US SECURITY CONCERNS IN AFRICA: AN AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article employs an Afrocentric perspective as an alternative theoretical lens to provide an overview of the national security challenges facing the United States of America (US) within the context of its engagement in Africa. It also demonstrates the reactions of the US to African security threats (real or imagined) to its national wellbeing. At the centre of the discussion in this article is the articulation of the main issues about the US national security strategy in relation to Africa. The objective is to unravel the myth that Africa is a threat to US national security and the reality about its dismissed importance to the US within the context of the current global discourse on security. In order to provide a wider context for understanding the security dimension of US foreign policy towards Africa and to foster epistemic justice, the viewpoints of Africans and others whose fate is tied to this continent were obtained. This article relies heavily on a critical analysis of the discourse on security in the broadest sense of the term.

Keywords: Africa; Afrocentricity; foreign policy; security; United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

The dominant view expressed in current studies in the field of International Politics is that the end of the Cold War has inaugurated a new security paradigm. The chief tenet of this argument is that during the Cold War security was defined in military terms, the main referent in this case being the state. Security during the Cold War was understood as the ability of the state to protect and defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity against external threats or foreign aggression, which was summarily known as national security (Maake 2009, 7–8). The size of an army or arsenal of the state was central to its capacity and capability, and served to justify (or not) its continued existence within the anarchic community of nation states. The premise that the post-Cold War era saw more intrastate than interstate conflicts necessitated a redefinition of security (Department of Foreign Affairs 2008). The need for this reconsideration was also driven by the fact that, regardless of the sources of conflicts (both interstate and intrastate), all conflicts affect civilians and cause the mushrooming of non-military security threats such as chronic diseases and natural disasters.

The redefinition of the term security established a nexus between peace, security and development, and, according to Rankhumise and Shai (2007, 4), "a myriad of factors became responsible for ensuring the safe and secure survival of all biological, natural and material entities within states, between states and within communities of states." The intersection of the diverse range of political and socioeconomic issues produced what is known as human security—a key denominator of the new security paradigm. Alkire (cited by Mpangala and Lwehabura 2005, 42) views human security as meaning "to safeguard the vital core of all human lives from critical pervasive threats, in a way that is consistent with long-term human fulfilment." This definition resonates well with the aphorism that "development is a precondition for Security. In other words, that there cannot be development without security. In the same vein, Libya's former president, the late Muammar Gaddafi, articulated that "[w]ithout political stability, no strategic program of economic transformation can be implemented" (Retriver as cited in Nabudere 2012).

While acknowledging that human security is a mixed bag which considers a calculable number of varied factors, this article is premised on the less-acknowledged or -known proposition that human security is not a new concept altogether. Hence, according to Fell (2006, 2), "households have always been concerned with human security and the evolution of Western states was closely tied with the desire of the groups of people to ensure their own human security." Based on these statements, it is not incorrect to posit that human security entails some of the aspects of national security. Having observed this, the authors of this article concur with Fell's thesis and add that the content of both traditional and modern security is more or less the same, the only notable shift being that an individual and not a state is the referent. This implies that the introduction of the concept of human security by both academics and policymakers is an indirect acceptance that the traditional security discourse has failed to offer solutions

to security challenges in the post-Cold War era, and that human security is an alternative to meet these challenges.

Against this backdrop, this article scrutinises the challenges of a theoretical analysis of human security. It seeks to bridge the gap between the discourses of academics, political analysts and policymakers relating to the contextualisation of the post-Cold War US-Africa policy. Using African critical theory, this article also seeks to unpack the reasons for the militarisation or securitisation of US-Africa relations within the context of the internationalised war on terror.

AFRICA'S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WASHINGTON, DC'S PESSIMISTIC VIEW

The US views the security landscape of Africa from two vantage points: a threat and an opportunity. The view of it being a threat has been openly and much advanced by American officials to the detriment of the view that it presents an opportunity. The qualification of Africa as an opportunity for the security of the US, however, represents a point of convergence between the leaderships of both sides of the world. Given the dividends of positive public diplomacy, this notion is tacitly beneficial to both the US and Africa.[1] This is in view of the fact that America (used interchangeably with the US in this article) stands to benefit from peace, stability and development on the African continent, whereas a lack of peace, stability and development in Africa equates to "lost opportunities" for the economic and energy security of the US (as alluded to earlier).

However, Ndhambi (pers. comm. 2016) cautions that "Africa is not a major security threat to the US. Africa does not operate as a homogenous group. It consists of 54 independent nation states, some very tiny and non-viable economically and militarily. It is, therefore, even farfetched for the US to begin to view Africa as a security threat." However, Ndhambi's position does not invalidate the fact that the lack of human security in certain African states constitutes a threat to US national security. Former Assistant Secretary of African Affairs, Susan Rice (1999/2000, 68), rightly asserts that, analytically, "if Africa succeeds, we all, Africans and Americans, stand to benefit … [but if] … Africa fails, we will all pay the price."

The time lapse between the analysis of Ndhambi and that of Rice is extremely important. In the words of Makhanikhe (pers. comm. 2016), "the US has the highest military capabilities. Even if we can combine all of the African military resources in one basket, we cannot match that of the US. However, it is undeniable that the US economy is sustained by continuous access to mineral and oil resources that are mainly found in the African continent." By implication, the US will always find an excuse (e.g. a security threat) for penetrating the continent, especially those countries that have the resources she needs. In addition, Makhanikhe (pers. comm. 2016) observes that "the US

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1   For a comprehensive analysis of diplomacy, see Morgenthau (1987, 146–150, 529–560).

is using the war on terror to penetrate each country that has the resources that she wants in Africa on the pretence that those countries are threatening the US's security."

