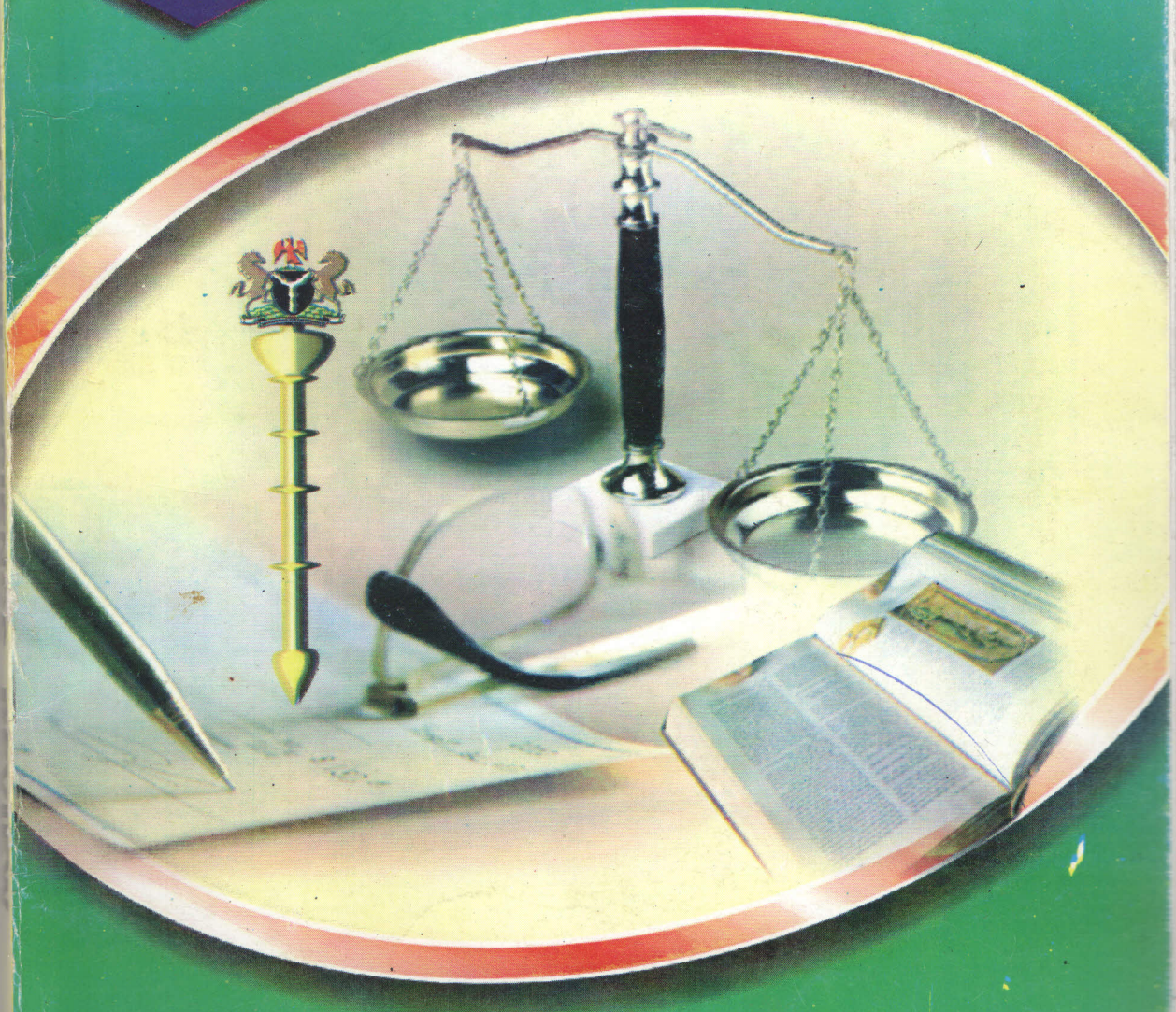
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CONTENTS

