

• Article •

The Motivation and Impact of US Military Assistance to Djibouti Since the New Millennium

Changhong Jiang ^{1,*}

¹ School of Marxism, Lanzhou University, with a main research focus on international relations theory and neighboring diplomacy. Lanzhou, China

* Corresponding Author: Changhong Jiang. Email: 1339890251@qq.com

Received: 26 August 2024 Accepted: 28 August 2024 Published: 30 September 2024

Abstract: Foreign aid, especially military aid, has always been an important means for the United States to ensure its global interests. After the 9/11 attacks, Djibouti's strategic position in the Horn of Africa became prominent and was regarded by the United States as an important anti-terrorism base in Africa. According to publicly available data analysis from the US Foreign Aid Database (foreignassistance.gov) and the US Foreign Aid Explorer, between 2001 and 2024, US military aid to Djibouti included establishing a military base in Djibouti, providing military funding, training military personnel, and related weapons and equipment to Djibouti's security agencies. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the United States has generally increased its military assistance to Djibouti and continuously adjusted it in response to the regional situation. By analyzing the motives behind US military aid, it is proven that the US military assistance to Djibouti stems from its own strategic interests and practical needs for counter-terrorism.

Keywords: United States; Military Assistance; Djibouti; Motivation; Influence

1. Introduction

The relationship between the United States and Djibouti began in the late 1920s. The United States established a consular representative office in the French Somaliland colony in 1929, marking the earliest contact between the United States and Djibouti. Due to French interference, there was no substantial progress in the relationship between the United States and Djibouti during this period. It was not until Djibouti gained independence from France in 1977 that the United States officially established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Djibouti. Since 1991, the relationship between the United States and Djibouti has developed rapidly, providing various economic and military assistance to Djibouti, making it the largest aid donor to Djibouti. Since the new millennium, the United States has continuously strengthened its military assistance to Djibouti and established Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti in 2003, which is currently the only sustained military presence of the United States in Africa. The

military assistance provided by the United States to Djibouti was a strategic choice made by the United States based on its own interests after the 9/11 attacks. It had a significant impact on both the United States and Djibouti, as well as on the situation in Africa and globally. It also affected China's cooperation with Africa and its interests in Djibouti.

The relationship between the United States and Djibouti in the domestic academic community mainly involves many fields such as agriculture, finance, society, and education in Djibouti, while there are relatively few research results on the military relationship between the United States and Djibouti. The existing research focuses on the formation and development of the US Africa Command and the geopolitical game of major powers in Djibouti, while there is relatively little research on the specific military assistance content, motives, and impact of the United States on Djibouti. After reviewing the data, it was found that the sharp increase in US military aid to Djibouti began in the new millennium, especially after 2001. Therefore, based on publicly available information on two US websites and the above research results, the author explores the overall situation of US military aid to Djibouti since the new millennium, focusing on analyzing the motives and impacts of US military aid to Djibouti, in order to provide reference and guidance for China to deepen comprehensive cooperation with Djibouti.

2. Overview and Evolution of US Military Assistance to Djibouti Since the New Millennium

Hans Morgenthau believed that military aid is a traditional way for a country to support its allies, including sharing military resources between allies, providing military, weapons, equipment, logistics, and financial support to recipient countries. Based on this viewpoint, the author defines the military assistance provided by the United States to Djibouti as establishing military bases in Djibouti, providing military funds, training, and related weapons and equipment assistance to Djibouti's security departments. The data referred to in this article mainly comes from two databases: foreign assistance ([foreignassistance.gov](https://www.foreignassistance.gov/)) and foreign aid explorer, which are repositories of budget and financial data provided by the US government to manage foreign aid. They collect foreign aid data from nearly 20 US government agencies, including the State Department, Department of Defense, and Agency for International Development, from 1946 to the present.

The assistance provided by the United States to Djibouti can be divided into two categories: military and economic. According to the analysis of the database mentioned above, from 2001 to July 2024, the United States provided mainly economic assistance to Djibouti, with military assistance as a supplement. Among them, economic assistance accounted for a total of 4479 items, accounting for 95.52%; There are a total of 205 military aid items, accounting for 4.48%, and they have shown a significant upward trend since the new millennium.

From the overall situation of military assistance, the United States began providing military aid to Djibouti in 1982. By the year 2000, the total amount of military aid was \$9585460; From 2001 to 2024, the US military aid to Djibouti reached \$182562610, an increase of nearly 18 times. Among them, 2017 was the lowest point of aid during this period, while 2019 reached its peak, accounting for about 33.97%

of the total actual military aid expenditure of the United States on Djibouti in the past 24 years. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the development and evolution of US military aid to Djibouti can be divided into four stages according to the presidential term, each stage having different characteristics based on the focus of US national strategy.

2.1 During the Bush Administration (2001-2008)

During this period, the United States provided a total of 18 military aid programs to Djibouti, including 8 Foreign Military Assistance Funding Programs (FMF) (\$35689000), 8 International Military Education and Training Programs (IMET) (\$2081000), and 2 Remaining Goods and Equipment Transfer Projects (EDA) (\$240000), totaling \$38010000 in aid.

