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NIGERIA'S DEFENCE POLICY AND THE REALITY OF DETERRENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF HER GEO-STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Defence policy is described as being concerned with "the provision, unemployment and use of military power to facilitate the protection and promotion of perceived national interests of the state in the international arena". The term "defence policy" is widely used by both the layman and the specialist in strategic studies but its meaning is rarely defined with precision. In spite of its simple presentation, the term hides a multitude of activities, some of which are emphasized in some uses of the term. The reason for this seeming ambiguity is premise in the fact that defence is an ideology which legitimizes some crucial trends in the post second world war order. The focus of this paper is "Nigeria's Defence policy and the Reality of Deterrant within the context of her Geo-Strategic Environment. Qualitative approach, is adopted as method of data collection and the findings collaborate the lack of sustainable national defence policy since attainment of independence.

Key words: Defence Policy, National Interests, International Arena, Geo-Strategic environment, ideology.

INTRODUCTION

National defence policy in general terms determines how well a nation endures national and international challenges to her national interest. A strong and well integrated defence policy where all elements of state power are coordinated and harmonized to support national objectives is crucial to the security and development of any nation (Nigeria inclusive) that desires progress, peace and stability and as well attain the status of deference in the world. The focus of this paper, therefore, is on "Nigeria's defence policy and deference within the context of her geo-strategic environment". Qualitative approach is adopted as mode of analysis.

Theoretical and Doctrinal Overview of Nigeria's National Defence Policy

The 2006 edition of the Nigerian National Defence Policy provides the theoretical basis of the national defence policy as "designed to guarantee national security and threats by deterring external threats and aggression. While the primary concern is to avoid war through diplomacy and deterrence, the nation will ensure that the Armed Forces possess the capability to successfully defend the Nigerian territory and her people" (NNDP, 2006:24). It is important however to point that Nigeria's defence policy since independence is anchored on six interrelated principles of prevention, protection, deterrence, rapid force mobilization, force projection and co-operation with allies (NNDP, 2006:25-26). From the above, it is possible to infer that Nigeria's defence policy is grounded in the conventional defence strategy. According to Palmer & Howard (2004:xxix), national security would continue to dominate the agenda of the state as long as it remains the prevailing form of political organization in the world. Short of utopia, there is no convincing evidence that states will cease to dominate all forms of political interactions at national and international level. The reasons are obvious. Most liberal theoreticians since Hobbes (1588 – 1679), such

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as Harrigan (1998), and Schlesinger (2004), continues to view state as the single most important social system outside of which life is completely meaningless and impossible. Currently, the mounting assault on the concept of statehood by proponents of globalism, and their new gospel of borderless world has done little to make the state seems irrelevant. For instance, Ohamae (in O'Meara, 2000:93), one of the 'state-must-perish champions' stresses, "The nation-state has become an unnatural, even dysfunctional, unit for organizing human activity and managing economic endeavor in a borderless world". This notwithstanding, opinion among scholars continue to support the relevance of the state. Mayall (In Levine, 1992:28) notes that, "nation-state remains the basic political unit. It continues to define the primary space in which political argument takes place". Laski (2004:25) says the importance of state is because it "becomes an organization for enabling the mass of men to realize social good on the largest possible scale". This gives the state ultimate legitimacy, authority and political sanctity to plan, and organize the best ways through which its citizens enjoy good life including security and defence. However, this process of providing good life to its citizens brings states into conflicts with each other. It is natural that other states would equally want what is best for their people. Moreover, the resources being inadequate to share around, states resort to various methods and subterfuges for dominance. This generates tension and conflicts in international relations. Sometimes, states resort to war as an extreme measure for achieving their goals.

