Africa's Ungoverned Space*

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Resumo
Espaços Não Governados em África

A atenção que os EUA, a UE, o G-8 e a NATO têm prestado a África apresenta níveis sem precedentes. É necessário, no contexto político pós 11 de Setembro, reflectir sobre "espaços não governados". Este novo conceito está no centro de uma mudança de paradigma na política externa norte-americana, onde o "soft power" tem um importante papel a desempenhar.

O artigo fornece casos concretos. A partir daí discute os modos de minimizar as áreas não governadas e os possíveis meios militares que podem ser utilizados para tal.

Uma das maiores ameaças do século XXI envolve a ligação entre terroristas e armas de destruição em massa. Neste sentido, África apresenta inúmeros "espaços não governados" que merecem a nossa atenção, visto que constituem refúgios ideais para grupos terroristas. O progresso contínuo em África é vital para a segurança dos EUA.

Abstract

The attention that the US, EU, G-8, and now NATO are paying to Africa is unprecedented and continues to grow. Why? It is necessary to a post 9/11 security environment to pay attention to what we are calling "ungoverned spaces". This concept is at the center of a strategic paradigm shift on US foreign policy where soft power can be a key player. This article is about Africa in the context of ungoverned space, focused on the security environment and on the concept of ungoverned space, providing specific examples. From there, it underlines the ways in which we are seeking to reduce ungoverned areas and the military tools we can use toward that end.

Africa is now a higher priority than it was 10-15 years ago. The bottom line is that an international system of willing and able partners – that exercise effective sovereignty – bolsters our security. The objective is for the footprint of governance to match the footprint of effective sovereignty. If one of the biggest threats of the 21st century involves the nexus between terrorists who seek to harm us and the most dramatic and effective means by which they can do so – accessing and moving weapons of mass destruction – Africa provides enough ungoverned space to be of major concern.

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Introduction

This is a fascinating, albeit dangerous, time in the world as great strategic shifts are underway, politically, economically and militarily. Simultaneously, the paradigms we have used, in some cases, for more than a century, to understand relationships between nation states, and the requirements for security are being fundamentally challenged and even probably shattered.

The world has always been unpredictable from a security perspective, but we have not had such unpredictability and flux since the time between WWI and WWII and that is what I want to talk to you about today – a very significant shift in understanding our security and threats to it.

I have been involved – in one way or another – in African affairs since 1987 – and outside of various times of crisis (i.e. Somalia, Rwanda, etc). I do not recall a time when Africa had more prominence on our general strategic agenda than it does today. That does not mean it is at the center of our agenda but it is certainly no longer on the periphery.

In fact, the attention that the US, EU, G-8, and now NATO are paying to Africa is unprecedented and continues to grow. Why? It is necessitated by a post 9/11 security environment that requires we pay close attention to what we are calling "ungoverned space" – both physical and non-physical. This concept is at the center of a strategic paradigm shift and it is an area where I think Special Operations Forces can be a key player.

So what I'd like to do is talk about Africa in the context of ungoverned space. We will first focus on the security environment in Africa. Then I will elaborate on the concept of ungoverned space and provide specific examples in Africa that pose a challenge. From there, I will also discuss the ways in which we are seeking to reduce ungoverned/exploitable areas and the military tools we can use toward that end.

African Environment

Our understanding of and corresponding response to our security environment have gone through fundamental changes over the years.

In the 1950s, our great concern was determining how to fight in the time, place and manner of our choosing in the atomic age.

In the 1980s, we focused on competitive technological strategies against the Soviet Union and the roll-back of communist expansion in the developing world – Africa, in particular.

The key dimensions of the 21st century globalization and the potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction mean that dangers may arise in and emanate from states that do not exercise effective sovereignty – which poses very different challenges than those of previous decades and consequently bring Africa into greater prominence.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to face constant security, political, and economic crises. Government corruption is a major problem. Many countries have limited or unreliable capacities for internal security, law enforcement, and border protection. This lack of governance capacity makes them attractive venues for the development of violent extremism, terrorism, and criminal activities.

This African environment is, unfortunately, not new as many of you know but what is new is its relevance to ungoverned space.

Key Ideas that Underlie US Thinking

When looking at how to address the African security environment and challenges that it poses, there are three key ideas that underlie US thinking:

- We cannot predict events with precision.

- We need to recognize the value of taking early measures to resolve problems before they become crises, and

- We need to improve our capacity to work together to address common security problems.

The Problem of Ungoverned Spaces

What is "ungoverned space?" Ungoverned space is a physical or non-physical area where there is an absence of state capacity or political will to exercise control.