The terrorist attacks that occurred on US soil on September 11, 2001 (known as the "9/11 attacks") marked a turning point in US military aid to Djibouti. During the period of 2001-2003, the United States' military assistance to Djibouti showed a sharp upward trend, and the Horn of Africa Joint Task Force (CJTF-HOA) was established, along with the establishment of the Lemonnier military base. In 2007, the United States began to establish the Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and signed an agreement with Djibouti to expand the area of the Lemonnier base from 0.36 square kilometers to nearly 2.02 square kilometers. Concrete sidewalks and gravel roads were built to facilitate the deployment of various transport aircraft such as the C-130 Hercules, CV-22 Osprey tiltrotor, C-17 Globemaster, and C-5 Galaxy by the US military, as well as the construction of living facilities in US military camps. This base can not only carry out counter-terrorism missions, but also transport a large amount of military equipment and combat personnel through Kuwait to Iraq, playing a crucial logistical support role in the Iraq War. In the later period of President George W. Bush's administration, the subprime mortgage crisis dealt a heavy blow to the US economy, and the financial aid funds available for Djibouti gradually decreased. At the same time, as the anti-terrorism situation stabilized, US military aid to Djibouti slightly decreased.

2.2 During the Obama Administration (2009-2016)

From 2009 to 2016, the United States provided Djibouti with 88 military aid programs, including 1 Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (CTR) (\$3310000), 1 peacekeeping operation: the East African Regional Counter Terrorism Partnership (PREACT) (\$1630000), 8 Foreign Military Assistance Funding Programs (FMF) (\$11455430), 3 International Military Education and Training Programs (IMET) (\$1124000), 60 Remaining Goods and Equipment Transfer Projects (EDA) (\$1556052), 2 Training and Equipment Programs (\$17440027), as well as 2 domestic anti drug programs (\$165000) and 11 other projects (\$3613937), totaling \$40294446. This data is \$2284446 more than the military aid provided during the Bush administration. The aid funds are mainly used for training and equipment programs, as well as the Foreign Military Assistance Fund (FMF) program.

In December 2011, then US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta emphasized the importance of the country's strategic position during his visit to a US military base in Djibouti. During 2011, the US

military base in Djibouti launched at least eight RQ-1A drone bombs, launching multiple attacks on jihadists in Yemen and Somalia. In 2012, the Obama administration proposed the "Asia Pacific Rebalance" strategy, which increased investment in the Asia Pacific region and reduced military investment in Djibouti. However, with the changing situation in the Middle East, the United States had to attach importance to the role of the Djibouti military base and use it as a support base for Saudi military operations. In 2014, the Obama administration extended the lease of Lemonnier Base for another 20 years. According to the new lease agreement, the United States agreed to increase the annual rent paid from the previous \$38 million to \$63 million.

2.3 During the Trump Administration (2017-2020)

During President Trump's tenure, the US government's military aid to Djibouti increased sharply from a low point in 2017 to a peak in 2019, reaching the highest level of military aid to Djibouti in nearly 20 years. During this period, a total of 28 military aid programs were provided to Djibouti, including 3 partnership programs to combat terrorism and unconventional warfare (\$27368), 3 foreign military aid funding programs (\$7958742), 4 training and equipment programs for the construction of the Djibouti Rapid Intervention Battalion (\$65597833), 8 US Department of Defense institutional capacity building programs for cooperation between Djibouti and the Kentucky National Guard (\$292625), and 10 other projects (\$3848557) totaling \$77725125. During this period, the actual military aid amount in 2017 was only \$1203079, the lowest since 2001. In 2019, the actual aid amount reached \$62015244, the highest aid amount during Trump's presidency.

2.4 During the Biden Administration (2021-)

After taking office, the Biden administration attempted to give a new tone to its African policy, replacing Trump's transactional "America First" diplomacy with a commitment to a "mutually respectful relationship". In May 2022, at the request of the Pentagon, Biden overturned Trump's December 2020 order and authorized the redeployment of hundreds of special operations forces to Somalia. In December 2022, Biden held a summit of US and African leaders in Washington, announcing the provision of more humanitarian aid to the region and proposing multiple new initiatives such as the "21st Century Africa Security Partnership" and "African Democracy and Political Transformation". Since then, the summit agenda has become the framework for Biden's Africa policy. Although the overall foreign aid from the United States to Africa did not increase significantly during the Biden administration. But the Biden administration's military aid to Djibouti continues to grow, currently mainly focusing on three Foreign Military Assistance Funding Programs (FMPs) (\$17000000), three International Military Education and Training Programs (\$1637516), and 36 Goods, Services, and Operations Maintenance Assistance (\$6073680).

3. Reasons for US Military Aid to Djibouti

Although the proportion of military aid from the United States to Djibouti is relatively small, its role and position are important in all of its aid. Since the new millennium, the United States and Djibouti have established a stable and close bilateral military relationship. The maintenance and promotion of this military relationship are closely related to the US government's global counter-terrorism strategy, "Indo Pacific strategy", and the need for great power games, especially the attempt to hedge China's influence in Africa.

