

ETHNICITY AND THE MYTH OF THE MILITARY

IN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT*

by

CYNTHIA H. ENLOE

[An enlarged version of this paper will be published sometime in 1975 in a special issue of *Armed Forces and Society* on "Ethnic Groups and the Military," ed. Kenneth Grundy (University of Chicago). Meanwhile, the author would appreciate any comments and suggestions from readers. - Ed. Note.]

Ethnic group attachments long have been deemed a major obstacle in the path of nation-builders. Ethnicity not only limits the extent of mobilization of human energies; it drains limited governmental resources by requiring special group inducements and security provisions.¹ Complementing this fear of ethnic parochialism and inter-ethnic hostilities has been the search for policies and institutions which enhanced national integration and maximized mobilization of national resources. Political parties, charismatic leadership and the state bureaucracy have attracted scholars because of their potentials for cementing otherwise fragmented polities. But on no institution has the burden of integrating mobilization been placed more heavily - or hopefully - than the military. While the majority of studies of the military in developing nations focus upon the policy-making role of armies, the present discussion looks more closely at the accuracy of the assumption that armies inherently perform an *integrative* role in politics.

It is difficult to trace the origins of the widely held belief that military organizations are natural integrators of divided nation-states. Certainly, the military was not a major vehicle for national integration in American political development. In other countries as well, the military was often a mirror or supporter of social divisions based not only on ethnicity, but on class, region or rural-urban residence.

*Although this paper represents only the start of a long-term project, I am already indebted to a number of colleagues for their helpful comments. Among the African specialists are Claude Welsh, Diane Wittenber and Warren Weinstein.

More recently, European armies have been shown to have reduced the class bias in officer recruitment, but studies make no mention of ethnic persistences: "proletarianization" of a military is no guarantee of ethnic homogenization.² Even this reduction of social class differentiation in European armies did not occur until well after the solidification of the respective nation-states, and thus their experiences are not reliable analogues for currently developing countries. The model used to justify the faith placed in the military in Asia and Africa is more often abstract rather than historical. Furthermore, the model does not refer to the military in a purely functional sense, but to a specifically "modern" military. It is not merely any organization designed to utilize coercive force which is in the analysts' minds, but an organization marked by professionalism, reliance on technology, hierarchical command and specialization. Since an army can qualify as an army without most of these attributes, the "modernity" of any given army should be problematic, not, as is often the case, assumed. Moreover there is the belief that the military, perhaps more than any other public institution, owed its very existence to the legitimacy of the nation-state. Thus its members feel the greatest personal stake in the perpetuation of the national policy. There are, of course, genuine military organizations which have been formed for the purpose of undermining the current national political system or achieving its dismemberment. A truer picture of the dynamics of the military would be possible, perhaps, if we studied insurrectionist and secessionist armies -- and tried to incorporate those findings into our theories of the military's role in development. The ethnic motivations of some of these less conventional armies make their study especially pertinent to the understanding of the military's various potential roles in the integrative side of development. "Rebel" forces in Angola, Mozambique, Sudan, Chad and Nigeria have not been "non armies" simply because they rejected commands from the national capital.

In African studies a great deal of attention has been paid to national armies which participate in coups d'etat. This emphasis has generated a concern more for the policy-making performance of armies than for their integrative function, though the latter remains an assumption. It is common in social science for research to follow on the heels of headlines. While we talk of the predictive powers of our theories and typologies, our analysis more usually is *post hoc* in character - i.e., we don't start publishing articles on the Ugandan military until after General Amin has indirectly prodded us by unseating the Obote regime. This prevalence of army coups and the post-coup origins of much of our African

military research has had important consequences for the study of the integrative role of the military in African states:

