

May 2, 2012

### **African States and Sovereign Instability**

The European advantages of security and unity are that of a region which provides stability to the constituencies that exist in the western world. Immediate systemic problems of African states are not fully comparable to the ones that Europe faced in its development due to a fundamentally different set of circumstances that Africa ought to solve. Jeffery Herbst suggests in “War and the African State,” the wars that shaped Europe, at great cost and destruction, provided the necessary unity to effectively tax and nationalize the citizens of Europe into sovereign states. Although if interstate wars plagued Africa in the same manner, then perhaps stability would not result due to differences between Europe and Africa. As many other analysts support, the indication of positive institutional change is relative to the notions of leadership, types of nation-state failure, 21<sup>st</sup> century sovereignty, and the resurgence of religion in states.

### **Vocational Politics**

A clear understanding of the role that political elites have in society is important in understanding the factors that lead to state change. Max Weber described essential distinctions between leaders that live *for* politics and those that live *off* of politics. In the former case, the politician is a civil servant which strives to improve the surrounding environment. The latter case compares the role of the politician to that of an entrepreneur seeking profit from the endeavor of civil service. Weber would most likely argue every political figure in African politics could fit a mixture of the two descriptions. Additionally, Weber emphasizes that leaders hold traits of charisma, tradition, or legal status and that the differences amongst strong leaders are not always clearly separate in these terms. Poorly governed states may need to develop leaders that work *for* African societies and may need to improve their tactics along which institutions are best suited

May 2, 2012

for specific leadership characteristics. Otherwise, institutions may continue to reject leaders in African states. States may fail because leaders are not perceived as qualified to lead.

### **Types of Nation-State Failure**

A collapsed nation-state unable to prevent catastrophe is also unable to structure legitimate governance. To reiterate, this is a state that neglects the security of its citizens, either intentionally or unintentionally. Robert Rotberg finds that many states are not categorized, but rather these entities are in constant fluctuation. Many states do not follow a consistent *one-size-fits-all* mold on the path to failure, and it is more efficient to prevent a state from reaching a failed *point-of-no-return*. In fact, Rotberg argues that failed states provide a security concern not only for the constituencies of the region. Therefore, interstate war in Africa could be quite detrimental for all major international actors. Herbst (Spring 1990) and Rotberg (Summer 2002) speak from relatively different time periods; the Cold War and the 21<sup>st</sup> century have different sets of international order, and the perspectives of these two analysts differ in relation to the historical context of their eras. Rotberg may find interstate war as a 'wild card' scenario with vastly different outcomes for each African state. Failed states would lose governance, and strong states would ultimately be responsible for governing the territory of conquered failed states.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Sovereignty**

A continuous evolution between state sovereignty has impacted the world since the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, although not with regards to the actual arrangement. While religious tolerance increased, state sovereignty is more so connected to globalization. NGOs and supranational institutions have an impact on the ability of states. And, an increased cooperative strain is required; constraints impact sovereignty of states, but their role in international affairs maintains importance. Stephen Krasner might argue, in this instance, that an interstate war would

May 2, 2012

raise the attention of international groups such as the IMF, the United Nations, etc. And, a result could be global involvement in African affairs – global involvement in European affairs during the interstate war periods was not a possibility.

### **The Resurgence of Religious States**

The role of religion in states is a possible wild card as defined by Mark Juergensmeyer with regard to ideology and the nature of legitimate moral duties to faith. The particular nexus of political and religious ideologies to civil society is prominent to fundamentally shifting power relations in any part of the world; in Africa, either stability or instability could result. Interstate war and religious resurgence could together create long-lasting impacts of all kinds. Religious nationalism could act as a bonding agent between individuals and shared national identity has the possibility of creating both positive or negative outcomes. With regard to interstate war, any form of national identity may increase connectedness of people within states and the resilience of states. Yet, religious nationalism may also decrease the likelihood of interstate war in scenarios that create lasting bonds of trust between states that share similar identities.

### **Implications**

African states and their decision-makers may not fully embrace any of the possibilities presented by analysts; however, the insight from these scholars could be effectively utilized to present a logical course of action which may in turn lead to sustainable security and unity. Weber discusses the notion of civil servants, where successful institutions have charismatic leadership that works *for* politics. These figures could be religious or secular, and might continue to work cooperatively across the boundaries of states. The support of global security agreements might act incentives for better security arrangements in Africa. Yet if interstate war were to surface, a nation-state failure could dismantle the institutionalized boundaries of African states.