3.1 The United States Regards Djibouti as an Important Base for Implementing the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Djibouti is located on the west coast of the Gulf of Aden in northeastern Africa, adjacent to Eritrea to the north, Ethiopia to the southwest, and Somalia to the southeast. It connects the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of East Africa, guarding the strategic gateway from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. It is known as the "throat of Asia and Africa" and the "key to the Red Sea", and its strategic position is very prominent. But in the decades following the mid-20th century, the United States long neglected the important position of Djibouti. Until the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the Iran Iraq War in 1979, the United States relied heavily on Berbera in Somalia in the Horn of East Africa, using it as a military base to intervene in East Africa and the Red Sea, as well as a strategic location to contain Soviet expansion and Islamic extremist forces in the Gulf region. After the bombing of the US Embassy in Kenya in 1998 and the terrorist attack on the USS Cole destroyer in 2000, the United States began to recognize the importance of Djibouti and transferred its naval refueling facilities to Djibouti. With the outbreak of the 9/11 attacks, Djibouti's position became prominent and became the most important piece of the puzzle in the United States' global counter-terrorism strategy. Since 2001, successive US governments have regarded Djibouti as a strategic pivot for the Horn of Africa, the entire African region, and the Arabian Peninsula, elevating their relationship to a strategic partnership and strengthening their military ties to varying degrees.

During the presidency of George W. Bush, the United States positioned Djibouti as a "strategic partner of the United States located in a turbulent region" and used Djibouti as a bridgehead for counter-terrorism. The period from 2001 to 2003 was the three years with the largest amount of aid, not only increasing the amount of aid, but also establishing permanent bases, providing comprehensive military assistance to Djibouti from stabilization operations and security sector reform to counter-terrorism, from combating weapons of mass destruction to drug control. Among them, the actual aid amount jumped from \$232000 in 2001 to \$13554000 in 2003, mainly used for the procurement of defense supplies and defense services. The establishment of a permanent military base in Djibouti to the establishment of the US Africa Command was the most important military cooperation between the United States and Djibouti during this period. During the Obama administration, although US aid funds and programs were reduced, Djibouti continued to be seen as an important partner in counter-terrorism operations, rescue operations, intelligence gathering, and military training. At the beginning of Obama's presidency,

the US government's country report on counter-terrorism still referred to Djibouti as an "active partner in counter-terrorism cooperation" and believed that Djibouti had contributed to counter-terrorism operations. During the Trump administration, despite the escalating strategic competition between China and the United States, ISIS, Al Qaeda, and their affiliated organizations operated and recruited personnel on the African continent, planning attacks against American citizens and related critical infrastructure targets, which constrained the United States' African strategy. In response to the threat of radical Islamic terrorism and violent conflicts, the United States continues to view Djibouti as an important support for carrying out operations against violent terrorist organizations in Africa.

The favorable governance environment in Djibouti is also conducive to counter-terrorism cooperation between the United States and Djibouti. Unlike neighboring countries Somalia and Eritrea, which have complex ethnic conflicts, internal chaos, and long-term territorial disputes, Djibouti has a relatively stable political situation and has long pursued a neutral, non aligned, and friendly foreign policy in international affairs. It does not seek to form political or military alliances with other countries and advocates developing cooperation with countries around the world on an equal basis, avoiding various disputes. Faced with the olive branch extended by the United States, the President and government of Djibouti have utilized their advantageous position to develop a partnership with the United States and seek development opportunities for their country.

In fact, Djibouti has indeed played an important role as a counter-terrorism base. In 2002, the United States dispatched 1300 soldiers to Djibouti aboard two amphibious command ships, the Blue Ridge (LCC19) and the Mount Whitney (LCC20), with 900 deployed at the Lemonnier base and the remaining 400 remaining on the Mount Whitney. In the same year, the US military carried out counter-terrorism missions at the base and used drones to strike a vehicle carrying terrorists in Yemen. In 2014, President Obama said during a meeting with President Guelleh of Djibouti, "Lemonnier Base is not only crucial for our work in the Horn of Africa, but also throughout the entire African region."

After the establishment of the Africa Command in 2008, the United States continued to strengthen its military presence in Djibouti and consolidate its dominant position in the region. In 2009, Obama proposed the establishment of the East African Regional Counter Terrorism Partnership (PREACT) to enhance multilateral cooperation among East African countries in the field of counter-terrorism. Djibouti received assistance and participated in training. In 2014, the United States provided \$9090000 in military assistance to Djibouti in training and equipment programs to support the participation of the US armed forces in counter-terrorism and stability operations in the Horn of East Africa region, and to enhance cooperation with Djibouti in the field of counter-terrorism. In 2015, the United States provided \$8350027 in military assistance to Djibouti in training and equipment programs, helping Djibouti establish a logistics force to support counter-terrorism operations in Somalia by providing vehicles, medical equipment, and training. In the past decade, the United States has provided multiple anti-terrorism assistance projects in its military aid to Djibouti. It can be seen that counter-terrorism has become an important part of US Kyrgyzstan cooperation.

3.2 Military Aid is an Important Bargaining Chip for the United States to Compete with Other Major Powers

After the end of the Cold War, Djibouti became an important place for geopolitical chessboard and great power games due to its significant strategic position. In addition to the United States, several countries including France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and China have deployed military facilities in Djibouti, which makes the United States use Djibouti as a battleground for competing with other countries and an important bargaining chip for military aid in the Horn of Africa. By expanding military aid to Djibouti and strengthening military alliances with Western allies, the United States intends to hedge against China's influence in the Horn of Africa and block Russia's strategic attempts to extend to Djibouti.