Physical space can be land area, such as the Sahel region, where terrorists have successfully conducted attacks, or the Niger delta, where corruption and criminal

activity is pervasive. Or something we often forget, maritime areas, such as the African coastal waters in the Gulf of Guinea or the Swahili coast.

Non-physical space might, for example, involve financial space where there is little capacity or legal authority to prevent terrorists from raising and moving monies in support of attacks. This is space that terrorists thrive in and need to exist.

Ungoverned space is not new – just like the threat environment in Africa is not new. What is new is the fact that we are now looking at this as a 21st century threat. This is a fundamental paradigm shift in terms of strategic thinking about threats.

In the past, we were concerned about "governed space" because massive military power could be built and sustained there and that was the only type of power that we believed could threaten us.

Totalitarian regimes represented the ultimate in governed space as they controlled everything. We did not focus on countries that could not control anything outside their capitals but 9/11 has brought home to the US the fact that we can no longer think like that. We now have the traditional threats plus that of ungoverned space and that is the reason why Africa is showing up more on the radar screens in Washington. For those who have worked Africa for a long time, you know the solutions to Africa's problems are going to be different and more complex than the traditional solutions. One of the key tools is an effective security cooperation program to reduce the ungoverned area and deny that area to terrorists.

Ungoverned and Exploitable Areas

Ungoverned and exploitable areas have physical and non-physical dimensions:

Ungoverned territories: there are plenty of rugged, remote, maritime, and littoral areas that require more effective government control in Africa – and this is probably what first comes to mind when you think about ungoverned space – but there are other equally important components of ungoverned space – for example: **Competing Governance** exists when the state is unable or unwilling to exercise authority in certain areas and so cedes that authority to outside elements. For example, this might include countries that lack adequate resources to implement wide--spread education programs and increasingly rely, by default on externally supported madrassas to educate their children (e.g. Ethiopia, Mali, etc). **Exploitation of legal principles** is self-explanatory and includes legal rights and principles that

can be exploited by actors to radicalize and motivate disaffected populaces. In Africa, the problem tends to be lack of legal principles or selective enforcement of those that exist. Corruption is a factor here.

An **opaque area of activity** involves the state's inability to monitor or control certain illicit or facilitating transactions, such as, moving monies in support of terrorist planning. In Africa, this tends to a capacity problem – so even if you have laws in place to protect against such things you may not have the resources to enforce them. Also, as we noted in talking about competing governance, incapacity and the lack of political will may interact. The decision of some governments to relinquish control over certain core governance functions may be partially the result of low capacity forcing budget trade-offs. Finally, in Africa, it is also not unusual to have the collapse of the central government which can contribute to the creation of ungoverned territories where, over the long run, competing forms of governance emerge.

Military Challenges

Security problems or challenges generally fall into four different categories, from a purely military perspective. **Traditional challenges** involving armies, navies and air forces. **Disruptive challenges** from competitors who employ new technologies to counter our current military advantages. **Catastrophic challenges** through the acquisition, possession and use of weapons of mass destruction. **Irregular challenges** refer to non-state and state actors employing "unconventional" methods to counter stronger state opponents. Many of these challenges exist in Africa in one way or another due to the continent's considerable ungoverned space. Catastrophic and irregular challenges are the ones that apply most to the ungoverned space problem. So it shouldn't come as any surprise that Africa is a potentially attractive place for violent extremists, terrorism and criminal activities.

What's Required to Reduce Ungoverned Spaces

So how do you address ungoverned space? To establish governance seems pretty simple. The problem is that governance is not just the security sector. That's only one

piece. Governance is the complex interaction of the security sector with other government sectors such as the economic sector, the justice sector, basic services sector and even the education sector. All these sectors have to be strengthened almost simultaneously and that's no easy task – particularly if you are facing corruption in the government.
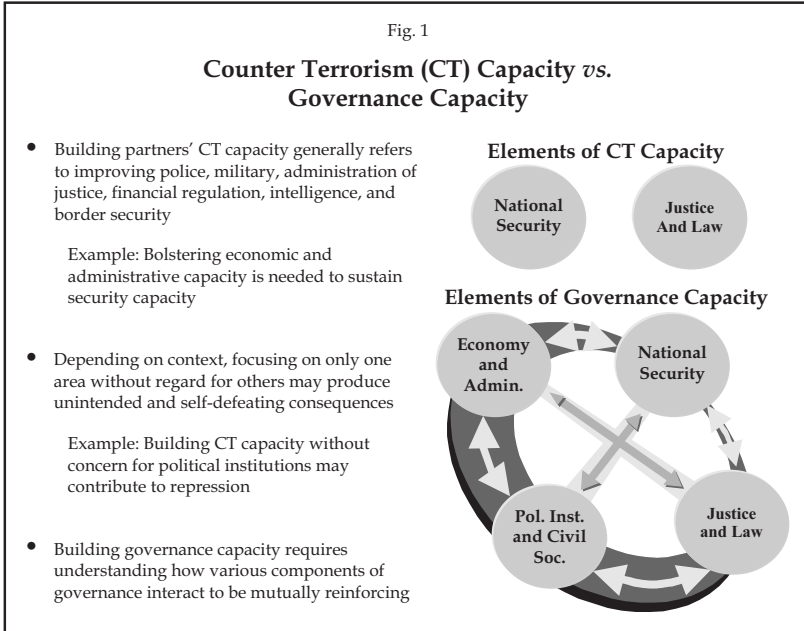
What is required to reduce ungoverned space/area?