Despite its rich mineral-energy complex, Africa is known internationally as a continent ravaged by poverty, chronic illnesses, bad governance, unending violent conflicts and other social ills. This perception has been strengthened by a history of biased international media reporting that Africa has been reduced to a continent of hell, with no potential to better itself.[2] The many social ills of the African continent, coupled with its marginalisation and vilification by the West, have led to the deterioration in the moral fibre of African society. While some of these problems have historical roots and can be linked to colonialism, it is clear that despite an increase in the number of independent African states, with South Africa as the last country to obtain independence from white settler rule in 1994, overall the continent has registered slow progress in social and economic development (AISA 2009). Africans do not have a monopoly over this concern, but they share it with the continent's international partners, including the US, as indicated above. This view should be understood within the context of the interconnectedness of the world as a global village (Coker 2002). In fact, consecutive US administrations (from President George Bush Sr to President George W. Bush Jr) have viewed Africa's dire situation as a serious security threat to the US, and have stated emphatically that Washington should carefully develop a security relationship with the African continent. Inasmuch as there has been a shift towards positivity in terms of international media reports about Africa in the form of the "Africa rising" narrative, it should be borne in mind that old ways of thinking about and viewing Africa die hard (Ankomah 2008, 8–9). Such old baggage will continue to have a certain level of influence on the foreign policies of Western countries towards African states.

Reacting to the projected image of Africa as posing a serious national security threat to the US, Bond (2007, 4) writes that "Bill Clinton broke new ground by forcefully applying free market policies to Africa and, often unnoticed, by placing Africa on the US foreign policy map by casting it as a transnational security threat." Ironically, certain public commentators have praised Clinton for championing pro-Africa foreign policies and have stated that his term of office actually marked a shift in terms of US policy toward Africa. The reality has, however, been sobering (United States Congress 1998). On the basis of this, other writers, such as Drezner (2005, 429), conclude that "the distinction between rhetoric and action needs to be stressed."

After leaving office, Clinton was often praised by African-American officials of the Bush administration for having conceived the much-lauded African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of 2000 (Pub. L. No. 106) that was implemented in 2004 by the government of the day. This can be attributed to the fact that the rhetoric behind AGOA (2000) prophesied the promising future of Africa's development under the newly established trade regime between the US and certain African states. It is

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2   See the two infamous cover pages of the international magazines *The Economist* (May 13–19, 2000) and *Newsweek* (January 17, 2000), and the caption of the *New African* (issue 474, June 2008).

important to note that the envisaged level of economic and social progress in Africa is intricately intertwined with the US national security as outlined in detail in this article. Unfortunately, AGOA's prescribed liberal policies signed in economic growth for its beneficiaries but could not be used to service their populations fairly because they prohibited them, for example, from acquiring lowest cost drugs for their people, making health care service a luxury only for the employed and the wealthy (Shai 2012). As the American pharmaceutical business community's legal battle with the South African government indicates, the US and its Western counterparts are engaged in Africa in a form of economic neo-colonialism (Iroanya and Shai 2016). The unique features of their engagement have reversed the little democratic gains achieved after the independence of African states from colonial rule.[3] Similarly, it has further eroded any prospects of Africa's development, thus imposing serious limits on the economic security of African states. Key aspects of AGOA, such as privatisation, have partly contributed to increasing levels of unemployment and poverty in certain African states, including South Africa (Minter and Booker 2002). Put simply, the deliberate neglect of the contribution of the external factors in the fermentation of security threats in Africa has created a superficial divide between fact and fiction in the understanding of the US-Africa policy and its national security strategy. Raphala (pers. comm. 2016) adds clarity to this policy confusion when he states that:

> The US is still looking at Africa using the Cold War era lenses. The US continues to seek strategic allies in every region in Africa. It is still all about the sphere of influence with the Americans. The US also looks at the major players in the region and builds close relationships with them. In East Africa, we can see this through the close relations the US has with Kenya and Tanzania and in West Africa, Nigeria and Ghana. All these four countries are blessed with mineral resources which the US continues to benefit from.

What can be deduced from the point of view expressed above is that there is continuity in terms of the content of the foreign policy of the US towards Africa. Ndhambi (pers. comm. 2016) clarifies this understanding of the evolution of US foreign policy by stating that the Obama presidency was increasingly challenged by new players, such as China and India, in the African continent. The US "can no longer claim to be a sole dominant player in Africa and the international system. As such, Obama policy has sought to re-assert US influence in the continent due to the growing influence of competitor powers" (Ndhambi pers. comm. 2016).

To get back to the central focus of this section, mention can be made of the statement that Rice made when she addressed the World Affairs Council in Washington, DC (administrative hub of the US government) during Clinton's term of office that "[o]ur first interest in Africa, as elsewhere, is defending our own national security and protecting Americans in the United States and abroad." This statement, which was lifted

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3   For more information on the US's legal battle with South Africa over Pretoria's decision to legislate the domestic production of generic HIV/AIDS drugs, see Hink (2009).

from the website of the Uganda Rural Community Support (cited in Nabudere 2012), should be understood in the context that America is the only remaining superpower in the world with a huge population density, and its nationals are to be found in all corners of the African continent. Irrespective of their location at any point in time, their citizenship still entitles them to full protection by their government (US Department of State 2004, 193). In many instances when conflict erupts in Africa or elsewhere, the first step for the US has been to evacuate its nationals to a place of safety. Few academics and policy analysts would disagree that the protection of the Americans beyond their country's territorial borders requires cooperation with friends, allies and alliances, hence the centrality and significance of African states to America's quest for security. When discussing the realities surrounding the security challenges facing the Americans in Africa, Ndhambi (pers. comm. 2016) posits that the US engages in the continent primarily for containing and eliminating terror groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, and that this agenda is advanced "by giving aid and training to targeted countries, protecting American business and political interests."