Djibouti's multilateral diplomacy and "balanced diplomacy" policy, taking advantage of the situation, objectively provided conditions for the United States to compete with other countries. Djibouti has a small land area, scarce natural resources, and weak economic foundation, and has long been among the underdeveloped countries. After entering the 21st century, Djibouti actively engaged in "small country diplomacy" by leveraging its own advantages and the opportunities brought by the international counter-terrorism environment, maneuvering between major powers and enhancing its strength by obtaining their support and assistance. For Djibouti, allowing other countries to engage in military cooperation or even establish military bases is its biggest bargaining chip in dialogue and cooperation with major powers. In 2005, the President of Djibouti publicly stated to the media during his visit to the United States: "Djibouti's allowing foreign countries to establish military bases in the country should be seen as an extension of its friendly relations with these world powers. "Therefore, multiple countries have signed relevant agreements with Djibouti to establish military bases and logistics support bases. For example, France, the former suzerain of Djibouti, has its largest military base overseas, H é ron Naval Base, located in Djibouti; Japan established its first overseas military base in Djibouti after World War II in 2011, with approximately 600 members of the Self Defense Forces, under the pretext of combating piracy and protecting important energy supply lines; Italy signed a military facility agreement with the Djibouti government in 2012; Australia also clearly stated in its Defense White Paper that it attaches great importance to Djibouti; Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands also sent troops to Djibouti. For the needs of overseas peacekeeping and logistics support, China also established its first overseas logistics support base in Djibouti in 2017. The base is not only a support facility for China's peacekeeping forces in Africa, but also provides logistics supplies for Chinese naval escort teams to carry out escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters.

The United States, which has always sought a dominant position, fears that Djibouti has become a target for major powers to strive for and leverage, and what it fears most is the deep cooperation between China and Djibouti. After China put forward the "the Belt and Road" initiative, its economic and trade relations with Djibouti have developed rapidly, and cooperation has been carried out in infrastructure construction, information communication and logistics industries, such as the Addis Ababa Djibouti

Railway, Djibouti Free Trade Zone projects, Ethiopia Djibouti cross-border natural gas transmission projects and water supply projects. From 2017 to 2019, President Guelleh visited China three times and the two countries signed multiple cooperation agreements in areas such as finance, technology, agriculture, and infrastructure. In 2020, the bilateral trade volume between Djibouti and China will reach 2.354 billion US dollars, up 5.75% year on year, becoming a model of China Africa "the Belt and Road" cooperation. The all-round development of China Djibouti relations poses a challenge to the advantageous position of the United States, which views China as its biggest competitor and attempts to force Djibouti to change its policy by adjusting its military aid to Djibouti.

In early 2015, the US Ambassador to Djibouti conveyed to the Djibouti government the so-called "red line" of the US government - that is, not allowing Djibouti to engage in military cooperation with foreign countries. In May 2015 and February 2016, the US Secretary of State John Forbes Kerry and Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken successively visited Djibouti, putting pressure on Djibouti to prevent Djibouti from allowing China to establish logistics support bases. In 2017, the United States attempted to force Djibouti to distance itself from China by reducing aid, reducing military aid to a historical low since 2001. After this series of attempts failed, the US government adjusted its aid strategy and made every effort to build Djibouti's image as the best partner country, increasing its aid to Djibouti to hedge against China's cooperation with Djibouti. At the end of 2018, the United States released its "New Africa Strategy", which clearly stated that the US Africa strategy mainly focuses on three areas: promoting trade and commercial relations, addressing threats from Islamic extremism and violent conflicts, and increasing US aid funds for key countries and specific strategic goals. The 'key countries' here include Djibouti. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson emphasized during his visit to Djibouti that "the United States is committed to maintaining a strong military cooperation relationship with Djibouti, which is one of our most important areas of cooperation. During the same period, the United States also reduced its military assistance to Egypt, making the Horn of Africa a top priority for aid, aiming to ensure the smooth passage of the Strait of Mandeb, combat piracy, maintain the security of European allies, and engage in geopolitical games with countries such as China and Russia.

3.3 Military Assistance is an Important Part of the United States' Implementation of the Indo Pacific Strategy

In recent years, the Indo Pacific region, which is regarded as the "maritime hinterland," has increasingly become the center of geopolitical power competition, with countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, India, and Australia launching "Indo Pacific strategies. In October 2010, then US Secretary of State Hillary gave a speech titled "US Engagement in the Asia Pacific Region", which first proposed the concept of the "Indo Pacific". In November 2011, Hillary stated in an article titled "America's Pacific Century" that "the Asia Pacific region has become the core engine of international politics"; The US Defense Strategy Guidelines, released in January 2012, pointed out that the security interests of the United States are closely related to the development of events in the arc-shaped region extending from the Western Pacific to the Indian Ocean and South Asia, and that US

military power is bound to tilt towards this area. However, during this period, the focus of the US government was on the "Asia Pacific Rebalance" strategy, and the "Indo Pacific Strategy" did not become the center of gravity for the US government. After the Trump administration took office, the United States announced the termination of the "Asia Pacific Rebalance" strategy in March 2017. On December 18 of the same year, the United States included the "Indo Pacific Strategy" in the National Security Strategy Report (NSS), marking the formal establishment of the "Indo Pacific Strategy" and becoming the new national strategy of the United States.