Umar (2000:42) argues that: "One of the responsibilities of modern states, indeed, even during the times of old empires, is to protect and promote their sovereign interests; defence in terms of national security and territorial integrity. These interests are constantly under threats. These threats to national sovereignty manifest themselves in variety of forms". In contemporary time, the essence of the state rests on its ability to protect and promote the security and well-being of its members. Mbachu (1998:23), argues, "The first task of any state is to ensure the safety of life and property of its citizens". It is imperative for states to design ways and conceive of means through which their interests can effectively be secured. This explains why "the issue of national security cannot be taken for granted by any state" (Mbachu, 23). National security is central of the formulation and implementation of any fundamental policy principle aimed at enhancing or protecting state's interest at internal and external levels. Umar (2004:44) observes: National security is concerned with the maintenance of national sovereignty, territorial security of the state, the defence of national self-determination with respect to the right to choose an independent socio-economic system without inference by external forces or interests. National security also includes the ability of the sovereign state to protect, and promote the individual and, collective security and, welfare of its citizens. An analysis of national security is therefore, concerned with the way and manner nations plan, make and evaluate the decisions and policies designed to maximize their relative ability to ensure the survival and continuity of (its) vital interests. This view on national security is further supported by the arguments of Tedheke (1998:6), who argues, "Security is beyond militarism. The term security goes well beyond military consideration. Security can be understood both as a defence against external (or internal) threats as well as overall socio-economic wellbeing of the society". In analyzing security from this perspective, there is the dilemma of categorization: either there is absolute security, or there is absolute insecurity. To Tedheke, there is nothing like relative security. McNamara (in Tedheke, 1998:6) shares this opinion: In a modernizing society, security means development. Security is not military force though it may involve it: security is not traditional military ability though it may include it. Security is development and without development, there can be no security. McNamara in Tedheke, 1998:7) further elucidates:

> Any country that seeks to achieve adequate military security against the background of acute food shortages, population explosion, low level of productivity, fragile infrastructural base for technological development, inadequate and inefficient public utilities and chronic problem of unemployment fall short of security.

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National security "is more than territorial defenece it focuses on the physical, social and psychological quality of life.. both in the domestic setting and within the larger regional and global system" (italics added)(Braithwaite, 1992:9). National security cannot be reduce to physical military strength alone. Okwori, 26 (1995:21) argues that national security based on "capability in military terms alone is not enough and should be located within the unconventional security matrix". Capability is defined "as the capacity of a state to effect changes in the global environment its own interest. By such capability, a state does what it can and suffers what it must" in order to achiever her objectives (Okwori, 1995:21). This however is not always easy, or even possible. The present nature of global distribution of power is such that it does not favour states that are technologically underdeveloped. Therefore, talking of cap ability must always involve understanding the central role of non-military agents in national security and defence. The height of this effort in fact ought to start with the recognition that comprehensive economic development and enthronement of social justice and equality is the cornerstone of national security and defence. To hold that "security is the prevention of property damage, injury and loss of lives caused by military means as well as the limitation of such damage, casualty and death in the event of war" (Okwori, 1995:20), is quite simplistic if not overly misleading. Security entails a larger picture.one that seeks to incorporates within its matrix the recognition of the pre-eminence of justice, egalitarianism, development and ultimately, societal well-being as the pillars guaranteeing (or undermining, by their absence) security of the state. In essence, security is the presence of sufficient deterrence against all forms of threats caused by in-equality, exploitation and underdevelopment in the society.

Okwori (1995:20) holds that "National security cannot, and in fact should not, be reduced to the acquisition of military hardware alone". It is difficult not to link this attitude to national security with countries like Nigeria. Since independence, successive administration have sought to increase the volume of military purchase – thereby, ironically, further compromising Nigeria's security – without the corresponding transformation in the material condition of the people or even technological and industrial development of the country. There is the need to point that states always need to recognize the enormous dangers which international environment poses to their survival. Therefore, the conception of national security ought to come between these two extreme views. On one hand, those who maintain that security can only be achieved within the unconventional matrix, needs to recognize the importance of military as a strong and veritable agent of deterrence. On the other hand, it is important to recall the example of former USSR on how excessive militarism can in the end become eventually tragic and catastrophic. Notwithstanding her military might, USSR could not survive in the face of colossal economic, social and even political challenges (Powell, 2003:401-402). Palmer & Howard (2004: xxix) sees national security as the maximum reliance on a state's own resources. This came close to any accurate description of the concept of national security. Ikoku (1980:45) adopts this approach to the question of national defence. He views the issue from self-sustaining economic foundations angle. When a country is self-reliant, its capability for national defence is greatly enhanced. In Nigeria, the choice of conventional defence strategy no doubt is informed by the nation's historical experience and less by any conscious effort from the policy makers to develop a strong defence strategy for national security. Nigeria's geo-strategic location and her own view of national interest are equally responsible. Located in a region of comparatively weaker countries, in terms of human and financial resources, Nigeria could not define her national interests beyond these considerations. According to Fage (1995:1), "since independence, successive Nigerian leaders have emphasized two principles as the fundamental tenets of the country's….policy. One is Afrocentricism. The other is good neighbourliness". In line with this thinking Nigeria, theoretically and practically, limits her defence policy to military preparedness as the tangible vital element of national security and degence. Nigeria's strategy for national defence is "to avoid war through diplomacy and deterrence; the nation will ensure that the Armed Forces possess the capability to National Defence Policy, 2006:24). This forms the bulk of Nigeria's ultimate strategy of defence and Security in general. Nigeria tailors her strategy on the employment of military firepower to discourage or deter potential enemies. It is important therefore to look at this idea of

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deterrence within the context of 21st century challenges. Subsequently, there follow an analysis of Nigeria's general thinking on national defence and security. The analysis ends with an intensive reflection on the doctrine of conventional defence strategy.