- 1) A preoccupation with coups has encouraged a fascination with the upper levels of the officer corps, to the neglect of the ordinary rank and file soldiery. Since the great bulk of a national army's population - especially when one accounts for turn-over - is below the rank of colonel, such a focus seems a poor basis for determining the impact of the military on members' political outlook.
- 2) Attention to the military in a coup situation can lead to a simplistic dichotomy between "military" and "civil" authorities, which implies a unified military, internally homogeneous. Devoting research to armies in times of less institutional stress might reveal the actual nature of social boundaries and inter-connections which create internal army diversity and tension.
- 3) A coup orientation can impose an unrealistically short time frame on military analysis. Sudden events, as African coups often are, may require analysis of colonial and pre-colonial conditions as well as detailing of current officer motivations.
- 4) The military perceived through the coup experience is seen chiefly as a policy-making instrument, a wielder of state authority and coercion; whereas a military both in and out of the palace has other crucial functions: symbol of the character of the national community (extensive or exclusive); recruiter of manpower and rival of other recruiting institutions; trainer of a section of the male population (less often female); source of social mobility.
- 5) Since most African coups have occurred during peacetime, there has been a surprising neglect of the impact of *war* on the integrative capacities of armies - especially with regard to altered recruitment patterns.
- 6) African armies which have not launched coups have received inadequate attention: Kenya, Liberia, Zambia, Tanzania.³

Each of these oversights has had the effect of underplaying the impact of ethnic identification on the political role of the military. Ethnic differences when mentioned at all are rarely put into the context of officer-rank and file distinctions. Does it matter for the long run national allegiance of an ordinary soldier whether he is in a unit composed entirely of his own tribesmen but commanded by an officer of a different tribe? When armies do intervene directly in politics, does success depend on the ranks and officers being of the same ethnic background? Do ethnic differences between the ranks and officers reinforce or dilute social class tensions within the military hierarchy? A coup preoccupation has meant that the relationship between recruitment criteria favoring certain ethnic groups and recruitment's effect on the military function have received insufficient attention. What vehicles are used for army recruiting activities - certain language-medium schools, certain political parties, party auxiliary organizations? Do any of these have ethnic overtones? Does the military act as an employer of last resort when the labor market cannot absorb all the potential workers, and, if so, does its distribution of employment opportunities parallel or offset the ethnic biases built into the civilian labor market?

Critics of the military-as-modernizer model recently have put forth a number of perceptive criticisms, underlining either the limitations or the non-modern options of armies in developing countries.⁴ But those revisionist analyses still contain some of the basic flaws of the more orthodox studies. First, they continue to concentrate on coups. Second, they devote their attention mainly to higher ranking officers. Third, they often - though not as consistently as the modernizer school - fall into the assumption that the military is united, though revisionists are apt to portray that unity as based on adherence to bourgeois and consumerist values, rather than on a dedication to professionalism and technocracy.⁵ While the revisionists' sensitivity to the limitations of the military as a controller of government alerts them to the ethnic divisions within armies, they rarely deal with the ethnic dimension of the military in a systematic fashion. Ethnicity is more likely to appear on a list of conditions inhibiting an army's modernizing potential. Even more rare is the effort by African military analysts to spell out the impact of the military's ethnic character on ethnic group relations within the country at large. That is, ethnicity not only shapes the nature of the army; the ethnic image and reality of the army may determine how various tribes relate to each other and to the central government.

Types of Military Organizations

There are four very general types of military organizations if we use ethnicity as the major criterion. First, the modernizer's ideal military, in which all social groups are proportionately represented throughout the hierarchy and in which primary allegiance is to the organization itself without reference to its ties to any non-military class, tribe or region. In an admittedly incomplete survey of Africa, I have yet to find a single African military that fulfills that ideal, though Lefever contends that the Ghanaian army has been making significant strides toward detribalization.⁶

A second category includes those armies in which various ethnic groups are represented beyond token levels, but in which personnel of different ethnic identities fill quite distinct roles. Internal ethnic differentiation may be according to rank, or according to regimental assignment or to duty (e.g., technical versus combat role). For instance, the post-civil war Nigerian army is commanded increasingly by Hausa officers, though the ranks remain populated by a mixture of middle belt tribal members. A third military type is one dominated by a single ethnic group throughout the organization, to the exclusion of all outsiders. Such an ethnically-exclusive military can be found in South Africa (though there may be a mixture of Afrikaners and British) with its all-white force and the prohibition against any of the Balck tribal peoples obtaining weaponry expertise. Similarly, the Tutsi-dominated army of Burundi is essentially a mono-ethnic organization. The fourth and final category is a combination of types two and three: the military is multi ethnic, but certain critical groups in the country still remain outside. As we will describe below, the Western European colonizers utilized a military recruitment strategy which favored numerically smaller tribes and barred potentially threatening tribes. In these instances mere pluralism in an army is no guarantor of military effectiveness as a nation-wide integrator.