Encourage/enable governments to gain responsible control over ungoverned areas by:

- offering civilian & military education opportunities;

- establishing strong civilian & military working relationships;

- providing humanitarian assistance;

- providing training and military assistance;

- enforcing fair laws and regulations;

- establishing responsive civil government.

Counter Terrorism (CT) Capacity *vs.* Governance Capacity

Figure 1 makes clear that reducing ungoverned space is not strictly a military endeavor. A balance must be struck between sustainable economic development, national security, justice and law, and political institutions and civil society. You can't expect to progress in one area and have the impact you desire if progress in other areas continues to lag. Similarly, you can't build a counter terrorism (CT) capacity without keeping an eye on how that capability might otherwise be used, for example, to repress the perceived "political enemies" of the state rather than legitimate terrorists. So what do we face when we try to do this in an African environment?

Fig. 1

Counter Terrorism (CT) Capacity *vs.*
Governance Capacity

- Building partners' CT capacity generally refers to improving police, military, administration of justice, financial regulation, intelligence, and border security

  Example: Bolstering economic and administrative capacity is needed to sustain security capacity

- Depending on context, focusing on only one area without regard for others may produce unintended and self-defeating consequences

  Example: Building CT capacity without concern for political institutions may contribute to repression

- Building governance capacity requires understanding how various components of governance interact to be mutually reinforcing

Elements of CT Capacity

National Security   Justice And Law

Elements of Governance Capacity

Economy and Admin.   National Security

Pol. Inst. and Civil Soc.   Justice and Law

Challenges of Working in Africa

These factors add to the complexity of working across the various sectors of government. First and most obviously, we have to address the cultural differences between Western countries and African countries in the way we do business, approach problems, share information, think about time, etc. There are also cultural differences between African nations themselves – and our approaches to building governance capacity have to take this into account. Corruption further complicates the problem because it undermines the desire to see effective change. Improved governance capacity would stifle opportunities for corruption. Consequently, corrupt officials are not inclined to implement reforms. Lack of health care, HIV/AIDS and high illiteracy all impact negatively on efforts to build capacity for governance because it limits the pool of people you have to work with to affect change. The last three challenges are systemic structural problems that impact negatively on a country's ability to sustain whatever capacity improvements that are made.

Ungoverned Space Problems

West Africa

What I'd like to do next is take those definitions of ungoverned space I talked about earlier and look at specific examples in an African regional context – starting off first with West Africa. We know that there is ungoverned space between North Africa and the Sahel (ungoverned territories). This is the Sahara desert area and where terrorists transit and where governments do not have the capacity to control such movement. In the Niger Delta and Northern Mali, there is little exercise of government authority (competing governance). We also know that an illicit diamond trade is going on, as well as the sale of illegal weapons and drug (opaque areas of activity).

East Africa

As for East Africa, we have examples of piracy along the Somali coast (ungoverned territories). There is no functioning government in Somalia. Governments exercise little to no control in the Ogaden area, Southwestern Ethiopia and Northern Uganda – and we are familiar with the problems in Darfur where atrocities continue to occur (competing governance). Kenyan courts are weak in prosecuting criminals and terrorist suspects **(**exploitation of legal principles**).**

Central Africa

In the great lakes region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo does not exercise effective control along its border with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda (Ungoverned Territories).

And we have unregulated diamond and mineral exploitation going on as well as weapons smuggling (opaque areas of activity).

Militia groups and outside countries and interest are involved and Congolese officials have no control over these activities. The areas in the northern CAR and the Gulf of Guinea are not effectively governed.

Southern Africa

The southwest Indian Ocean, specifically the Mozambique Channel, is considered by some to be the last great fishing ground in the world. A lack of monitoring, control and surveillance capabilities among the nations bordering the channel has led to unacceptable levels of over-fishing and general environmental degradation. This robs the nations there of economic resources which should be funneled back into their national economies. It is the lack of these enforcement capabilities that creates an attractive venue for other criminal activities, to include smuggling and terrorist activities.