Deterrant within the context of Nigeria's Defense Policy

According to the Nigeria's National Defence Policy (2006:25): The nation shall maintain a credible defence capability and communicate her intentions in consonance with the prevailing circumstances in order to ensure that potential aggressors are kept in no doubt of the willingness to use the Armed Forces and all weapons at their disposal. Force modernization and development for the next few years shall, therefore, give priority to acquisition of relevant deterrence capabilities.

Deterrence and force projection are the vital elements and principles upon which the national defence policy in Nigeria rests. Deterrence has today become a cache phrase to most states unmindful of its cost defined primarily in terms of technological, economic and industrial development. According to Synder (in Okwori, 1995:21), defence:

> Means discouraging the enemy from taking military action by posing for him a prospect of cost and risks which outweigh his prospective gains….. Deterrence works on the enemy's intentions, the deterrent value of military forces is their effect in reducing the likelihood of enemy moves.

Hypothetically, Nigeria's sub-Saharan neighbours do not have the necessary human, economic and technological resources to compete with her. In fact, for sometimes, the belief is popular within the policy making circles, that because of her policy of good neighbourliness, Nigeria would not face substantial threats to her national interests from sub-Saharan Africa. This may be far-fetched. Although by any standard, Cameroon is not to Nigeria what Pakistan is to India; still the existing relation between these two neighbours is anything but cordial. The same cannot be said of those who by any index of analysis are not neighbours. The idea of deterrence is an idea of economic development and integration, excellent infrastructure, industrialization and superior technology in relation to the immediate source of threats. Nigeria of the 21st century possesses none of the above. Okwori (1995:19) elaborates further on deterrence: The understanding has been that massive acquisition of lethal weapons form the basis for effective manipulation…aimed at removing the war option from the strategic calculations of potential adversaries, although such acquired weapons of mass destruction could be used but only as a last resort. Global changes however call for a change or shift in the interpretation of the concepts of security and deterrence by African states. The challenges to Nigeria is to re-examine this principle of deterrence with a view to design and adopts less costly, yet effective approach to national defence. It is out of question for Nigeria, to develop the technological and economic capacity to sustain deterrence at a par with non-African states. It is pointless to waive with a hand, the probability of one of the world powers today, especially USA, invading Nigeria. In a world where US supremacism runs berserk, it is prudent to look at the possibilities and the options attached to each. Nigeria is a considerable supplier of crude oil to US markets. NNDP (2006:13) recognizes this possibility thus, "Nigeria's natural endowments…imposes on her, heavy responsibilities and challenges". The nation can equally become a target. With the growing activities of the Niger-delta militants, continued destruction of oil facilities and disruption of oil flow to the West, it cannot be farfetched, if the US decides to go the whole nine-yards and secure the oil flow. Already talks of establishing AFRICOM in Africa are in the pipeline. Economic and technological development is not the only thing, which hampers proper operationalization of deterrence from the standpoint of conventional theories of defence. There is another power, subtle, yet formidable, one that Okwori and all proponents of principle of deterrence failed to see. With the rather abrupt way the Cold War was brought to an end, a new force emerges in international arena. That is terrorism. Today, the power and impact of terrorism defies the sheer

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force of military. The September 9/11 attacks on USA confirm this suspicion and bring to light the embarrassing limitations of the conventional security theories in national defence. Notwithstanding her refutation as the greatest economic, industrial, technological and military power, agents of terrorism invaded US and wrought dangerous havoc in her own turf. With the passage of Cold War, terrorism becomes a strong force in international politics.