It is risky and perhaps analytically misleading to label any particular army according to one of these four labels: 1) Assimilationist, 2) Pluralist-Differentiated, 3) Mono-ethnic or 4) Pluralist-Exclusivist. The label that is descriptive today may be inaccurate tomorrow. Development implies change. Armies are not only vehicles of change (though not always of development), but undergo change themselves as the nature of the political community alters. The conventional "progressive" pattern of change within an army would be assumed to be: from Exclusivist to Differentiated to Assimilationist. An army that is in the process of developing, then, is one in which ethnicity

is being eliminated as a criterion from recruitment and promotion, objective functional criteria being put in its stead. However, in those African societies in which some ethnic groups possess disproportionate advantages in education or metropolitan contact the substitution of these objective standards may do little to widen the base of military recruitment, particularly into the officer corps and technical units. The development pattern just outlined also, of course, assumes that ethnic group pride - sometimes derived from a traditionalist warrior role - is dysfunctional or that ethnic separatist armies, necessarily ethnically homogeneous, are regressive steps in the larger scale of international development. That is, while the mono-ethnic character of the South African military is anti-developmental, the exclusivist character of the Biafran army might not have been, if one can imagine divorcing "development" from "nation-statism."

Risks in labelling are compounded by the transformations that African armies actually have experienced over the past decades. For instance, the Burundi army has moved from being an ethnically mixed organization to being a predominantly Tutsi force.⁷ Similarly, the Kenyan army appears to be in transition ethnically, moving from type four, Pluralist-Exclusivist, to type three, Mono-ethnic or at least dominated by a single tribe, the Kikuyu.⁸ By contrast, with the end of the prolonged civil war, the Sudanese northern-based regime in Khartoum has pledged to diversify the national army, bringing in southern rebel soldiers. Over the past forty years or so Sudan's military has in fact moved from Type 2 to Type 3 and now perhaps to Type 1 or 2 again. As in political development generally, military development is not necessarily steadily progressive. There is nothing predetermined in the character of the military itself that dictates that it will change only in the direction of increasing plurality and non-parochialism.

Among the factors that determine the type of ethnic composition of an army and the direction of its transitional tendencies are the strength and visibility of ethnic boundaries within a country as reflected in territorial concentrations and identities, linguistic differences, intermarriage rates, religious distinctions. The concern of any military organization for territorial placement of units makes geographic bases of ethnic identity relevant to military recruitment. The reliance of armies on rapid communication and responsiveness to command and training give linguistic attributes of ethnicity added military significance as well. Another factor which will affect the ethnic character and development of an African army will be the stability of the current national regime and the

degree to which an insecure government relies upon ethnicity for a basis of popular support. If the regime draws heavily on ethnic association and yet feels unsure of its grip on authority, it may deliberately strive to achieve communal symmetry between the regime and the army, or reinforce it if it already exists by discouraging wider recruitment. Still a further factor is the army's - meaning usually the top command's - perception of how ethnicity can be best used to optimize military self-interest. Given an ethnically-based regime, military professionals may see pluralist recruitment as a valuable buffer between politics and military, lessening the likelihood of the ruling party drawing the army into necessarily muddy political conflicts.