VOLUME 3 No. I

Note to Contributors vi

Notes on Contributors vii

Editorial Comment ix

Motivation of Organisational Behaviour (Human Behaviour) in Historical perspective: What lessons for the Managers?
- B. Salawu, Y. Muhammed and D. S. Adekeye 1

A Geopolitical perspective of the voting behaviour of Electorate in Nigeria
- Johnson O. Olaniyi 11

The Relevance of Military Capability in contemporary times: An Analysis of African Security Issues - Case Study of South Africa
- A. J. Omede 28

A Critical Analysis of The Anti-Corruption Crusade in Nigeria
- H. A. Saliu and F. A. Aremu 37

Yoruba Oral Literature and the Idea of Democracy
- 'Lere Adeyemi 44

The impact of the National Question on Nigerian Federalism
- Samuel O. Oyedele 52

Administrative Reforms in the Nigerian Civil Service Since Independence
- O. Lucky Ovwasa 59

The National Question and Nigeria's fourth Republic
- D. O. Alabi **67**

THE RELEVANCE OF MILITARY CAPABILITY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES: AN ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN SECURITY ISSUES (THE SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY)

BY

Dr. (Mrs.) A. J. Omede

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world, most nations embark on the military build ups of their armed forces in response to various threats (internal and external) to their national interests and security. In Africa, Europe, The Americas, the case is the same. The focus of this study therefore, which is on African security issues and the Republic of South Africa is premised on two assumptions. Firstly, African countries have a prevalence of cross border conflicts, civil wars, struggle for resource control among competing groups, ethnic rivalries and mutual distrust between neighbouring States. All these factors attenuate the rapid increase in the qualitative and qualitative increase in the military capabilities of African States. Secondly, South Africa is a peculiar country in Africa. The country under went several decades of apartheid rule. During this period neighbouring, that is, front line States, were perceived as threats to the South African national security. Consequently, the South African government embarked on the rapid militarization of its armed forces. With the end of apartheid however, the situation remained essentially the same. What changed though, was the nature and types of threats that the black ruling party had to contend with. Essentially, the study is of the view that because of the various threats to the security of Nation-States and the intense struggle for power, influence and authority, then, military power and the militarization of the armed forces of countries around the world have become a predominant feature of contemporary international relations.

INTRODUCTION

One of the factors to be taken into consideration, when formulating and implementing decisions on military power, is not only the perception of external threats to a state's territorial integrity and sovereignty, but also the assessment of the military capabilities as well as the hostile intentions of perceived enemies. The aspect of threats which is the focus of our present study is that of the military. These are threats that are intended for destabilizing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a Nation-State. Threats of military dimensions require that States must have military capability (that is power in strategic terms), to be able to defend their sovereignty. This is necessary to make the threat credible and effective or in the case of the threatened State. to make the threat less effective. Thus, it would be right to assert that military

power has frequently been used as a threat to influence the behaviour of another State (Karster, 1984).

In strategic analysis, threats are an inherent feature of the international system populated by States that enjoy substantial military capabilities. This explains the emphasis we lay on threats as an implicit function of military capabilities of Nation-States. In fact, the possession of military capabilities to deter potential or direct threats by "conventional military action", is considered in international relations, as a sort of strategic mutual deterrence (Karster, 1984:6)

To cope with military threats, most nations attempt to have an effective military strength which depends on the extent to which armed forces have conditioned themselves in the anticipated nature of future military conflicts. Specially, a nation harbouring no aggressive design, and whose intent is only on preserving its political and territorial integrity should pay much attention to the deterrence of threats as a form of defence. Furthermore, "the abilities to deter can rest largely or wholly not only capacity to retaliate, but also on the perceived ability to resist attack and inflict punishment" (Knor, 1976a: 372-380).