According Laqueur in O'Meara, 2000:152): Terrorism's prospects… are improving as its destructive potential increases. This has to do both with the rise of groups and individuals that practice or might take up terrorism and with the weapons available to them. The past few decades have witnessed the birth of dozens of aggressive movements' espousing varieties of nationalism, religious fundamentalism, fascism and a pocalytic mileniasm. Terrorism is cheap, dangerous, deadly, and with fair amount of luck, quite effective. The lessons of Afghanistan Mujahiddeen in the 1980s, Lebanon, September 9/11, resurging Taliban in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Israel have all shown that there are forces, which cannot be ought conventionally. To Laqueur (149-150): Terrorism has been defined as the sub-state application of violence or threatened violence intended to sow panic in a society, to weaken or even overthrow the incumbents, and to bring about political change. It shades on occasion into guerilla warfare (although unlike guerillas, terrorist are unable unwilling to hold territory) and even as substitute forward between states in its long history, terrorism has appear in many guises, today faces not one terrorism but many terrorisms political considerations, though mainly the dominant motive, are not the only considerations among terrorists. In the 21st century, economic and religious considerations figure so prominently in terrorists' activities (Bishara, 2001). It is easy to determine that Nigeria is frankly vulnerable to terrorist attacks for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, it is not easy to determine yet, if the country has even acknowledge the enormous threats this poses to her national security.

Dominant Theme(s) in the Nigerian Defence Thinking

Conventional defence doctrine is the dominant theme, which guides defence thinking in Nigeria. The formulation and operationalization of national defence policy along conventional lines has as long a history as the political independence of Nigeria itself. To begin with, the conception and or formation of the tangible and intangible aspects of state interests reflect the ideological character of the state itself. This includes historical experience, as well as the factors (both internal and external) that shape her economic and political values. In Nigeria, the answer to internal and external threats is seen from the angle of strong, effective, efficient, and modern military organization (NNDP, 2006:24). According to Alabi (1997:130), in Nigeria today, "two crucial issues have helped to explain the militaristic perception of the country's defence policy". The nature of the historical evolution of the country in general and the military in particular counts as one: Obasanjo (NNDP, 2006: v), says, "The Armed Forces of any nation are the most visible expression of its sovereignty and preparedness to secure its place in the comity of nations". This view betrayed the fundamental thinking among defence planners and policy makers in Nigeria. By regarding the military as the custodians of national sovereignty, the policy makers glorify them to the detriment of the equally vital instruments of national defence. In its simplest and purest form, military is an institution of the state created to serve the purpose of physical self-protection against harmful threats to its sovereignty and territorial interests. In this context, it is important to point that this instrument reflects the level of development, which the society has attained. As a social institution, it embodies the dominant class character of the society (Dudley, 1978:88). To Marxists, military is pre-eminently an apparatus of the ruling elites to aid in subjecting, dominating, repressing and exploiting the freedom of the peoples (Engels, 1977). There are those who argue that the approach to defence from militaristic perspective has fundamental flaws. Tedheke (1998:8) points that, the relegation of the economy in issues of defence and security, betrays our profound lack of perspective. There is a merit to this argument. Always, the military seems willing in being an effective accomplice in emasculating the weak and deprived. This institution proved veritable and zealous

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in waging the wars of imperialism and the subsequent enthronement of colonialism in Africa. Ever since, the role of military is not so edifying in African economy and politics. Resources that could be used for projects of national development are divested for their up-keep and enjoyment. In order to understand this point in its proper perspective, it is imperative to first turn to the circumstances that led to the formation of military and indeed, entire defence structure in Nigeria. Historically, Nigeria Armed Forces, and by extension, the entire defence structure, is an offshoot of the British defence structure. This indeed, is one of the remaining living legacies, and stark remainder of the process of the emergence of Nigeria from colonial debris. According to Wikipedia (RWAFF, 2006), an online encyclopaedia, the military in Nigeria emerged from the ashes of the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF). This was formed by the British colonial office in 1900 to garrison her West African colonies against purported French intrusion into West African coast of Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and Gambia. Dudley (1978:88) adds an enlightening perspective to the understanding on the origins of Nigerian military. The personnel were indigenous mercenary in the services of the foreign trading companies, used to harass the indigenous population. The collection of these forest became RWAFF. In reality, RWAFF was conceived by the colonial overlords as an answer to the resistance of the indigenous communities, and in fact, any potential resistance that may choose to recur. It was never designed, nor formed to protect the people or even the nation. It goal never passed beyond protecting the interest of the colonial overlords. Consequently, the entire structure is not meant to provide national security to post-independence African states. Later, during dependence, this role of custodians of national security is conceived, without actually taking any step to alter its values. The second crucial issue, which explains Nigeria's militaristic perception on defence according to Alabi (1997:130), is the absence of national security community "through which the rich resources available in the academic community can be mobilized to continuously contribute to national security policy formulation and awareness". This in Alabi's opinion contributes immensely to a narrow, faulty, and misleading perception of national security in Nigeria. With a comparatively large, out-ward looking culture thriving in the academic community, it is not clear, how this can contribute towards a broad and integrationist perception of national security. Within the defence community, this is evident in the manner academicians and indeed the policy makers continue to swallow anything Western without discrimination. This prevents proper understanding of national security in Nigeria; rather, it seeks to equate national security with modernization and westernization. In fact, without trying to sound uncharitable, this act in itself is a threat to national security and development. Therefore, as Asobic (1988:18) argues, any meaningful analysis of the militaristic nature of the Nigerian defence policy must look at the arrangement made for security and defence of the country since independence.

