



**AFRICA CENTER**  
**FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

## **Session 2: Critical Thinking**

Raymond Gilpin, Ph.D.  
Academic Dean

# Overview

- What is critical thinking?
- Why is it relevant for Africa?
- Why is it important in Africa's security sector?
- Elements of critical thinking
- Implications and recommendations

# What is Critical Thinking?

“Intellectually disciplined process of actively conceptualizing, analyzing and evaluating information gathered or generated by observation, experience or reason as a guide to action”

- Source: [www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org)

“Critical thinking is a learned skill”

- Source: *Helen Bouygues, 3 Simple Habits to Improve Your Critical Thinking*, Harvard Business Review, May 2019

# What is Critical Thinking? (continued)

“Strategic leaders must be inquisitive and open-minded. They must be able to think critically and be capable of developing creative solutions to complex problems . . . With mental agility, successful strategic leaders scan their environments, think critically, and lead and manage change”

- Source: Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, Armed Forces Journal (2011)

# Why is it important for Africa?

1. Consistent with African philosophy
2. Africa is dealing with “wicked problems”
3. Africa’s security sector leaders must be guided by evidence – driven solutions

# Why is it important for Africa's security sector?

1. Multi-dimensional nature of insecurity
2. Fighting the “three block war” in Africa?
3. Efficiency gains and citizen-centric security sensitivity, secrecy and confidentiality

# Understand the Problem

<p><b>Simple</b></p>	<p><b>Boiling an egg . . . . .</b>  <i>a. Recipe</i>  <i>b. Results</i>  <i>c. Replicate</i></p>	<p><b>The old approach . . . . .</b>  <i>a. Identify current issue</i>  <i>b. Apply template or best practice</i>  <i>c. Expect results</i></p>
<p><b>Complicated</b></p>	<p><b>Building a plane . . . . .</b>  <i>a. Plan</i>  <i>b. Personnel, Partnerships</i>  <i>c. Adequate resources</i>  <i>d. Product</i>  <i>e. Replicate</i></p>	<p><b>The current approach . . . . .</b>  <i>a. Analyze current issue</i>  <i>b. Secure assistance</i>  <i>c. Encourage partnerships</i>  <i>d. Apply template or best practice</i>  <i>e. Expect results</i></p>
<p><b>Complex</b></p>	<p><b>Raising a child . . . . .</b>  <i>a. Observe and Learn</i>  <i>b. Understand resources</i>  <i>c. Iterate</i>  <i>d. Adapt</i></p>	<p><b>A preferred approach . . . . .</b>  <i>a. Understand the issues</i>  <i>b. Learn from ecosystem</i>  <i>c. Strengthen teams and institutions</i>  <i>d. Iterate and adapt . . . . . over time.</i></p>

# Elements of Critical Thinking



- Source: Robert Burton, *Critical Thinking and SOF Decision Making, Special Warfare*, April - June 2017