Realistically, States must provide for some measure of deterrence and defence in reaction to perceived dangers which result from antagonisms and conflicts within the international system. Again, contingent threats must be posited even though their properties are unknown, and even though an actual threat may never materialize over some relevant time span. Apparently, the trend of our analysis indicates that threats are important and are even as essential defining element in nationhood. Thus, it is the perception and analysis of threats by nation-states that constitute the legitimate right to threaten to use force or to actually use it to achieve order in the international system (Wilbur, 1977:126-139)

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study is both historical and analytical in character. The design of the research is a case which focuses on the various security issues confronting African States. In particular, factors contributing to the rapid increase in the South African military capabilities are also examined through the use of certain security documents as well as the government's policy pronouncements. Also, through the use of the argumentative method, previous research materials, relevant books, journals, periodicals, and other relevant publications, were further utilized in the study

MILITARY CAPABILITY: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The military capability of a nation consists of the power potentials and the ability of the Nation-State to defend itself and to conduct successful military operations against a powerful enemy. The basis of military power (used synonymously with Military capability), is composed of a nation's political structure, its industrial potential, its level of development in terms of science and technology, and the qualitative structure of its population. Most importantly, a nation's power is vested in its armed forces, which has the responsibility to protect and safeguard the sovereignty of the nation (Bhatia, 1980:170-4)

The military capability of a nation-state constitutes a "direct restraint on a State's ability to use force. Thus, because of the important role of force in international relations, the use of the military has therefore become more overt, dramatic and damaging. Hence, States are continuously flexing their muscles and cleaning their

guns before their neighbours' windows. By so doing, each State becomes responsible for its own defence and so, unilaterally provides itself with such common force as to deter any possible aggressor from encroaching on its territorial integrity.

Military capability is one of the legally sanctioned instruments of violence which nations use in relation to each other. It could be used, either as a deterrent or as an offensive strategy. Evidently, the foregoing suggests that the underlying assumption of military capability is that, it is a functional purposive thing of the many instruments in the orchestra of power, which "States use at an appropriate moment in the pursuit of their respective national interests" (Garnet, 1981:3). Thus, this study contends that:

> States exist primarily in terms of their own strength... And if they wish to maintain their independence, they must make the preservation or improvement of their power the principal objective of foreign policy (Spykman, 1942:25-38).

Implicit in the foregoing analysis is the view that military power rests upon manpower, armament and such related factors as the social, economic and psychological make up of a nation. Hence, in order to survive in the militarily conscious and ruthless international system, countries rely on knowledge of other countries to provide for self survival. The armed forces of every State do seek information which enables them compare their power potentials with those of their friends and adversaries alike. Significantly, the military capability potentials of nation-states are judged in terms of complete appraisal and assessment of the following: geography, natural resources, industrial economy, population (which is a potential power), nature of a country's government (Duppy and Manchard, 1972:1), (Kadlor and Eide, 1979:1-6).

In addition, it should be stated that even when nations have sufficient military capabilities, the effectiveness of such capabilities also depends among other things on; ability of the State to resort to war; the ability to threaten a potential enemy with the use of military action; and the anticipation by States that another State may proceed to use its military forces in the event of a serious dispute (Knorr, 1970b: 1-3). In the final analysis, one must also note that an effective exposition of the military capabilities of nation-States is considered in comparative and relational terms. These relative factors in our view, consist, essentially of:

a. Military potentials, which are basically the resources capable of being mobilized for the establishment of military forces.
b. The value placed on military force, that is, the proposition actually transformed into military strength.
c. The skill with which resources are cast into ready, military strength (Knorr, 1970b:23)

RELEVANCE OF MILITARY CAPABILITY IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Essentially, the nature, content and the priority accorded military capability has generated a lot of controversy between strategic analysis and statesmen (Kadlor and Eide, 1979:7). Undoubtedly, one of the most widely held views about power propositions is that might makes right. A corollary proposition is that military power assures security. This is because military strength easily lends itself to qualification, thus, the tendency to equate physical safety with size of military forces. The inference one can draw from this assertion is that, military capability is the best way to ensure physical security, leading to, the tendency to spend more money on protection and

security of nation-states.