This arrangement "was meant to protect the Nigerian ruling class against both external aggression or subversion and internal rebellion". There were two elements to this arrangement. Internally, it is felt that the existing security apparatus is strong enough to protect the ruling class from all forms of threats to its interests. The army effectively demonstrates this in domestic uprisings such as Tiv riots early at independence, and the Western Region crisis. Even after the fall of the First Republic, the ruling elites continue to rely on the military to secure their grip on power. On external front, communism (Nigeria got her independence at the peak of the Cold War) was regarded as the major threat to national security (Asobie, 1988:18). On this ground, Nigeria concluded a mutual defence pact with Britain. The pact was to ensure that Nigeria remained within the western capitalist orbit with Britain, a NATO member, assuming the responsibility of protecting her. This is not surprising; Nigeria is then ruled by a party (Northern People's Congress) the President General (Sir Ahmadu Bello) of which believed there is "neither need nor justification for breaking the close bonds of friendship forged with the people of Britain" (Amune, 1986:190). Since then, subsequent efforts aimed at planning and designing new policies continue to reflect this conventional security doctrine and sentiment. Among the three basic principles of Nigerian's foreign policy identified by Alkali (2003:183), "maintenance of national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity" forms the most cardinal. Apparently, this is a clear testimony and demonstration of how deep and

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pervasive, the influence of conventional perception of defence is in Nigeria. According to Nweke (1988:1-2), this form of thinking amounts to equating national security with the survival of the state, since it is pointless to talk of security of the state until "the aggregate of people organized under it has a consciousness of belonging to a common sovereign political community, enjoy equal political freedom, human rights, economic opportunities, and….the state itself is able to ensure independence in its development and foreign policy". Further, Nweke (1988:2) admits that, although national security includes inviolable boundaries and the right to individual and collective defence against external and internal threats, it must also involve: Strengthening of the foundations of the political economy, abolition of all forms of internal injustices and ethno-social inequality, persistent struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism, all round development based on freedom and self-reliance, and establishment of real equality, friendship and fraternal co-operational politics. No one can argue against the need to eradicate social in-equality in the society, or establish justice. Yet, admittedly, the strength of this argument lies in its idealistic and utopian garb. In the immediate future, it is apparent that traces of political and socio-economic in-equality will persist in Nigeria. This constitutes a formidable threat to African security in general and Nigeria's in particular. The idea of national defence policy in Nigeria according to Alabi (1997:130), "…is that of bullets and guns and the uniformed individual who live in the barracks". This aptly captures the dominant and most popular theme currently prevailing in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Nigeria since independence has never experimented with any other form of defence strategy beside the conventional/militaristic one. Therefore, to talk of defence policy in Nigeria actually is to talk about the conventional defence strategy. However, unless policy makers accept that defence policy is in a complex relationship with other variables of national development, the country cannot hope to enunciate any meaningful and efficacious policy for national defence. According to Vogt (in Tedheke, 1998:8): The Nigerian defence policy must be designed around a proper understanding of national interests and objectives of the state because if we do not have a proper perspective of the mission or goal which state policies are designed to achieve, the chances are that we may advocate and adopt inadequate policies.

Alibi (1997:131) faults Vogt on the ground that the relevant national interests, which the national defence policy should strive to protect, are not clearly articulated. In Nigeria frankly, policy problems are mostly addressed on ad-hoc basis.

What Nigeria has, as national interests is no more than mere respect of tradition in international politics: sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability, good neighbourliness, and world peace and security. In most of the industrial societies today, there is a visible harmony and interdependence between military as a social institution mandated with the responsibility of translating the defence objectives of the state with other equally vital social institutions. The issue of defence is dynamic and most of necessity address all security issues in the society. There cannot be successful strategy when social road blocks such as inequality, poverty, and ignorance which ought to support the entire defence structure, are left unattended. The Nigeria's defence policy besides its adhoc character is bedeviled with these and other challenges such as corruption among others.

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