Linking Rice's statement quoted in the previous paragraph (cited in Nabudere 2012) to what less critical Africans may describe as the unintended negative consequences of AGOA, this research questions if America can be entrusted with the responsibility to come up with solutions for African problems to its own disadvantage. *Realpolitik* shows that in international relations the first national interest of each state is its security and survival, and the primary client in this regard is its population (Danziger 1997, 312). Flowing from this school of thought, it can be concluded that AGOA is a diplomatic strategy to lobby African states to open their markets to American products and companies in return for preferential treatment on the New York Stock Exchange. Contrary to the normative assumption that AGOA promotes fair trade between African states and the US with equitable benefits for both, it seems as if this is untruthful since the key actors in this regime are unequal partners in the first place (Le Cordeur 2016). Similarly, the prescription of international specialisation for the African states makes them more vulnerable to international price fluctuations, further holding them down as compared to the diverse economies of developed countries, including the US. Stewart (2003, 15) argues that behind the blind language of free trade "there could be high social and political costs if smaller, weaker economies are opened up fully to international competition." It is within this continuum that the US indirectly contributed to Africa's insecurity, which has come to haunt its own national security.

One of the key arguments advanced by both Bush presidents and Clinton to justify the perception—real or perceived—of Africa as a security risk to the US has been linked to the continent's level of poverty and HIV/AIDS infection rates. Booker and Colgan (2004, 1) explain that the "HIV/AIDS pandemic remains the greatest challenge facing Africa, and the greatest global threat to human security." While the whole of Africa is a victim of HIV/AIDS, Islam-dominated countries, such as Sudan, are less affected. There is no gainsaying that HIV/AIDS retards economic development in Africa and that

this in turn contributes to the impoverishment of the affected populations. This is also having a negative impact on the national security of the US because Africa serves as a source of cheap labour for that country. Unfortunately, HIV/AIDS cuts short the lives of potential African immigrants. Recent studies show that in most African countries, including Ghana and Tanzania, the most productive sectors of the economy are the hardest hit by the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and this is a concern for America because some of the victims are likely to have contributed to its "brain gain" (Economic Commission for Africa 2003). The combination of cheap African labour and "brain gain" is very important for the sustainability of America's economic security. Drawing upon the above postulation by Booker and Colgan, it is clear that the US is not immune to the global implications of African emergencies.

Notwithstanding the causal relationship between the spread of HIV/AIDS and poverty in Africa, there is widespread recognition that some of the conflicts in Africa are rooted in poverty. Fundamentally, there is also a link between the level of poverty and HIV infection rates in Africa. The January 2008 socio-political unrest in Kenya and the May 2008 xenophobic pogroms in South Africa can be properly diagnosed using the first analysis, based on conflicts and poverty (Shai and Mothibi 2015). It is well documented that in both man-made disasters the perpetrators had largely lost confidence in the capacity, capability or will of government institutions to address their problems and then acted, as the saying goes, as desperate people resorting to desperate solutions.

According to Maitland (2008), frustration-aggression explanations and arguments about deprivation are relevant in discussing the relationship between poverty and conflict in Africa. This assertion has been adopted by the US over time in conceiving its national security strategies and overall foreign policy on Africa. In a speech delivered on the theme "The National Security Implications of Global Poverty," Rice (2006, 1) emphasises that "global poverty is far more solely a humanitarian concern. … over the long term, it can threaten US national security." She argues that poverty substantially contributes to the outbreak of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. There is logic in this analysis because the process of globalisation confirms that the US cannot be immune to the security challenges facing the African continent and their manifestations. It is therefore argued that if a global and effective HIV/AIDS strategy is not forged and implemented, this will have far-reaching consequences for the national security of all countries in the world, including the US and African states.

Gradually, soldiers in the American army might be hit by AIDS, or the prevalence of HIV/AIDS on the continent may negatively affect the US recruitment drive for African mercenaries for other wars like that in Iraq in 2003. Given the above considerations, the largely pessimistic view of Africa as an immeasurable threat to the national security of the US is morally, historically, economically and philosophically incorrect. Even though the argument has some elements of truth, the key issue is that the views became more superficial and in the end created an impression that security (looking at either internal

threats or those exported from the US to Africa) was not a concern for Africa, and that the US had a monopoly on it.

Rice's (2006) assertions provide the sobering analysis that impoverished zones serve as fertile breeding and training grounds for future terrorists. She also claims that Al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks take advantage of the impoverished situation of the Africans to recruit them to fight against Western civilisation in exchange for huge sums of money and promises of better lives after the attacks.[4] This analysis has proven to be more applicable to other poor societies, especially impoverished Islamic societies where ideology is fundamental to their existing tensions with the Christian-dominated West. Equally significant, when poor Africans look at images of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which to them are symbols of the ill-gotten wealth of the US, and they consider their own situation, they naturally develop a hatred that makes them would-be terrorists or their accomplices (Le Pere 2008, 2–3). These symbols serve as a stark reminder of the exploitative and expansionist nature of the US foreign policy towards African states and the developing world at large (Shai 2016). This should be understood within the context of the natural animosity between the rich and the poor. It is also important to note that a large component of African populations is made up of the youth, who are mainly unemployed and who can be easily recruited by terrorists (Gavin 2008).

Extending her analysis, Rice (2006) links poverty in Africa and elsewhere to environmental hazards such as desertification and deforestation. The poverty of Africans is characterised by a shortage of electricity and over-reliance on timber as the main source of national income, which in some countries poses a long-term security threat to the US and the world at large. Environmental scientists and the advocates of nature conservation note that the cutting down of trees in one part of the world (Africa) causes adverse climate changes with long-term effects for the entire globe (Turton 2006). It is therefore important for the US and the industrialised world to help make poverty a thing of the past in Africa. More development assistance and the revision of the current trade rules should be at the centre of any possible global poverty eradication initiative or intervention. In other words, it is not only one perpetrator of climate change (Africa) that would suffer in the long run, but all humankind. This can be explained through what is popularly known as the "tragedy of the commons."