Djibouti, although located on the edge of the Indian Ocean region, holds an important position in the US Indo Pacific strategy. The facilities at Djibouti Port are crucial for refueling maritime transport vessels and are located adjacent to the Gulf of Aden, known as the "lifeline of offshore oil". About 30% of world trade and over 20000 ships pass through this important waterway every year. Many oil shipments to Europe, America, and China must pass through Djibouti in terms of transportation efficiency and time cost. Therefore, providing military assistance to Djibouti by the United States is not only beneficial for the implementation of the US Indo Pacific strategy, but also greatly beneficial for maintaining US oil resources and energy investments in the Horn of Africa region.

The introduction of the US Indo Pacific strategy and the inclusion of Djibouti in the strategy are mainly aimed at constraining China's activities in the region and hedging China's influence in the Horn of Africa. The 2018 National Defense Strategy Report highlighted China's growing strength in the Indo Pacific region, explicitly stating that in order to contain China's rise in the region, the United States will continue to seek cooperation with Japan, Australia, and India. During Trump's tenure, the US military renamed the Pacific Command (USPACOM) to the Indo Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) to demonstrate the increasing connectivity between the two oceans.

As a result, during the Trump administration, there was a significant increase in military aid to Djibouti, setting a new historical high for military aid since 2001. In 2019, the United States strengthened its military presence in Djibouti by expanding the construction of military bases, increasing the number of troops stationed, and equipping the US Navy stationed in Djibouti with long-range anti-ship missiles and Tomahawk cruise missiles, thereby enhancing its military strength in Djibouti. At the same time, the United States also seeks to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with its allies in Djibouti, expand military cooperation with NATO members, as well as Japan, Australia, and others in Djibouti.

4. The Impact of US Military Aid to Djibouti

The US military base in Djibouti is just one of hundreds of overseas military bases deployed by the US globally. For the above strategic purposes, the military assistance provided by the United States to Djibouti since the new millennium far exceeds that of the last century. Djibouti is being developed by the United States as an important pivot for counter-terrorism missions, combating piracy, responding to emergencies, and countering imaginary enemies in the Horn of Africa region. Undoubtedly, this

series of measures has had a significant impact on both the United States and Djibouti, as well as on the situation in Africa and globally.

4.1 The United States Has Achieved Significant Benefits in Multiple Fields and Its Strategic Goals Have Been Preliminarily Realized

In terms of politics and security, the United States has gained reliable allies in the Horn of Africa, greatly easing the pressure of counter-terrorism. The security complex in the Horn of Africa region has begun to be constructed, and Djibouti has become a stabilizing valve in this complex. After the end of the Cold War, the security situation in the Horn of Africa was dire, and it remained in conflict for a long time. Ethiopia and Eritrea have long been at odds over territorial disputes, while Somalia has become a breeding ground for terrorists and pirates. The United States has placed Djibouti at the center of its counter-terrorism strategy, making it an important player in maintaining regional security and stability and combating global terrorism. In 2012, 850 Djiboutian soldiers joined the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to support the counter-terrorism operations of the United States and France in Somalia. With the support of the United States, Djibouti's military strength increased to 2000; Djibouti has also established a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), amended its own laws, cooperated with the United States' counter-terrorism actions at the legal level, ratified relevant international conventions to combat terrorism, and signed relevant laws and regulations on the extradition of terrorists with the United States. In addition, Djibouti joined the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism in 2017 to assist the United States in its efforts to combat ISIS. In short, under the bilateral needs of the United States and Djibouti, the United States has established closer ties with Djibouti and intervened in Djibouti's domestic politics, supporting political parties friendly to the United States, in order to expand its control and influence in Djibouti.

Economically, in addition to direct aid, the United States has also actively increased its arms trade with Djibouti, which has effectively promoted the profit growth of American military enterprises. From 2001 to 2008, the total value of arms trade between the United States and Djibouti reached 20812000 US dollars, Obtained economic benefits several times greater than military aid. At the same time, the US military presence in Djibouti greatly ensured the safe passage of American merchant ships through the Strait of Mandeb, allowing for the growth of US commercial interests.

It is worth noting that while the United States is profiting, it is also facing challenges similar to those faced in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the people of Djibouti are not "convinced" by the US military aid. According to reports, Djiboutians said in a phone interview, "The first time Djiboutians met the United States was not because of the peace team sent by the United States or the International Development Agency, but because of the United States' attempt to achieve a highly militarized presence in Djibouti, which carries an aggressive posture and makes Djiboutians feel disgusted." The frequent accidents and casualties caused by the drones deployed by the United States in Djibouti have directly triggered anti American sentiment among the public and affected the relationship between the two countries. Since 2010, out of the 16 Predator (MQ-1) drones deployed by the United States in Djibouti,

5 crashed in 2013 in densely populated areas, resulting in several casualties. The following year, another U-28 reconnaissance plane crashed 8 kilometers away from the Lemonnier base, resulting in the death of four crew members. Under pressure from the Djibouti government, the US military agreed to transfer a large number of drones from crowded cities to desert areas several kilometers away to prevent such incidents from happening again. However, the anti American sentiment among the people of Djibouti has not diminished as a result.