Another popularly held view, is that which sees the trend of world's militarization and increased spending on arms as highly erroneous and dangerous (Goldman, 1982:40 & 41). Proponent of this view hold the opinion that military build up competes directly with economic growth and undoubtedly serves as a constraint on certain lines of development. The critics further argue that where resources are scarce, competing demands are likely to be made on economic needs and military requirements (North, 1974:40 & 41). According to this line of thought, the high priority given to defence spending and acquisition are the opportunity costs of the production and consumption values of other than military strength. The resources diverted to the military sector are unavailable for producing goods and services for investments and consumption (public or private). Consequently, economic growth and welfare are apt to suffer (Knorr, 1976:375).

Evidently, the lack of a consensus among scholars on the continued relevance of military capability in contemporary international relations is an indication of the decisive influence of threats' perception on a State's attitude to military capability. Consequently, according to Garnet (1981; 65 - 73) the factors contributing to the continued importance of military capability in contemporary times among others are (Garnet, 1981:65-73):

A. Over years, states have found out that their prosperity and influence are directly related to their military capability in a world that is tough, ruthless, and which specifically lacks an acknowledged central authority. The competition for scarce resources is so keen that military power has become an indispensable instrument of state policies. The use of military capability has therefore become the determinant factor which prevails in the struggle and tussle for prosperity, prestige and security, while its acquisition represents an attempt by leaders to control the volatile and unpredictable international environment in which they operate.

b. To most states, it will be difficult to imagine international politics would be like in the absence of the military. It is not easy to se how international relations can be conducted and order maintained if the military were to be totally absent. In as much as the capacity of States to defend themselves provides the basic framework within which the business of international negotiations is carried on, then, military capability thus, constituted an intrinsic and significant part of the fragile international order.

C The possession of military capability is also intended to serve as a deterrence strategy. Strategic power is designed to promote peace and security by preventing wars rather than winning them. The point here, is that, the strategies of using military capability to hurt in a deliberate way to intimidate, demoralize, blackmail, and bargain for a position of advantage, is a major feature of the international system.

In summary, this study reveals that statesmen perceive power/capabilities as a fact of life and not an aberration in international relations. This contention to us is appropriate in view of the individualistic, calculative, brutish, selfish, devilish, and a dangerous world, which States inhabits, in contemporary times.

AFRICAN SECURITY AND THE MILITARIZATION OF AFRICA

In the past three decades, military factors have been playing increasing role in African international Affairs. In building up their military capability potentials, African States are presently undergoing fundamental changes and extraordinary expansion in terms of manpower and armanments acquisition, which have increased in number and levels of sophistication (Barrows, 1985:99-101). The growth and the "turn around" are accounted for by changes in mission involving the perception of threats by African

States to their national security, and constant interference in each other's affairs.

The changing military capabilities of several African countries have enabled them to gradually improve the combat readiness of their various armed forces hence, the decision to acquire additional weaponry and requisitely organizational and technical skills are geared toward attaining this goal.

One accompanying consequence of the build up of military capabilities among African States is that these countries are becoming increasingly heavily armed and so, are spending more of their limited resources on weapon acquisition. This build up is premised on suspicion which African States have about hostile neighbouring States and other foreign intervention in its (African) affairs (Foltz, 1985:71). These threats, by implication have impacted on the national security of African States and are hinged on two basic issues which are:

a. The threat to African sovereignty both internationally and regionally by superpowers, that is, African former colonial masters and other adventurous foreign elements.

b. The threat to African stability by internal forces as obstacles to economic development. The forces (he says) consist of ethnic, tribal, religious and domestic political factors (Garnet, 1981:64-72)

In addition, other sources of threats that African States have to contend with included Cross-Border disputes among various African countries as well as the support of some African leaders to dissident groups who consequently launched an attack on their country from bases in neighbouring countries. These actions in most cases involved the transfer of arms from the host country to the dissident groups from where they in turn resorted to direct invasion and deep penetration raids on their home country. Examples of such instances are; the financial and training assistance rendered to Charles Taylor's NPFL in Liberia by Libya, Cote D'Ivoire and Burkina Faso; South Africa and Zaire's arms supplies to insurgent groups in Angola; Tanzania, Mozambique, Nigeria and Ethiopia's assistance to the black liberation fighters in Zimbabwe; Arms and financial assistance by Sudan to insurgent groups in Eritrea and Chad; Somalia arms supplies to the rebels in the Ogden region; Libya arms assistance to the Republic of Benin and Burkina Faso as well as, insurgent groups in Sudan, Western Sahara and Chad (Foltz, 1985:181).