Other causes of environmental degradation in Africa are veld fires and land clearing for agriculture. This calls for the US and the international community to partner with Africa to prevent the unintended consequences of these practices. These are the key environmental issues in world politics that need to be taken into consideration if the challenges of global warming are to be addressed amicably. While the industrialised countries are engaged in a blame game over climate change in Africa, the irony is that the current pattern of the trade partnership between the industrialised countries (including the US) and the African states is prone to serious environmental hazards. This pattern

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4   The US strongly believes that there are terrorist cells in African countries such as Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania.

inhibits African economies from diversifying. Moreover, foreign companies are actively involved in unhealthy oil exploration and mining activities in Africa (Omotola 2006). In the light of the foregoing, it is argued that an analysis of the security discourse between the US and Africa cannot be limited to concerns over environmental sustainability.

Hypothetically, the nature of the economic involvement (both direct and indirect) of the US contributes to the undermining of Africa's economic sovereignty, and to a certain extent it negatively affects the capacity of African states to provide human security to their populations.[5] At a fundamental level, Raphala (pers. comm. 2016) addresses these very issues as follows:

> Apart from accessing mineral, oil and gas resources from African countries, the US also enjoys influencing local policies. She [the US] also continues to enjoy monitoring the progress these countries are making. There are a lot of benefits that the US government and private companies are enjoying in Africa. With China penetrating Africa aggressively, it is wise for the US to maintain its hold on African nation states. This is because China is fast becoming a serious competitor to the US in Africa. Therefore, for the US to continue to enjoy all the benefits associated with its relations with African states, it should redirect its focus in these countries.

As reflected above, it is argued that the current race between Washington, DC and Beijing has inclined the US under Obama to continue to show a great deal of interest in Africa. As Makhanikhe (pers. comm. 2016) further argues: "Obama has visited Africa more than any other continent during his term in office. Obama's approach to the US-Africa relations is diplomatic as compared to Bush who was radical." In a nutshell, the US has shown strong interest in Africa since the Cold War, and that has not changed.

Contextually, this research emphasises that the crux of environmental degradation is not limited to environmental sustainability. The AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, argues that "commodities produced in Africa are meant for companies in the west" (in Africa News as cited by Nabudere 2012). The above discussion passively highlights the fact that the current trends in US-Africa agri-business relations are characterised by an imbalance between cash crops and food crops (the basis of African food security, which has resulted in food insecurity in the African continent). In addition, traditional analysis on the subject reduces the causes of food insecurity in Africa to the effects of global warming and other related environmental problems such as deforestation, neglecting the influence of external forces and the dictates of the painful trade relations between Africa and developed countries, the US in particular. Given the interrelationship between various forms of security or insecurity in Africa, it becomes clear that the prevalence of famine and hunger on the continent can possibly lead the affected groups to join organised criminal syndicates. In addition, Rice (1999/2000, 65) claims that "Americans lose over $2 billion annually to African white-collar crime syndicates, mostly from financial schemes, including insurance, credit card,

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5   Human security embraces economic security, environmental security, food security, personal security and national security.

and advance fee fraud scams." To support this, Nigeria, Africa's western regional power and also defined as a pivotal state in terms of US foreign policy, is classified as number five internationally as a source of counterfeit US currency (Rice 2006). This should be understood within the continuum of the long-established truism that crime and poverty in Africa have a causal relationship.

As a central feature of poverty, food insecurity in Africa has an international dimension. For instance, under the AGOA trading framework, the US-supported International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank's adjustment programmes, African states are discouraged from subsidising the agricultural sector (generally the backbone of their economies) and this indirectly contributes to a shortage of food on the continent (Zitha pers. comm. 2010). This situation also denies the African states an opportunity to compete with their American and European counterparts on equal terms, trading in products at which they excel. The irony is that in the US and Europe, the agricultural sector is heavily subsidised, and more controversial is the fact that their countries still receive agricultural imports from the African continent. Extremely worrisome is the fact that the US has turned the problem of food insecurity in Africa into a trade opportunity, as it currently exports expensive food products to African states such as Uganda, Niger and Angola, among others (TRALAC as cited by Nabudere 2012). While some African states have shown improvement in terms of food production, others often import food from the US at fairly lower prices, given the unfair advantage of Washington, DC over international trade rules (Rannenyeni pers. comm. 2010). It is argued that the US is able to manipulate the African economies given the slow progress of economic integration in Africa and lower levels of intra-trade on the continent (Shai 2012). These are some of the common features of global apartheid in the international trading system that directly affect the way in which the US positions itself within the complexities and dynamics of the lapsed security environment in Africa in relation to the war on terror.

SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS AND THEIR EFFECT ON US POLICY IN AFRICA

On September 11, 2001, the US was struck by massive terrorist attacks resulting in the collapse of the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. To date, there is no definitive account of the causes and the results of these surprise attacks on the US. According to US intelligence authorities, Osama Bin Laden was behind the attacks. However, the main question is whether a single individual can be a real threat to the national security of a superpower such as the US. This simply means that Bin Laden was the suspected mastermind, not the sole or real attacker. The evolving policy discourse within American government circles is reminiscent of the failure of the US security machinery to uncover the root causes of the attacks. It is argued, however, that the US was fully aware of the underlying causes of the September 11 attacks, but sought to ignore them in favour of

a concealed political agenda that served the interests of its ruling and business elite. An important aspect to note about the September 11 attacks is that the "potential" or US-fabricated terrorist threat in Africa has served as an impetus for Washington, DC's renewed interest in Africa (Carmody 2005). As will be seen later, terrorism did not become a new phenomenon or threat to Africa after the September 11 attacks, as was acknowledged by the Clinton administration (Masindi pers. comm. 2010). Moens (2004, 124) reinforces this idea by referring to the testimony of the Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks in 2004 (Washington, DC) when he inferred that there was a "stunning continuity" on the part of Clinton and Bush regarding their approach to counterterrorism.