4.2 The Military Assistance from the United States Is Like a Double-Edged Sword for Djibouti. While Enhancing Its Own Capabilities and Improving Its International Status, It Also Increases Security Risks and Becomes a "Target" for Terrorist Forces

Djibouti has exchanged its own security and economic development support for the United States by providing anti-terrorism bases.

Firstly, the impact of US military aid on enhancing Djibouti's military capabilities is quite direct: on the one hand, with the help of the United States, Djibouti has established and improved its maritime security law enforcement department, resulting in a significant improvement in the effectiveness of maritime security governance. In 2009, the United States' Horn of Africa Joint Task Force Navy collaborated with the Djibouti Navy to establish a port security force to enhance port security and improve the ability to protect passing ships. At the same time, the US Coast Guard training team provided training and learning to the Djibouti Coast Guard on operating coastal patrol boats, repairing outboard engines, and other related courses. In 2015, the navies of the two countries held the "Cutlass Express" exercise in the Gulf of Tajura, in which the "Boarding Reconnaissance and Search Mission" (VBSS) tactic was practiced in the open sea, effectively enhancing Djibouti's maritime security governance capabilities. On the other hand, the United States' Horn of Africa Joint Task Force has conducted counter-terrorism training and joint operations with Djibouti, enhancing Djibouti's capabilities in counter-terrorism and handling emergencies. These joint actions focus on strengthening border security, improving airport security, and comprehensively preventing terrorist forces and terrorists from hiding. In 2015, Djibouti adopted the Counter Terrorism Assistance Program (ATA) launched by the United States and received training from the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEAs) located in Gaborone, greatly enhancing its counter-terrorism capabilities.

Secondly, the military and economic assistance provided by the United States has brought considerable economic benefits to Djibouti, becoming an important pillar of its economic development. Djibouti has a hot climate, scarce natural resources, and a single economic structure, mainly relying on service industries such as shipping and port trade. Its economic development has long lagged behind, with over 95% of agricultural and industrial products, including food, relying on imports, and over 90% of construction funds relying on external aid. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. The military assistance provided by the United States to Djibouti mainly increased its revenue in two areas. One is the rental income from military bases, which accounts for about 20% of Djibouti's total revenue, increasing the government's fiscal revenue; The second is the revenue generated by the US military's

logistics procurement and base construction. Since 2010, the United States has invested \$300 million to \$500 million annually in the Lemonnier base for daily military life and base construction, which not only increases Djibouti's income but also provides many job opportunities. The most typical change brought about by US aid is the growth of Djibouti's economy: from 1991 to 1997, Djibouti's GDP growth rate was negative, but it steadily turned positive from 2001, reaching 5.8% in 2008 and 5.5% in 2014.

Meanwhile, the trade benefits enjoyed by Djibouti under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) contribute to the development of modern ports and logistics facilities, while the "Food for Peace" program launched by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has deployed a food aid warehouse in Djibouti as a regional security base in Africa. Before 2035, the United States also plans to assist Djibouti in completing several major infrastructure projects and creating the largest free trade zone in Africa.

In addition, the military assistance from the United States has enabled Djibouti to engage in "balanced diplomacy" among major powers, enhancing Djibouti's international status. Djibouti was once a protectorate of France, but the French government's support for the Djibouti government during the Djibouti Civil War was wavering and deliberately creating ethnic conflicts, which led Djibouti to decide to reduce its military and economic dependence on France. The military assistance from the United States has made Djibouti's diplomatic partners more diversified, which helps to enhance its international status.

It should be noted that Djibouti's becoming a partner country of the United States has also made it one of the targets of terrorist forces. In 2012, Iyas Moussa Dawaleh, the Minister of Economy, Finance and Industry of Djibouti, stated in an interview that local radical groups in Somalia may not be able to launch attacks on US military facilities, but they can still destroy Djibouti's infrastructure. In 2014, terrorists launched an explosion attack on a coffee shop in Djibouti where military officers from multiple countries often gather, causing multiple casualties. On March 26, 2021, the leader of the Youth Jihad Movement fiercely criticized the President of Djibouti for turning Djibouti into a military base for the Muslim war in East Africa in a video.

4.3 The Military Assistance from the United States Has Led to a Conflict Between the United States and Other Major Powers in Djibouti, Exacerbating Regional Tensions

The military assistance from the United States and its special partnership with Djibouti directly touched upon the interests of the former colonial power. Under the pressure of the United States and in order to reduce diplomatic costs and alleviate the pressure of the global economic crisis, France released the "Defense White Paper" in 2008, making significant adjustments to its African strategy, including defense negotiations with former French African colonies; Adjusting the military presence in Africa; Closing military bases in West Africa, etc. In 2011, France signed an agreement with Djibouti to reduce its military deployment in Djibouti and actively involved its remaining combat troops in the US military

operations in Djibouti. In July 2012, France and the United States signed a five-year agreement to strengthen military cooperation between their forces stationed in Djibouti.