Secretary of Defense Priorities for Africa

So now I've defined ungoverned space, discussed the theoretical approach to dealing with it, and the practical challenges to implementing the theory in Africa – and – we've also looked at specific, illustrative examples of the ungoverned space challenges in different parts of the continent. So what does that translate into for Department of Defense (DoD)? Where does DoD fit? What is its role in addressing this problem in Africa? To begin to answer that question, let's take a look at the Secretary of Defense's priorities for Africa. Note that with the possible exception of the first topic, the emphasis in these priorities is on prevention through security cooperation.

- war on terrorism and WMD proliferation;
- strong military to military relationships;
- military professionalism & reform;
- building sustainable capacity within African militaries;
- working with both European allies and sub-regional organizations;
- good governance and stability.

OSD Security Strategy for Africa

This is our security strategy for Africa. Figure 2 boils the matter down to its essence – the three key pillars of addressing the security component of the ungoverned space problem in Africa. Note again the emphasis on prevention, especially in the third aspect.

Fig. 2

OSD Security Strategy for Africa

To work with our partners in Sub-Saharan Africa to foster stability and combat terrorism by:

- Promoting civil control and defense reform

- Developing professional military organizations

- Building national and regional capacity to gain responsible control over ungoverned areas, prevent and resolve conflicts and crises, and thwart global terrorism

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Strategic Elements Defined

Figure 3 defines the strategic elements in more detail. While working in these areas can help build reliable partners who can help us respond to today's threats, we think the prevention and deterrence that can derive from a more competent and capable security capacity in Africa is an even more important outcome. This is as much a part of fighting the war on terrorism as is the kinetic component of that war. Better that we "win the battles" at this stage instead of waiting until a kinetic response is required and we are the only ones who can deliver it.

Fig. 3

Strategic Elements Defined

Civil Control & Defense Reform

- Civil subordinated/appropriately sized and funded militaries with improved transparency and accountability for national security.

Military Professionalism

- Institutionalization of training to develop and maintain a disciplined force, with a professional ethic, conducting legitimate national security missions with respect for law and human rights.

Capacity Building

- Skilled, appropriately equipped and well-led African militaries that can help reduce ungoverned space by contributing positively to combating terrorism, controlling land and maritime space and work to prevent and to respond to crises, at both the national and sub-regional level.

Key DoD Assistance Programs in Africa

The key DoD assistance programs in Africa are the following:

- International Military Education & Training (IMET) provides training to selected foreign military and defense associated civilian personnel on a grant basis. Training is provided in the US at military facilities, with US armed forces and through mobile training teams. In IMET in FY 2006, we allocated over $10 million to various African countries. However, those countries that have not signed an ASPA (American Service Members Protection Act) waiver with the US or were under sanctions did not receive any money.

- Foreign Military Financing (FMF) is our program of grants and loans to countries to purchase US defense articles, services and training. In FY 2006, FMF totaled over $16 million. Those countries that are under sanctions or who have not signed an article 98 waiver are ineligible.

- Trans Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) seeks to protect the nations in the region against terrorist groups and thwart the development of terrorist's safe havens and training bases in the Sahel and Maghreb. This is EUCOM's number one counter-terrorism priority. Nine partners' nations are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Nigeria.

- DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP) provides HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services to militaries in Africa and worldwide, with predominance of aid going to African countries. The FY 2006 budget is over $3 million.

- The purpose of African Contingency Operations Training & Assistance (ACOTA) is to enhance, develop and sustain African Peace Support Operations (PSO) capability and capacity at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. Fourteen African countries have signed up as partners so far with three additional countries as future partners. This is a State Department funded program, executed in conjunction with the Defense Department.

- African Maritime Governance Initiative (AMGI) is a proposed program to assist African countries in better governing their maritime space. It will coordinate the execution of existing and new US programs/initiatives in the areas of coastal and maritime security – includes the Gulf of Guinea and Southwest Indian coastal areas.

Conclusion

As I initially indicated in many ways, Africa is a higher priority than it was 10-15 years ago. The bottom line is that an international system of willing and able partners – partners that exercise effective sovereignty – bolsters our security. Our objective is for the footprint of governance to match the footprint of effective sovereignty. We have quite a way to go in Africa. And if one of the biggest threats of the 21st century involves the nexus between terrorists who seek to harm us and the most dramatic and effective means by which they can do so – accessing and moving weapons of mass destruction – Africa provides enough ungoverned space to be of major concern. Continued progress in Africa is vital to US security.