To further reinforce this argument, Moens (2004) refers to the time before the September 11 incident when he wrote that the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, explained before the Congress in early 2001 that embassy protection against terrorist attacks, such as had occurred in East Africa in 1998, was one of his top priorities. Before September 11, he still referred to terrorists as "criminals" because their activities apparently did not happen on American soil. However, research shows that the threat of terrorist attacks was not a thorny issue for American pundits and politicians until the year 1998. The admissibility by American politicians of the seriousness of the terrorist threat to the US, especially during the second term of Bill Clinton and the presidency of George Bush Jr, can be explained on two fronts. Firstly, protection against terrorist attacks consistently registered more than 70 per cent of public support as a foreign policy priority in the period between 1998 and 2006. Secondly, and equally important, the desire to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction also recorded more than 70 per cent support from public opinion surveys as a foreign policy priority during the same period (Drezner 2005, 16).

Although language experts identify and distinguish between terrorism and crime, it would appear that the two are at times treated interchangeably by the US in the current policy discourse on international security. Central to the national security discourse of the US, drug trafficking is among the prevalent threats emanating from or going through Africa (Fisher-Thompson 2002, 29). Even though drug trafficking is criminal in nature and can be prosecuted, a related and important consideration is that terrorism has a criminal dimension as well, although there are difficulties in prosecuting its suspects due to lack of a generally agreed definition of what constitutes "terrorism" (Iroanya 2007, 64–65). Besides the simplicity of the dichotomy that exists in the application of the two terms (crime and terrorism) to human security, the US has also identified "rogue states" as well as failed states in Africa as threats to its security within the context of the war against terrorism (Fisher-Thompson 2002, 28–29). Rice (2006) clearly articulates that:

> [A]ll transnational threats from arms flows to drug flows are most difficult to combat where national institutions are weakest and where people are poorest and conflicts most enduring. We need strong, democratic, economically viable partners in Africa. Only such partners can be relied

upon to invest in healthcare to stem disease, to foster environmentally sustainable development, to apprehend terrorists and drug traffickers.

It is important to point out that failing states do not necessarily constitute a cauldron of security threats, but their weak institutions make them susceptible to terrorist networks and drug syndicates within their borders (Fisher-Thompson 2002, 29).

A particularly important aspect about failing or "failed" statehood is the inability of the state to safeguard the inhabitants within its territorial jurisdiction. The monopoly on the use of force and the exclusive control over resources are either severely restricted or entirely absent (Maitland 2008, 6–7). Meanwhile, the state is nevertheless able to function in at least one of the two areas. Failing states do not have total control of their territory and they are mainly characterised by armed regional conflicts where armed groups occupy and control certain regions. However, these states still deliver basic services to the majority of the population and still enjoy some degree of legitimacy (Maitland 2008).

In the context of the definition of "rogue states," African states that can be classified as such include countries such as Somalia, (northern) Uganda, Sudan and Libya.[6] Government institutions in all these countries are flawed. As outlined above, this situation renders their territories as hideouts for terrorists. Previously, consecutive US administrations have alleged that both Sudan and Libya were sponsors of terrorism. However, recent official statements from Washington, DC show that this perception is waning on the side of Tripoli (administrative capital of Libya). This view was confirmed by Bond (2006) with regard to Libya when he asserted that there were signs from the US policymaking establishment of bringing Tripoli to the fold of weapons certification and control. Tied to the foregoing statement is the fact that in 2003 the social identity of Libya as a "failed state" was taken out of the American lexicon in return for Tripoli's relinquishment of weapons of mass destruction (Squassoni and Feickert 2004). Moreover, the effects of the Arab Spring on Libya since the year 2011 have also sealed its declassification from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Hence, the new administration in Tripoli can best be labelled as the puppet regime of the US; and above all, the Washington administration has been instrumental in facilitating regime change in Libya (Poopedi 2014).

It should also be stressed that failing states pose a danger not only to the US, but also to international peace and security. For example, the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab group is known for launching transnational terrorist attacks against a series of countries in East Africa and the Horn of Africa (Botha 2014). While Al-Shabaab is indigene to Somalia, its activities have been extended to countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. A case in point is the Westgate Mall in Nairobi attack in September 2013. This attack left 67 people dead and a further 175 with severe injuries (START 2013).

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6   For details about "rogue states", see Saunders (2006, 23–49).

African countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda have been targeted due to their active participation in the activities of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)—a force that enjoys the backing of the US. The foregoing analysis should be understood within the context that the leaderships of Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda are also close to the US leadership collective. That being the case, the agenda of AMISOM stands to thwart Al-Shabaab's efforts to gain control of Somalia and, in turn, use the country as a launching pad to spread its ideology for establishing the Islamic Emirate in East Africa (Igwe pers comm. 2015; Odhiambo et al. 2013).

The ambitions and activities of Al-Shabaab constitute an imminent threat to regional peace and the strategic interests of the US. Hence, the scale of terrorism in East Africa has the potential to undermine and delegitimise the national leadership of those countries that stand with the US in the struggle against terror. According to Igwe (pers. comm. 2015), fear and anxiety provoked by the wave of terrorism in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Somalia fuel the diffusion of their governments' electoral support from their populations. This scenario could weaken the US's upper hand in its conflict with the complex web of terrorist groups, which include Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda. This analysis is anchored on the baseless American belief that there is a logical connection between Islam and terrorism (Yahya 2002).