Furthermore, African countries are also confronted with the threats of cross-border armed incursions. These incursions are very frequent and have often led to strained relationships and severing of ties between the countries involved. Notable among these cross-border armed incursions is Uganda's infiltration of Tanzania. The border disputes between Eritrea and Ethiopia; Libya's several incursions into Chad and Tunisia; Somalia's incursion into Ethiopia; Tanzania's incursion into Uganda and Cameroon's incursion into Nigeria (Moose, 1985:60).

Other source of threats that have resulted in the further militarization of African States can also be attributed to religious crisis and civil disturbances. The disruptions caused by religious uprising are in most cases backed up by foreign Muslim fundamentalists. A case in point was the Maitasine disturbances in Kano, Nigeria, in 1981. Also, threats caused by political upheavals in Zaire and Cameroon in 1979 and Zimbabwe in 1983, are cases of civil disruptions that needed more than police action to quell (Foltz, 1985:71).

The most pervasive of the external threats facing African countries are the activities of countries such as France, United States of America (USA) and Britain whose various attempts to destabilize the economies of the African States have often

ended in the instigation of one country against the other. This mostly achieved through the supply of arms, establishment of defence pacts and agreements, the provision of economic aid and the funding of puppet regimes in Africa.

SOUTH-AFRICA'S PERCEPTION OF THREATS AND MILITARY BUILD UP (1962-1990)

Since the 1960's, South African security situation deteriorated sharply mainly because of the armed resistance to the apartheid policy by black freedom fighters such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-African Congress (PAC). In addition to this, economic, political, arms and sporting embargoes were imposed on the country by both the United Nations Organisation and the Commonwealth. To counter threats to its national security and survival as a nation operating within a "hostile" international system at the time, the South African racist government developed its own striking power. The power, propelled the country to project an image of a regional power, with significant strategic roles to play in globally as well as in regional affairs.

In view of the foregoing, the South African government formulated a "national strategy" that involved a rapid expansion of its military capabilities and the pursuit of an active interventionist policy compared with its neighbouring States. Other strategic measures adopted by South Africa included programmes undertaken to develop, manufacture and procure arms with the ultimate aim of self-sufficiency (Jasper 1986: 122-128;Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 1984) . This self-sufficiency was directed to South Africa's armament requirements. By 1982, the country recorded 85% arms manufacturing and arms self-sufficiency. According to the chairman of the South African armament development and production company (AMSCOR), the manufacture of defence capability has been expanded beyond domestic requirements in several areas. Also the South Africans believe their weapons can penetrate the highly competitive international arms market by virtue of the fact that they are operationally tested and evaluated.

Other strategies and policies embarked upon by the South African military to boost its capability are, the pursuance of an interventionist policy involving the deployment of South-African troops to neighbouring front-line States to engage in counter insurgency operations, as well as the pursuance of a détente policy aimed at asserting a vigorous leadership role in regional affairs, with the ultimate intension of winning the co-operation of African States in achieving political stability and thus, prevent the further spread of radicalism and chaos on the continent.

In the pursuance of the objectives stated above, the South-African Government got actively and militarily involved in the security affairs of her neighbours. Notable was the country's involvement in Angola. The racist regime supported two guerrilla factions, UNITA and FNLA, with the sole purpose of blocking MPLA'S Marxist efforts to gain control in Angola. In addition, South- African military leaders also prepared the Sout- African Force (SADF) for an offensive attack at the Front-Line States (FLS) for prolonged periods of time. The aim was to penetrate, seize and control some of the territories of the FLS.

In addition, the regime took steps to significantly increase its defence in the last few years, perfectly consistent with the country's heightened threat perception. Accordingly, while the defence appropriation of the country totaled more than three billion rand between 1981 and 1983, it however, rose steadily from 700 million rand (South-African Currency) with a 40% increase in 1981, to 2.5billion rand ($2.75 billion) in 1987 (Jaster, 1985:132).