# Critical Thinking Pathways

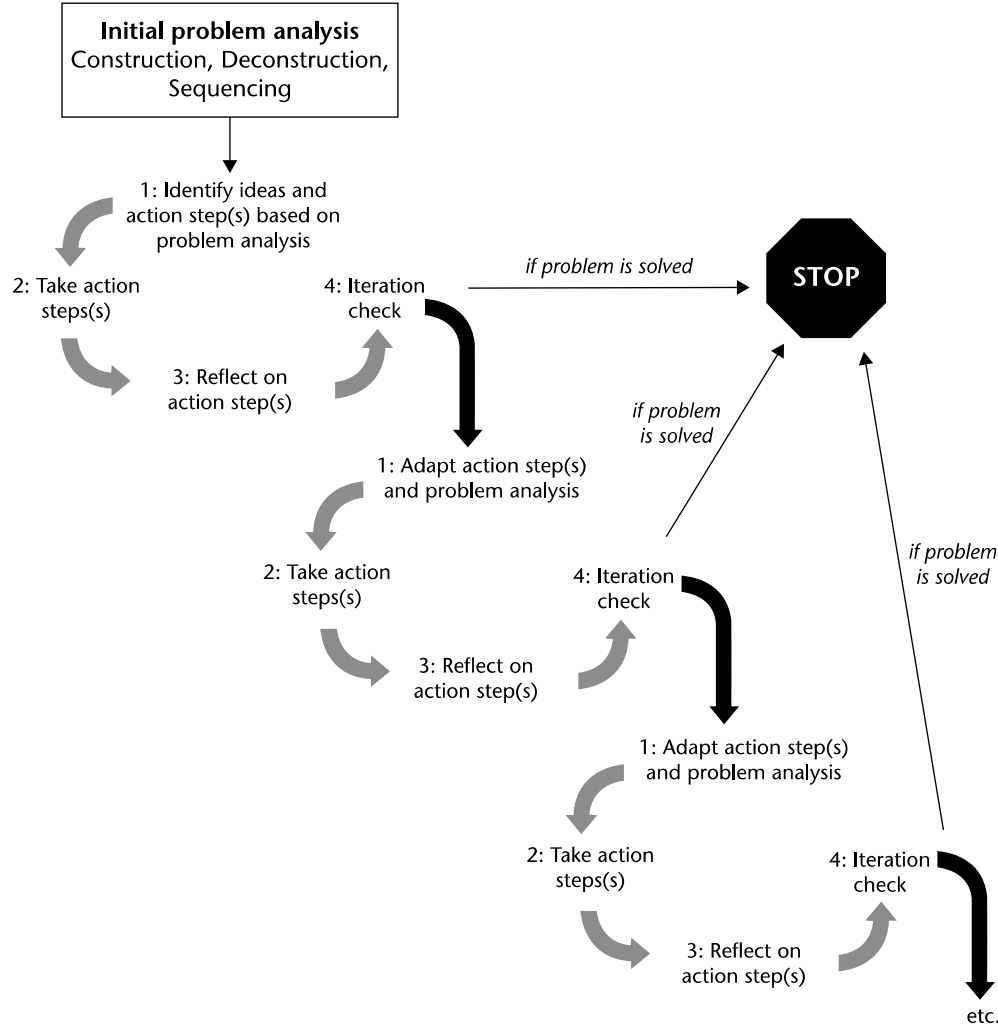


Figure 8.2. The iterative process in simple form

Source: Matt Andrews, Harvard Kennedy School

# A Theory of Change

Invest in . . .

Critical Thinking



and Expect . . .

More useful  
concepts

Focused  
practitioners

Improved  
coordination

Realistic  
goals



to Enhance . . .

POLICY

- *Evidence-driven*
- *Iterative*

PRACTICE

- *Shared goals*
- *Collaborative*
- *Citizen focused*

CAPACITY

- *Human*
- *Institutional*
- *Oversight*

and Promote . . .

Sustainable Security; Resilient Societies; Robust Institutions; Accountable Governance

# Institutional Fragmentation?

	Students	Curriculum	Pedagogy	Conflict Management Role	Examples
<b>A. Tertiary Educational Institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominantly varied civilian</li> <li>• Minimal uniformed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured</li> <li>• Scholarly – theory, empirical research, methodology</li> <li>• Broad security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction</li> <li>• Knowledge transfer</li> <li>• Contributing to scholarship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical insights</li> <li>• Empirical research</li> <li>• Policy-focused analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• George Mason</li> <li>• Notre Dame</li> <li>• San Diego</li> </ul>
<b>B. Professional Military Educational Institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominantly uniformed</li> <li>• Very minimal civilian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured</li> <li>• Military strategy and operations</li> <li>• Scholarly</li> <li>• Traditional security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Skills transfer</li> <li>• Table top exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory/empirical foundations.</li> <li>• Articulate and execute strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War Colleges</li> <li>• Military Academies</li> </ul>
<b>C. Think Tanks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector-specific</li> <li>• Mid-level professionals</li> <li>• Some uniformed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured</li> <li>• Issue-oriented</li> <li>• Targeted security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion/ instruction</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Case based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solve specific problems</li> <li>• Influence policy and practice</li> <li>• Build coalitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USIP Academy</li> <li>• PRIO</li> <li>• CSIS</li> </ul>
<b>D. Multilateral and Regional Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector-specific</li> <li>• Minimal diversity</li> <li>• Minimal uniformed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structures</li> <li>• Issue-oriented</li> <li>• Capacity enhancing</li> <li>• Targeted security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction</li> <li>• Developing skills</li> <li>• Case based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade skills</li> <li>• Re-train personnel</li> <li>• Influence policy and practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KAIPTC</li> <li>• IPSTC</li> </ul>



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