Nonetheless, the label of "failed states," especially in relation to African states that cannot make ends meet, smacks of racism and pessimism. This study challenges this pessimistic view, and rejects the continued application of the label "failed states" to weak African states like Zimbabwe and Somalia. The impression that this label creates is that there are no prospects for such countries to become well-established states in the near future. In other words, there should be a definitive turn in the perspective in which these countries are viewed internationally, and the most reasonable label in this regard would rather be "failing states" (Gueli and Liebenberg 2006). This denotes that while weak African states are unable to create an environment conducive to human security, they are actually making an effort to improve the situation.

AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF THE PROSPECTS OF SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE US AND AFRICA

With reference to all the negative arguments and counterproductive events in relation to the US-Africa policy, many of the respondents in this study agreed that Africa had been marginalised by the US foreign and defence policymaking establishments over time, from the Cold War era to date. As a result of the thin line that separates information and propaganda, this suggests that US foreign policy on Africa was often shaped by beliefs based on twisted information about certain incidents. Most of the American and Eurocentric scholarship on Africa has associated the African continent with wars, famine, hunger, poverty, diseases, corruption and backwardness (Ankomah 2008, 8–9;

Schraeder 2000, 12). In all fairness, some of these associations are relatively appropriate to certain African states, but a broad generalisation about Africa is problematic, and the combination of all these factors amounts to the old African label of a "dark continent."

This research submits that ignorance lies at the root of this continued marginalisation or misinformation in terms of historical writing, and unfortunately this trend can also be observed in public and policy discourses in America and Europe in particular (Muchie 2015, 24–25). The key issue is that events never stop, but ever-changing circumstances prevail, and therefore new information becomes more significant for updating public policy or national security strategy in this case (Shively 1995, 94–96). This article argues that the label of a "dark continent" is not applicable to the Africa of today, regardless of its political and socioeconomic ills.

Based on the arguments put forward above, and a review of the extensive literature on history, it is clear that there have been concerted and consistent efforts by European and American writers and neo-liberal scholars to perpetuate the negative image of the African continent (Shively 1995). This trend is apparent through the widespread reporting and recording of negative stories about the African continent, with little attention being given to its positive stories. This marginalisation does not go unnoticed. The current appraisal is an attempt to correct this situation in the context of the evolving security discourse, while acknowledging Africa's threats to the national security of other countries, the US in particular.

From an optimistic point of view, Africa presents a pool of opportunities that are strategically important for the national security of the US in the post-Cold War era. Contemporary studies place emphasis on the importance of Africa's oil to the energy and economic security of the US. To most political analysts, oil occupies a central position in the US-led war on terror and its economic security. The military vehicles and other automotive machines in the battle zones where the US soldiers and those of its allies are involved need oil to operate. The transportation of foodstuffs for the soldiers from production centres to the war zones also requires fuel. This situation has been complicated by the perceived relationship between oil and food prices that dates back to the global economic disaster of the 1980s. In 2008, this view was strongly contested by Gumede (2008, n.p.), the then Deputy Director General of South Africa's Department of Minerals and Energy, according to whom "this is controversy as there is no relationship between oil and food prices, although it has become fashionable to do so."

Notwithstanding all of the above, the ideal security value of Africa to the US is clearly spelt out by Ramalepe (pers. comm. 2015) as follows:

> The US economy depends much on the resources of the African continent. For the US economy to be sustained the US needs these resources. This is the sole reason that we see the US trying to pretend like it is in Africa for the benefit of Africans, investing a lot of their military resources through deployment of soldiers and financial aid that they shower some African countries with. The US also seeks to maintain its superiority in world politics and this requires resources and

strategies. I also believe that the US is monitoring Africa's development and she is also using Africa to check and balance relative power of other players in the international society.

This research proposes the addition of other elements to reinforce the view that Africa is a security anchor of the US. Africa prides itself on some countries' adoption of neo-liberal economic and political reforms (Josephs pers. comm. 2010). Although still relatively weak, democracies like Ghana and Tanzania, when coupled with their continental status, are important for peace and stability in Africa. Prior to the September 11 attacks, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya represented the regional enforcers of the national security strategy of the US in West Africa, East Africa and the Horn of Africa. Recognising the threat of conflict in Africa to its security, the US channelled huge sums of foreign aid through the aforementioned regional powers to enable them to embark on peacekeeping missions in their respective regions and in Africa as a whole (Kornegay, Landsberg, and McDonald 2001, 106–108). It has been widely acknowledged that the severity of violent conflicts in Africa has been a burden for the White House (the official residence and workplace of the President of the US), especially because American taxpayers are indirectly liable for the bigger portion of the US peacekeeping assistance to Africa. Besides threatening the economic security of the US, according to Rannenyeni (pers comm. 2010), the apportionment of more military aid to Africa in the congressional budget has the potential to brew dissatisfaction and protests among the American public, and the government cannot afford always to leave this as an afterthought.

Although the US deployed its own troops to the African continent after the September 11 attacks and intends to establish a permanent military base in Africa as soon as the opportunity arises, recent developments give a picture of the regard paid to the need and the continued wish of the US to secure Ghana and Tanzania (in addition to South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya) and other powers in other regions as geo-strategic bulwarks in the fight against terrorism. However, it would appear that this policy was mainly influenced by the experience from the US occupation of Iraq, which showed the risks of venturing on a mission to stamp out terrorist groups or bring about forcible regime change without the support of the neighbours of the country targeted (Pauly Jr and Lansford 2005).

The fact that the US has shared values on freedom and liberty with the above-mentioned African countries (and others not mentioned here) puts it at an advantage if a meaningful military action to hunt down terrorists is to be undertaken (Shai 2010). Even though they may not identify themselves with the US on its war on terrorism, logic dictates that they are potential allies and what is important is to make them understand that the war on terrorism is part of the overall global strategy of the US to make the world safe for freedom and democracy (Ngugi 2007). Contrary to this, the situation on the ground suggests that it is very difficult for the US to combat terrorism without limiting the civil liberties of individuals in Africa and elsewhere, which relates to issues of torture and interrogation in the search for terrorists.

