AFRICOM and African Cultures

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2. Introduction

• AFRICOM launched in 2007

• “Misconceptions” of AFRICOM
  - location of AFRICOM
  - the dust has settled
  - no US military base in Africa
  - located in Germany

• a shift of US security policy

• The centrality of African culture in peace building
3. Intent of AFRICOM

• AFRICOM is the face of the US military in Africa
• Opportunity for African military to work with the US military
• Need to appreciate the military as an instrument of foreign policy
• AFRICOM seeks to advance US strategic interests in Africa
• Africa remains the last frontier for natural resources
4. Guidelines for AFRICOM

- Support for strong and stable democracies
- Fostering economic growth
- Strengthening public health (HIV/AIDS and other life threatening diseases)
- Prevention of armed conflict
- Addressing transnational security challenges
5. Appreciation for African Security Standards

- Prioritization of security challenges
- State security vs. human security
- Top security challenges for Africa are non-military
- Afrobarometer:
  - poverty
  - unemployment
  - inequalities
  - HIV/AIDS
6. Clash of Civilization

- Samuel Huntington 1993
- Response to Francis Fukuyama: the End of History
- Critique of the modernization school of thought
- Conflicts in the Post-Cold war era:
  - Not ideological or economic
  - Ethnic and religious identities
  - Conflicts are intra-state and no inter state
  - Transcend the gap between modern and traditional
7. The Primacy of Culture in Peace Building

• As AFRICOM engages with Africa it must recognize the primacy of culture to the African people
• Insensitivity to a people’s culture may spoil good intentions
• Universality of democracy - best form of government
• filtered through African values and cultures
  - Blending republicanism and traditionalism
  - Appreciate role of traditional institutions in peace-building
8. Language and Peace building

• Do not intend to romanticize African languages and cultures
  - *Mmualebe o bua la gagwe*
    (free speech)
  - *Mafoko a kgotla a mantle otlhe*
    (every view counts)
  - *Ntwakgolo ke ya molomo*
    (it is better to dialogue than fight)
9. AFRICOM and African culture

- Unity in diversity
- Cultural pluralism
- Tradition Justice and Reconciliation
- Rwanda – Gacaca courts
- Northern Uganda – Child soldiers – Traditional cleansing
- Assist in the re-inventing of African Culture rather than replacing it with western values
10. Conclusion

- The preservation of indigenous cultures is emerging as a new site for the struggles for authenticity and self-actualization
- Culture is the missing link in efforts of peace-building
- Ethnic nationalism is emerging as a new force for democratic debates
- Building a culture of peace means being free from fear of violence and oppression and free to express one’s identity and sense of belonging
11. Conclusion (cont.)

• For peace to endure in Africa, Africans must listen to the voices of their culture drawing from the traditional values of *botho* or *ubuntu* (moral uprightness)

• As a social and cultural construct, botho lays the foundation for an ethical, just and accountable political system

• African solutions to African problems

• Regional standby Force
THANK YOU