Other allies with military bases in Djibouti have also taken the initiative to cooperate with the United States on maritime security. In 2008, as an important part of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSDP), the EU Navy (EU NAVFOR) used Djibouti as a logistics support base to carry out the anti piracy mission "Operation Atalanta", which was the EU's first joint naval operation. In July 2012, the European Union launched a new naval mission called "EUCAP Nestor" at a cost of 23 million euros, as a supplement to the "Operation Atlanta". The EU Navy is utilizing its infrastructure in Djibouti to strengthen technical cooperation and intelligence sharing with the United States, and the United States is also expressing support for the EU Navy's operations by providing several coastal patrol boats. In July 2012, France and the United States signed a five-year agreement to strengthen military cooperation between the two countries' stationed forces in Djibouti. After 2017, several mechanisms have been established with Japan and Australia to promote multi-party strategic and defense cooperation in Djibouti.

Japan is an important partner of the United States' Indo Pacific strategy, and its military base in Djibouti has received support and assistance from the United States. In 2016, then Japanese Defense Minister Nakatani Gen stated, "Japan's base in Djibouti will be used for multiple functions such as combating piracy and engaging in strategic competition with China. "The base works closely with the United States to achieve information sharing. According to reports, three Japanese frogmen once approached and surveyed a Chinese warship, sharing relevant information with the United States.

The military aid provided by the United States to Djibouti has also hindered Russia's strategic extension to the Horn of Africa region. In October 2012, Russia requested the deployment of two Il-38 anti submarine reconnaissance aircraft to Djibouti under the pretext of anti piracy. The United States exerted pressure to force Djibouti to reject Russia's request. Due to the continuous pressure from the United States, when Russia attempted to negotiate with other countries to establish military bases, their request was once again rejected. It was not until September 2018 that Russia reached an agreement with Eritrea to establish naval logistics facilities in Assab and gain a foothold in the Horn of Africa region.

In addition, the military assistance from the United States has made the security situation in the Horn of Africa more complex and volatile. Djibouti and neighboring Eritrea have had multiple border conflicts due to territorial disputes, and were once on the brink of war, leading to serious armed conflicts between the two countries. This is due to the contradictions caused by bilateral historical legacy issues, as well as the special relationship between the United States and Djibouti and the behavior of "pulling a wedge", which makes it difficult to eliminate the tense security situation in the Horn of Africa region and affects regional stability.

5. Conclusion

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the military aid provided by the United States to Djibouti has seen a sharp increase and significant increase in both aid funds and the number of aid

projects. The fundamental reason and direct cause of this change is the comprehensive shift of the US national security strategy after the 9/11 attacks, with Djibouti serving as an important anti-terrorism base for the United States. At the same time, as an important component of its Indo Pacific strategy, the United States also has important considerations for hedging and offsetting the influence of other major powers in its military aid to Djibouti. It cannot be denied that this series of measures has helped the United States partially achieve its strategic intentions, comprehensively affecting the political, economic, and security environment of Djibouti, and exacerbating the tension between major powers and the regional situation.

In the face of this challenge, China will balance major power relations, manage conflicts and differences, and continue to deepen all-round cooperation with Djibouti in various fields. Specifically, efforts can be made in the following aspects: firstly, China should actively participate in multilateral control of the Horn of Africa. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, China inevitably participates in regional crisis management and provides "Chinese wisdom" to promote peace in Africa; Secondly, China can strengthen cooperation and exchanges with Djibouti in the field of counter-terrorism. Djibouti has good experience in the field of counter-terrorism, and at the same time, as a victim of terrorist attacks, Djibouti has a strong demand for counter-terrorism. Therefore, China and Kyrgyzstan can work together to resist terrorism; Thirdly, China can actively explore dialogue and cooperation with the United States in the field of aid to Africa. In recent years, the relationship between China and the United States has become increasingly hostile, with intensified confrontation and reduced cooperation. The ability of the two countries to manage conflicts of interest has also declined. Although strategic competition with the United States will be the primary feature of the recent relationship, in the long run, there is ample room for cooperation between China and the United States in the process of assisting Africa, whether in easing regional tensions or combating epidemics. Taking Djibouti as an example, as a strategic extension of many countries overseas, its air and sea ports are overcrowded, and there is currently no permanent institution to regulate military cooperation and eliminate conflicts. China and the United States can engage in cooperative consultations on this matter while ensuring Djibouti's sovereignty as the host country. This multilateral coordination will become an important epitome of dialogue and cooperation between China and the United States in the field of aid to Africa.

Acknowledgement

None.

Funding Statement

This article is the result of the National Social Science Fund Youth Project "Research on General Secretary Xi Jinping's Important Discourse on Coping with External Environmental Risks" (Project No. 21CKS044).

Author Contributions

The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

Availability of Data and Materials

The data for this study are derived from publicly available literature and news reports, which have been listed in the references.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study.

