty and social protection	Crisis resilience and protection of vulnerable communities	Logistics, emergency response and enabling security conditions	National governments/AU social-development institutions
Education and skills	Human-capital resilience and professional capacity	Professional military education, technical training and specialised skills	Education ministries, AU, national institutions
Health and nutrition	Crisis response and continuity of essential services	Medical/disaster-response capabilities and humanitarian assistance	Health ministrie/AU humanitarian institutions

Agenda 2063 Priority	Relevant Security Interface	Potential AFRICOM Contribution	African Lead
Youth empowerment	Prevention of exclusion and productive participation	Technical, cyber, maritime, engineering and disaster-response skills	Youth ministries, education institutions/private sector
Women and girls	Civilian protection and inclusive security	Gender-responsive security-sector capacity building	AU, governments, women-led organisations
Peace and security	Counterterrorism, conflict prevention and crisis response	Training, intelligence, exercises and institutional capacity	AU/RECs/national security institutions
Governance and rule of law	Accountable security institutions	Professional military education, civilian control and rule-of-law training	National governments/AU
African strategic autonomy	Sustainable local capability	Capability transfer and institutionalisation	AU/RECs/member states

Table 1 presents the alignment between AFRICOM engagement and the priorities of Agenda 2063. The table illustrates how security cooperation may complement African development objectives through specific security interfaces, potential AFRICOM contributions, and the continued leadership role of African institutions. The alignment demonstrates that AFRICOM's contribution is primarily supportive by creating enabling security conditions, strengthening institutional capacity, and assisting crisis response, while Agenda 2063 implementation remains led by African governments, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, and relevant national institutions.

4.10 Challenges to Implementation

The first challenge is militarisation of development. If social problems are interpreted primarily through a security lens, poverty, unemployment and youth exclusion may be treated as threats rather than development problems. Such securitisation can distort resource allocation and weaken civilian ownership. Social policy must therefore remain principally under civilian institutions even when security actors contribute to enabling conditions.

The second challenge is external dependency. Long-term reliance on foreign training, equipment, intelligence or financing can weaken domestic institutional incentives and strategic autonomy. Agenda 2063 expressly seeks stronger African responsibility for financing development and more strategically balanced partnerships. The solution is not rejection of external cooperation but structured transition toward African ownership. The third challenge is fragmentation among institutions. Security, development, humanitarian and social-protection programmes frequently operate through separate institutional channels. Without coordination, a military stabilisation operation may secure an area while schools remain closed, markets remain dysfunctional and displaced households lack livelihoods. The solution is integrated planning in which security and civilian authorities jointly identify conditions required for sustainable recovery.

The fourth challenge is legitimacy and human rights. Military capability without accountability can undermine the very social stability it seeks to protect. AFRICOM itself recognises professional military development, accountability and rule of law as components of security cooperation. These principles should become measurable components of partnership outcomes. The fifth challenge is measurement. Security cooperation is often assessed by training numbers, exercises conducted or equipment delivered. Such indicators are useful but insufficient. Agenda 2063 requires transformation in people's lives. Evaluation should therefore include indicators such as institutional self-reliance, civilian protection, restored social services, youth employment, social-protection coverage and community resilience.

4.11 Policy Implications

The analysis has five principal policy implications. First, Africa's security partnerships should be aligned with African strategic frameworks rather than treated as isolated bilateral military arrangements. Agenda 2063 provides a continental framework through which security cooperation can be connected to development outcomes.

Second, social policy should be incorporated into conflict-prevention and stabilisation planning. The objective is not to militarise social policy but to ensure that security interventions create space for civilian institutions to restore education, health, employment and social protection. Third, external military partnerships should prioritise capability transfer. Training, technical assistance and equipment should be accompanied by local maintenance, African instructors, institutional doctrine and sustainable financing.

Fourth, women and youth should be treated as development and resilience actors. Agenda 2063's people-driven aspiration makes their inclusion a strategic requirement rather than a symbolic addition. Fifth, African institutions should develop common indicators for measuring the development effects of security partnerships. This would allow the AU and member states to distinguish between assistance that produces short-term operational capacity and cooperation that produces sustainable institutional and social resilience.

5. Conclusions

The relationship between U.S. Africa Command and AU Agenda 2063 should be understood within the broader security-development nexus rather than through a purely military perspective. AFRICOM remains a security institution focused on cooperation, capacity-building, and crisis response, and it should not replace African development institutions or civilian-led mechanisms. However, its activities can contribute to Agenda 2063 when aligned with African priorities, institutional accountability, and human-security objectives.

This study concludes that the strategic relevance of AFRICOM should be assessed not by the scale of military assistance provided, but by its contribution to sustainable African capacity, civilian protection, institutional resilience, and conditions that enable social development. The proposed Africa-led Security–Social Policy Alignment Framework highlights four interconnected pillars, namely accountable security institutions, social investment, community resilience, and African ownership with joint accountability.

Ultimately, security cooperation can support Africa development goals only when it strengthens rather than substitutes for African institutions. Effective partnerships should enhance Africa capacity to maintain peace, promote human security, and achieve the long-term vision of *The Africa We Want*.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to express appreciation to the institutions, scholars, and organisations whose publications, policy documents, and research contributions supported the development of this study. The author acknowledges the availability of academic literature and official documents related to security cooperation, human security, and African development frameworks that provided important insights for this research. The author also appreciates the scholarly discussions that contributed to the analysis of the relationship between U.S. Africa Command and the African Union Agenda 2063.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently, and the analysis, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this manuscript are solely the responsibility of the author. No financial,

institutional, or personal relationships influenced the research process or the findings reported in this study.

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