Lazreg (2007) reinforces the foregoing when she argues that,

torture demands that intelligence officers have free reign, unencumbered by considerations of civil rights and due process. More importantly, its defense requires civil authorities to define political issues on military terms, and thus lose sight of the political and social consequences of their decisions.

It is partly because of some of this that most of the African states are not supportive of the proposed move by the US to establish permanent military bases on African soil. On the other hand, the aftermath of the US-led war on terrorism in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan shows that the American population is more at risk than the state itself. This implies that the invasion of suspected terrorist states by the US mainly endangers the wellbeing of the majority of its citizens in different parts of the world, rather than just the mere survival of its polity.

The ultimate strength of the theory of international political economy and securitisation is the ability to create sound links between political and economic issues in international relations (Maddock 1992). Based on this premise, the American leadership is mainly interested in the impact of Africa on the economic dimension of the national security of the US or what some scholars of strategic studies term "economic security." The key issue is that Africa has a high population density that represents a less competitive market for the US. It is argued that the complexities of globalisation and the position of America in the whole process put it at an added advantage to tap into the African market where young Africans can easily develop loyalty to corporate brands such as Nike, Levi's, Chuck Taylor and Coca-Cola (McGowan, Cornelissen, and Nel 2006, 1–2). Equally important, the existing international trade regime gives the US the leverage of an unfair advantage over its African trade partners. A cheap labour market, affordable agricultural products and a cost-effective mineral-energy industry in Africa are a boon to the American economy.

According to Ramalepe (pers. comm. 2015),

> US foreign policy towards Africa is all about access to resources, which in Ghana are oil and gas. The US also enjoys being influential in national policies of African countries; this is done through assisting African countries like Ghana to meet the requirements of accessing financial assistance from either the IMF or World Bank. Unfortunately, the loans from the IMF and World Bank come with high interest rates and some conditions attached to them. It is these conditions that allow the US to influence the direction of national policies of the receiving countries. The US also prefers stationing its troops in African countries. She does this in the name of providing military training or assistance to local forces. This strategy helps the US in keeping an eye … [on] the African countries. Ghana allows the US to monitor the whole of West Africa through their continuous presence in the country. There are a lot of minerals, including gold, diamond and uranium just to name but a few, in Tanzania, and as such Tanzania is one of the strategic partners of the US in East Africa. The approach that the US is using in Tanzania is no different to the one they [Americans] are using in Ghana and every part of Africa especially where they have interest.

Mbeki (2009) observes that the mineral-energy complex in South Africa is very weak.[7] The current research agrees with this observation, and affirms that this is a common problem of all African states. The reality is that the African mineral-energy industry relies heavily on non-renewable assets and on imported technology as well as capital; therefore it is vulnerable to global market shocks. Washington, DC has tapped into the backwardness of the developing world, and in Africa most of the technological equipment imports used are made in the US. The political economy of African countries also features the predominance of the American multinational corporations, alongside those of China and Japan. For instance, the American company Wackenhut Corrections Corporation, was instrumental in the construction and operationalisation of the Kutama Sinthumule maximum security prison in South Africa (Skosana 2001).[8] According to the World Trade Organization, as cited by the former ambassador of the US to South Africa, Cameron Hume (2002, n.p.), "Africa accounted for only 1.4 per cent of US exports in the year 2000 and for 2.3 percent of all US imports." There might be a variation in terms of the quantity of imports and exports between Africa and the US, but the reality is that most of the African products are sold to the US at a lower price whereas those from America to Africa are sold at a price far higher than their production value. The strategic economic interest and importance of Africa to the US economic security is well articulated by Rice (1999/2000, 66) when she says that about "100 000 US jobs are tied to our exports in Africa."

Reinforcing Africa's growing relevance to the US national security is the fact that the Cape controls shipping between the Atlantic and Indian oceans. Equally, or more importantly, "the Horn of Africa is a potential choke point for traffic between the Suez Canal and the Indian Ocean," and America's base access agreement with Kenya is key to its ability to project force, when necessary, in the Persian Gulf (Rice 1999/2000, 65). Clearly, however, the overall context of the US policy in East and North Africa is intrinsically linked to anti-American sentiments and trends in Arab Africa and pro-Israel Washington, DC's role in the Middle East. In sum, the security of Americans is still intrinsically linked to the security and wellbeing of Africans (Abrahamsen 2004, 677).

LOCATING AFRICA IN THE DUAL INTERPRETATION OF TERRORISM

It has been widely reported that the September 11 attacks have revitalised US interest in Africa due to the imminent terrorist threat on the continent, and this event has become an academic magnet that has drawn the attention of scholars of strategic studies to look at other non-military security issues. This study wholly rejects the thrust of the so-

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7   Moeletsi Mbeki is a political economist and deputy chairman of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA).
8   Kutama Sinthumule maximum security prison is the second largest private prison in the world and it is situated in Makhado (previously known as Louis Trichardt), Limpopo.

called "war against terror" as articulated by George W. Bush and his sympathisers. This research argues that the recent global offensive by the US and its allies is a war *on* terror, instead of a war *against* terror. It is appropriate to emphasise that terrorism did not start with the September 11 attacks, and this event was not a surprise to the US intelligence community, as is claimed by the Bush administration (Jervis 2002, 37–38). The only surprising thing was the skyrocketing death toll and its systematic and organised nature because the US was fully aware of the increasing dissatisfaction and discontent of the Arab world with regard to its policies in the Middle East. Equally, the US was fully conscious of the simmering tensions of the populations in human insecurity situations and how they see themselves through the mirror of the Pentagon and the World Trade Center.

