Violence without Borders

The Case in Africa

Ambassador Cynthia Efird
Deputy Commandant for International Affairs
U.S. Army War College
Since 1970, there have been more than 30 wars in Africa – almost all internal struggles or the spill-over of internal struggles.

In 1996, 14 out of 53 countries were affected, resulting in half of the worldwide death toll.
African Conflicts

Transnational and/or Subnational cont.

- In the last 7 years, peace deals in DRC, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire, North and South Sudan, Ethiopia/Eritrea, and Angola.
- Conflict currently in Northern Uganda, Kenya, East DRC, Chad, Darfur, Somalia, Nigeria, and South Africa.
  - Source: United Nations

Conflict across Borders in Africa – the NORM
Causes of Violence

- **Ideology**: Religious, Political, Populist
- **Identity**: Nationalistic, Religious, Ethnic
- **Economic**: Poverty, Rising Expectations, Lack of Opportunity
- **Demographic**: Youth Bulge, Differential Birthrates, Urban Migration
- **Technology**: Accessibility/Potency of Weapons, New media
- **Injustice – Historical or Actual**: Colonialism, Presence of Foreign Troops, Arbitrary Borders, Unfair Political Power Distribution, Unfair Economic-Goods Distribution
Causes of Violence

- Amartya Sen – “Theories abound.... [avoid] isolationist programmes of explaining violence only through concerns of economic and social inequality and deprivation, or exclusively in terms of identity and cultural factors.”  
  (Journal of Peace Research, vol 45, No 1, 2008.)

- N.B. – My drastic abridgement!
Nature of Violence

- **Indiscriminant** - No clear objective/No control
- **Criminality** - Profit for an individual or group
- **Terrorism** - Political gain through violence against non-combatants for sub-national or transnational group
- **Warfare** - Political/Economic gain by one or allied states (may be civil war or between states)
- **Mass Atrocities/Genocide**
Kind of Violence + Control + Extent of Area Affected + Lethality of Force = Effect on average Individual

-Level of Control of Violence

- No control
- Control by Local/Regional/National Leader
- Coordination by Several Leaders for Specific Common Objectives
- Alliance among Leaders to Achieve Common Long-term Objectives

... AND willingness to support a leader and accept limitations on freedom to see it stopped
Many African States cannot limit violence, even when that is their citizens’ highest priority and in the leaders’ self-interest.

They lack of the capacity to:

- Maintain security/restrict weapons
- Negotiate effectively with perpetrators of violence or possible allies
- Encourage national, inclusive identity
- Create wealth, manage the economy
**Vicious Circle**

International criticism de-legitimizes leaders, Reducing interest in and ability to reform

International players demand results as precondition for assistance

Leaders lack capacity cannot produce results
Capacity development that balances working through the existing power structure while encouraging reform is hindered by:

1) Political Inter-Governmental Approach

- Binary Approach, “For Us or Against Us” (Cold War, GWOT)
- Ideological allegiances and the “nature” of a regime assumed preeminent/permanent
- Political power considered separate from governmental, economic or military capability
Capacity development that balances working through the existing power structure while encouraging reform is hindered by:

2) *Human Rights-Centered Approach*

- Analysis based on struggle for universal human rights (Latin America); public condemnation is essential tool
- Governments judged exclusively on performance on human rights
- Political or economic capacity issues considered “excuses”
- Working within existing structure is to accept injustice and is unacceptable
Policies to combat violence in Africa

- Equating war with violence is unhelpful. Wars are won or lost; but violence increases or decreases – no end state.
- Capacity building must strengthen governmental security institutions at all levels within existing physical, societal and resource limitations, while improving performance on human rights, democracy criteria with specific goals.
- Long-term, multi-faceted engagement must balance security reforms, democracy building and economic growth. See the world as it is, be realistic about what can be achieved.
Questions/Comments?

Thank You!