References

- [1]. Hans Morgenthau, "A Political Theory of Foreign Aid," *American political science review*, Vol.56, No.2, January 1962, pp.301-309.
- [2]. Lucia Majerčíaková, "United States Foreign Policy Towards Djibouti from George W. Bush to Donald J. Trump: A Laboratory of US Strategic Interests in Africa," MA thesis, Masaryk University, 2019, p.63.
- [3]. Lucia Majerčíaková, "United States Foreign Policy Towards Djibouti from George W. Bush to Donald J. Trump: A Laboratory of US Strategic Interests in Africa," p.106.
- [4]. Asteris Huliaras and Sophia Kalantzakos, "The Gulf States and the Horn of Africa: A New Hinterland," *Middle East Policy*, Vol.24, No.4, 2017, pp.63-73.
- [5]. David Vine, "The United States Probably Has More Foreign Military Bases Than Any Other People, Nation, or Empire in History," *The Nation*, 2015, p.14.
- [6]. David Styan, "Djibouti: Changing Influence in the Horn's Strategic Hub," p.13.
- [7]. Fahmida Alam and Samin Farhan Asef, "The Implications of BRI in Djibouti: A Critical Geopolitical Analysis," pp.277-283.
- [8]. 孙德刚、白鑫沂: 《中国参与吉布提港口建设的现状与前景》, 《当代世界》2018年第4期, 第70-74页。
- [9]. Nicholas Westcott, "The Trump administration's Africa policy," *African Affairs*, Vol.118, No.473, 2019, pp.737-749.
- [10]. David Styan, "China's Maritime Silk Road and Small States: Lessons from the Case of Djibouti," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol.29, No.122, 2020, pp.191-206.
- [11]. Hillary Clinton, "American 'sEnagement in the Asia-Pacific," October 28, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/10/150141.Htm> [2022-9-13]
- [12]. Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/> [2022-9-14]

- [13]. Department of Defense, "Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," January 3, 2012, [http : //nssarchive.us/wp - content/uploads/2018/01/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf](http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf)[2022-9-13]
- [14]. Redie Bereketeab, " Djibouti: Strategic location, an Asset or a Curse?" *Journal of African Foreign Affairs*, Vol.3,No.1,2016,pp.5-18.
- [15]. Philippe Le Billon and Fouad El Khatib, "From Free Oil to 'Freedom Oil': Terrorism, War and US Geopolitics in the Persian Gulf," *Geopolitics*, Vol.9,No.1,2004,pp.109-137.
- [16]. Vinay Kaura, "Incorporating Indo-Pacific and the Quadrilateral into India's Strategic Outlook," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, Vol.15,No.2,2019,pp.78-102.
- [17]. Muhammad Saeed, "From the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific: Expanding Sino-US Strategic Competition," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, Vol.3,No.4,2017, pp. 499-512.
- [18]. Zach Vertin, "Red Sea Rivalries: The Gulf, the Horn, and the New Geopolitics of the Red Sea," *Brookings Doha Center*, 2019.
- [19]. Lucia Majerčíaková, "United States Foreign Policy Towards Djibouti from George W. Bush to Donald J. Trump: A Laboratory of US Strategic Interests in Africa," p.67.
- [20]. Sun, Degang and Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Eagle's Nest in the Horn of Africa: US Military Strategic Deployment in Djibouti," pp.111-124.
- [21]. Sun, Degang and Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Eagle's Nest in the Horn of Africa: US Military Strategic Deployment in Djibouti," pp.111-124.
- [22]. Abdo A Abdallah, " State Building, Independence and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Djibouti" *Post-conflict peace-building in the horn of Africa*, 2008, pp.269-279.
- [23]. Timothy Walker, "Capacity Building for Maritime Security: the Western Indian Ocean Experience," *International Affairs*, Vol.97,No.1,January 2021, pp.242-244.
- [24]. Ra Mason, " Djibouti and Beyond: Japan's First Post-War Overseas Base and the Recalibration of Risk in Securing Enhanced Military Capabilities," *Asian Security*, Vol.14,No.3,2018, pp.339-357.
- [25]. Sun, Degang and Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Eagle's Nest in the Horn of Africa: US Military Strategic Deployment in Djibouti," pp.111-124.
- [26]. Sonia Le Gouriellec, *Djibouti's Foreign Policy in International Institutions: the Big Diplomacy of a Small State*, *African Foreign Policies in International Institutions*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2018, pp.389-402.
- [27]. David Styan, "Djibouti: Changing influence in the Horn's Strategic Hub," p.10.
- [28]. Sun, Degang and Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Eagle's Nest in the Horn of Africa: US Military Strategic Deployment in Djibouti," pp.111-124.
- [29]. Shaul Shay, " Al Shabaab from local to Regional and Global Terror Threat," *Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies*, Vol.1,No.3,2021, p.37.

- [30]. Nicolas Sarkozy, The French White Paper on Defence and National Security, Odile Jacob Publishing Corp, 2008.
- [31]. David Styan , “Djibouti: Small State Strategy at a Crossroads,” *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, Vol.1, No,1, 2016, pp.79-91.
- [32]. David Styan , “Djibouti: Small State Strategy at a Crossroads,” pp.79-91.
- [33]. Ra Mason , “Djibouti and Beyond: Japan’s First Post-War Overseas Base and the Recalibration of Risk in Securing Enhanced Military Capabilities,” pp.339-357.
- [34]. Jean-Pierre Cabestan, “African agency and Chinese power: the case of Djibouti,” October 2020.
- [35]. Zach Vertin, “Great Power Rivalry in the Red Sea: China’s Experiment in Djibouti and Implications for the United States,” Brookings Institution, June 2020, pp.1-30.



Copyright: This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MOSP and/or the editor(s). MOSP and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.