It has been contended by many political analysts that the September 11 attacks provided the US with a durable foreign policy issue to advance its national interests in the Middle East, Africa and the world at large (Masindi pers. comm. 2010). Although terrorism is a concern for America, the manner in which the Bush administration responded to the September 11 attacks did not come close to addressing the root causes of this catastrophic event. It seems as if the foreign policy of George W. Bush was more influenced by the realists or the advisors who view the world through an orthodox analysis. The key issue is that terrorism became a dominant and useful tool to advance a particular political and economic agenda for the US. Arising from the antecedents of America's centralisation of the victimhood of terrorist attacks and its unilateral approach to terrorism, it is clear that there are other concealed goals to the war on terror (Malone and Khong 2003, 1–16). For instance, the eco-political agenda of the US has been hidden through the extreme exaggeration of America's vulnerability to future terrorist attacks. Indeed, the Bush election campaign in 2000 was mainly sponsored by American oil and arms manufacturing companies. Taking into consideration the concerns and reservations of many ordinary Americans about Bush's persistent war on terror, radical Marxist scholars guess that the "war on terror" was a disguised strategy of the Bush kraal to create business opportunities for his election sponsors (Paul 2003). This dualistic understanding of the war on terror implies Bush's attempt to "kill two birds with one stone," thereby targeting the oil-producing countries. In Iraq, for instance, the ultimate beneficiaries of the invasion were American arms manufacturing companies and oil giants, among others (Williams 2010).[9]

Though he emerged victorious as president of the US, it was clear at the time that Bush was not that popular on the international stage or domestically as there were simmering tensions over some of the taxation and health care policies that he introduced. So as not to risk the life span of his political career, Bush's advisory council seized on the September 11 incident to score cheap political points to restore the confidence of the American people in him. This helped to direct the attention of the domestic

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9   American companies that secured lucrative oil, engineering and reconstruction contracts include Halliburton, KBR, Baker Hughes, Weatherford International and Foster Wheeler.

American population away from unwelcome domestic issues towards the appreciation of the perceived efforts of the president to eliminate any future terrorist threats in the Middle East, Africa and beyond global reach. This should be partly understood within the context of the privatisation of the state by the ruling elite in the US, as is the case in other parts of the world, including Africa (Danziger 1997). Regarding the sudden return of America to the old dominant school of thought in international relations (realism), Bourke (as cited by Moens 2004, under "Reviews") characterises this process as "a person becoming a policy at the White House".

Notwithstanding the need by the desperate president to appease his constituency, the macroscopic view of the world shows the desire of the US to retain its status as the only global hegemon. To this end, the US has explored all possible mechanisms to contain the rise of potential or competitive big powers like China and India (Mitchell 2005, 180). It is on this premise that the Bush administration saw it as real and achievable to maintain its hegemony through the use of its military power. In Africa and elsewhere, for example, this policy would entail the use of its power to bring regime change in what is known as "rogue states" and to impose US-friendly regimes and policing (or rather help) in those areas that are economically beneficial to the US economy. It has been reported that the total amount of US military sales, financing and training expenditure for eight African countries considered strategically important for the war on terror has increased from about $40 million over the five years from 1997 through to 2001 to over $130 million between 2002 and 2006 (Lemelle 2008, 1).

However, according to Chabikwa (2008), the key motive for the increased militarisation of US-Africa policy is the need of the White House to protect natural resource endowments in Africa and to ensure it has continued access to and monopoly of the energy-mineral complex on the African continent. This is an issue that lies at the heart of the nerve centre of the government of the US. In other words, the peacekeeping efforts and contribution of the US in Africa have been driven mainly by its thirst for African raw materials. To be specific, Chabikwa agrees with Lemelle (2008, 1) that "military commands are not meant for humanitarian cause and they reinforce the above argument using the case of the desire of the US to station the AFRICOM [Africa Command] along the Gulf of Guinea." In other words, oil addiction and the preservation of its economic security interests on the continent as opposed to humanitarian and moral obligations are central to the national security strategy and the foreign policy of the US in Africa.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to provide an overview of the national security challenges facing the US within the context of its engagement in Africa. It has also tried to demonstrate the reactions of the US to perceived African security threats to its national wellbeing. Based on the preceding discussions, it can be inferred that both realism and

idealism remain relevant to the analysis of the nature and content of the US foreign policy in Africa and elsewhere. This does not imply that other theories are not important in a study of this nature. Although this study subscribes to the notion of addressing the root causes of human insecurity from a multidisciplinary vantage point, it challenges the bulk of existing literature on strategic studies that claims that the September 11 attacks marked a change of US policy in Africa. The reality, this study argues, is that the US has always accepted the African continent as both a threat to and an opportunity for its national security. Therefore, it contends that the content of Clinton's foreign policy was no different from that of his predecessor, George H. W. Bush, or his successor, George W. Bush. What did change, however, was the style of leadership.

While recognising the impact of African conflicts on the national security of the US, this research argues that Africa has something that the US wants, and at times Washington, DC uses either hard or soft power to destabilise the continent for its own benefit. This emphasises that conflict analysis is not done in unison, and any attempt to subject it to a single framework renders policy implications and interventions irrelevant, especially when dealing with complex situations. It is concluded that Africa will remain a threat to the US if Washington, DC does not inject more foreign aid to end non-military threats and curb societal ills such as poverty and HIV/AIDS. Previous strategies and aid programmes of the US to address these challenges have failed because they did not look at the root causes of the problem, but instead prioritised short-term interests, thereby advancing a particular political cause at the expense of humanitarian concerns. Lastly, September 11 did not change the academic discourse in favour of human security, but just gave rise to renewed interest in the field of strategic studies, with an emphasis on state security. Recent developments in the international system show that US reaction to the terrorist threat has reduced the liberal concept of human security to a lower degree, thereby stressing the centrality of the military in the conduct of international relations. Whereas the stated goals of the US "war on terror" have evolved around the restoration of human security, its end results are the fundamentals of state security.

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10 *denotes the use of a pseudonym. The identity of the respondent is withheld for ethical reasons.