CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION FORUM.
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Speakers:
DR. JOYCE NEU, Carter Center
&
DR. I. WILLIAM ZARTMAN, Johns Hopkins-SAIS

DR. JOYCE NEU began with an overview of the Carter Center’s involvement in the reconciliation process in Sudan/Uganda. Neu described President Carter’s long-standing relationship with the Sudanese, beginning with a 1988 visit to Sudan. Neu attributes the invitation to the Carter Center to mediate in the region to the development of the relationship between President Carter and the peoples and governments in Sudan and Uganda.

Neu recalled the bombing of a Sudanese pharmaceutical company that moved Carter to publicly advocate for an investigation. Another impetus for the strong relationship forged was the Carter Center’s implementation of disease eradication and health programs in the region. Much more than a supply-drop, the Carter Center’s Guinea Worm prevention program included a four-month cease-fire – the longest cease-fire ever negotiated to fight disease - which temporarily halted a twelve-year-old civil war.

Dr. Neu enumerated the specific criteria that the Carter Center holds for neutral third party involvement. First, the other parties must invite the third party. Second, the third party should be confident that it is not duplicating the efforts of others. Finally, the third party must believe in its capacity to make a difference in the situation. Neu also discussed the importance of protecting neutrality in spite of outside funding. Private funds, as well as contributions from Norwegian and Dutch governments, support the work of the Carter Center.

In the spring of 1999, Presidents Bashir (Sudan) and Museveni (Uganda) separately wrote to Jimmy Carter asking for help in improving multi-lateral operations. Carter, in turn, solicited the participation of both John Garang, the leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), and Joseph Koney, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader who claims to be acting under divine instruction. Koney has not presented a political program readily understandable to outsiders, beyond calling for Uganda to be ruled according to the biblical Ten Commandments.

Neu stressed the necessity for secrecy throughout the process. NGO activity is more effective if kept out of the international media spotlight. Both governments had distrust for the other. Therefore, outside interference in the negotiations would have only meant further complications. Even after coming to an agreement, both presidents expressed concern over its long-term effectiveness. Previous agreements had little impact. In light of this, the presidents requested that the Carter Center aid in implementing the agreement.
Neu addressed the compounding factors of cultural differences during any mediation. While both sides continually requested formal interactions with each other, as facilitated by the Carter Center, a few obstacles were encountered. Protocol during meetings, how procedures would be viewed, and various suspicions generated by differences in accepted procedures all led to tension between the parties.

Neu concluded her remarks by commenting on the fragility of the process in which the Carter Center engaged. She spoke of the dilemma of how a third party can enter into a delicate situation and then push and move the conflict forward while retaining its neutrality and the goodwill of the parties towards each other and towards the mediator. Neu noted the ever-present suspicions and problems that arise between two opposing parties. Also, Neu recognized the challenge of preserving the best interest of both countries throughout the process. Finally, Neu stated the responsibility of the mediator to remain engaged as long as the inviting countries requested.

Sudan/Uganda agreement, December 8, 1999:
http://www.cartercenter.org/NEWS/RLS99/pr-sudanuganda.html

DR. I. WILLIAM ZARTMAN spoke about the conflict in Congo (Brazzaville) and why peace has failed to reign.

The civil war began at the end of 1998 and continued through the summer of 1999. An approach was made to the Carter Center about mediation and a desire was expressed for the CC’s International Negotiation Network to get involved. The Carter Center talked with all three principals and eventually came to an agreement of eight points. This process began in August of 1999. One of the eight points called for the creation of an independent election commission to study the feasibility of holding a national election.

Despite the Carter Center’s best efforts, however, the INN never heard from Bongo, one of the parties to the conflict, and this initiative faltered. What went wrong was that there was no relationship between the parties and the Carter Center. The INN was unknown to the parties. While an initial agreement was signed, it merely reflected the previous power relationship, and the problematic status quo. There was no mutually hurting stalemate to convince the parties of the need for a negotiated settlement. The Carter Center simply had no leverage, and was in no position to ask for help. Other Track One international actors with more leverage, notably neighbouring state Angola and former colonial power France offered no meaningful assistance. Unfortunately, Track-Two diplomacy cannot ask Track-One diplomacy in such situations.

Q&A and Discussion:

Q: Was a “hurting stalemate” significant in Sudan/Uganda? Did it help? Did it provide more leverage?
A: Not in the traditional sense. Sudan had been on the charm-offensive. Sudan wanted to be invited back into the international fold. Uganda was stretched to the limit militarily. The Carter Center’s leverage with Khartoum was that Jimmy Carter has been a friend to Sudan for many years. The trust and assurance of a fair shake brought it to the table. This was not a negative for Uganda because it wanted to get to the table, and if that was the way it was to happen, so be it. Although Uganda was
skeptical, the relationship between Carter and Sudan guaranteed that Sudan would participate in the talks.

*Q: Humanitarian aid to feed rebel groups?*

A: Humanitarian aid often doesn’t help the situation. Sometimes a mediator must do it to prime the conditions for mediation, but the Carter Center does not have the capacity to feed populations, nor do other NGOs. Only governments can accomplish such operations, but they cannot afford to support anti-government groups. It is a difficult paradox. A choice may be made to step up the war in Brazzaville in order to create a larger humanitarian concern and more action on the part of the international community.