SOUTH-AFRICAN'S MILITARY CAPABILITY: A POST APARTHEID ANALYSIS

The momentous change from apartheid to a popularly elected black majority government lead by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC.) in 1994, necessitated a rethinking of new defence priorities for South-Africa. The new government was saddled with the responsibility of establishing among other things; a broad-based and comprehensive national security arrangement, a reevaluation of the various threats facing the country, as well as restructuring its armed forces and its military capabilities.

In the context of its security concern and threat assessments, the South African Defence Force (SADF) , renamed the South-African National Defence Force(SANDF), in 1994 acknowledged that external conventional military threats were unlikely to develop over the medium and long term. Consequently, the immediate domestic sphere (which are no military threats) and regional security concerns. These threats in our view impinged on South-Africa's national security. They are also a continuation of racial hatred and political violence in post-apartheid South Africa. Strategically, the problem posed by these threats can be summarized as follows:

Low morale of troops within the South African police force who are not yet reconciled to the new political situation; the failure of law enforcement agencies in combating crimes such as small arms proliferation and smuggling; and in particular, the sporadic violence emanating from the contest for political power between the ANC. And Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) is among the major domestic security concerns in Natal (Sigh, Ravinder and Weizeman, 1995: 569 & 70).

In addition to the forgoing, there are other critical economic problems that impact on South Africa's national security. Problems such as chronic underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, inadequate social services, etc., which are sometimes of a non military nature still constitute serious threats South African National Defence Force (SANDF), believes it should retain an overwhelming military capability and an offensive defensive posture. By so doing, the South African military's procurement and production plans are based on acquiring equipment that enables offensive pre-emptive step (Singh, Ravinder and Weizeman, 1995;569).

In terms of local arms production and procurement, the attitude of the new government does not differ significantly from that of its predecessor. In fact, the government indicated its willingness to pursue a more responsible arms industry and trade. Based on its projected security needs, South Africa has embarked on the rapid acquisition of State of the art military armaments. In furtherance of its arms procurement and production policy, the South African Government have readdressed and sought to continue their erstwhile military doctrine and policies. Significantly, the continuity in the nation's defence is reflected in a June 1994 SANDF report which recommended that;

> *To maintain combat advantage over a potential enemy, the SANDF needs to improve its combat ability continuously by investing in research and development (R&D), operational research and force multipliers such as electronic warfare capabilities; second, it estimates the lead time for the acquisition and operational readiness of conventional weapon systems at 10-15 years, while significant changes in the regional political scenario are considerably shorter than the*

time required to detect and react to them from a 'cold start' (Singh, Ravinder and Weizeman, 1995:575).

An examination of threats and the consequent military build up of South-Africa's capabilities analysed in the text, is a positive indication of the relationship between threats and military capabilities.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this study has been on the correlation between threats, mutual distrust and the dangers posed to nation-states. The conflictual and antagonistic nature of the international system necessitated the build up of military capabilities by nation-states. In the study, we stated that through the analysis and perception of threats by military strategists, nation-states consequently expand the scope and nature of their military hardware and the whole spectrum of their defense arsenal- a precaution aimed at deterring harmful intentions of potential aggressors.

In addition, the relevance of military capability as a basis for assessing the power potentials of nation-states was also extensively examined. The de-facto acceptance as we said, increases the role of the use of force as a fact of life in international relations. The use of case studies of African nations as a system, and South-Africa, as a sub system, brought to fore, the world wide importance attached to threats and military capabilities.

In summary, States embark on the massive buildup of their military capability potentials in response to threats posed tot heir national security. Evidently, the possession of effective, modern and up-to-date military capabilities implied the intrigues of power balancing among nation-states. Emphatically, the study posited that countries lacking adequate military capabilities are under the risk of jeopardizing their national interest, national security, sovereignty and territorial integrity to an otherwise aggressive and militarily powerful State.

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