The distribution of economic opportunities within a pluralist society will also shape the ethnic make-up of a military. Military posts, whether colonel or lowly private, are, among other things, *jobs*. When jobs are scarce, government employment becomes a major resource for regimes and they dispense it with an eye to political benefit. In a sense it is easier to expand military employment than it is to expand civil service employment, if the regime is willing to allot more of its budget to defense. In employment terms, the army can become an ever inflated currency. When some ethnic groups are less equipped to compete in the already tight commercial job market, the military may take on special attractiveness. In this situation it is the less advantaged tribes which look to the military for employment, while the luckier groups can expect to find jobs elsewhere.⁹ The presently inflated state of the Nigerian army reflects the problems attendant to expanded wartime recruitment among those ethnic communities less equipped to exploit commercial opportunities. General Gowon's dilemma is acute, for his military regime is burdening itself with a massive defense budget at the same time as it is trying to accelerate economic development. Demobilization under such circumstances amounts to dumping hundreds of northerners and members of smaller tribes onto a labor market unable to absorb them.¹⁰ An inflated military may be the price for at least tolerable unemployment among those groups on which the Lagos government depends for political allegiance.

Each of these factors is subject to change. Ethnic identification itself is more mutable than is often imagined. Regime reliance on ethnic bases can change, either by the regime trying to reach outward and expand its base or by a change in governmental control. Military personnel's perception of their organizations or their own personal career best interest also can change over time, due either to new calculations or the promotion of a new kind of officer. Economic

opportunities and the equity of their distribution throughout the society can be altered, and with them the changing labor role of the army. In the following discussion some of these transformations and their impact on the political role of the military will be examined. The data suggests that the caveat against confusing change with development is nowhere more pertinent than in the understanding of the military in Africa.

The Period of Colonial Ethnic Manipulation

Most African armies date back to the period of European colonization, unlike Asia, where organized military forces existed prior to European control. Most of the European-created armies in Africa were not designed to be bulwarks of national integration: they were meant to protect the empire against nationalism. Their African recruits, though few in number until the post-World War II period, may have learned western values of technology and professionalism, but these were not automatically connected to national - as versus parochial - allegiances. A common colonial strategy was to recruit soldiers from these tribes who would be least likely to succumb to nationalist mobilization either because they feared being outnumbered by larger tribes or because they felt less equipped to compete against tribes with greater access to education or more experience in political organization.

In Rwanda, the Belgians drew soldiers from the Hutu rather than the more powerful aristocratic Tutsi.¹¹ Similarly, the British quite deliberately excluded the Baganda from the Ugandan army because they appeared too proud and susceptible to political mobilization. British exclusion of the Kikuyu from the Kenyan Kings Rifles was grounded in a similar anxiety. In an ironic sense it was a compliment to an African tribe to be excluded militarily, a testimony to its perceived sophistication. In Uganda and Kenya the colonial administrators drew their soldiers instead from smaller, less threatening tribes. If the purpose of a colonial army is to suppress opponents of colonial rule, then the army would have to be made up of persons who had the greatest stake in the continuation of colonial rule. One should not however, misread this tribal sentiment as proimperialism: Welcoming colonial recruitment was a weak group's ethnic strategy in the midst of change. In other words to appreciate fully the political significance of tribal-based military recruitment, we should recognize not only the colonialists' strategy of divide and rule, but also the varying ethnic group resources and interest calculations in any single colony. The fact that the British excluded the Kikuyu in Kenya does not explain, for instance, why the Akamba, Kalenjini, Gusii, and to a lesser extent, Luo were susceptible to military recruitment.

In the Sudan the British policy of military recruitment may have had less to do with predictions of likely nationalist opposition than with British ethnic stereotypes. For along with divide and rule strategic policies, most colonial administrators made assumptions about what constituted a good soldier and what groups in the colony possessed those desirable attributes. As Samuel Sarkesian has noted, the overriding assumption throughout British policy in the Sudan was that the African peoples of southern Sudan were less developed, less civilized than the Arabic peoples of northern Sudan.¹² Believing that the two sections of the Sudanese populace were so incompatible, the British attempted to create no *national* institutions until as late as the 1950's. The army thus was not a national organization, but was as divided as all other sectors of the colony's administration. In creating this bifurcated structure, an important step was the creation of a local Southern military force which provided a security element divorced from control of Northern authorities. This local military force, the Equatoria Corps, allowed the removal of the Northern garrison and its traders, and hence destroyed a link with the North.¹³ Given the condescending stereotype that the colonialists had of the Southerners, it is not surprising that they were commanded by British officers, while Northerners had a better chance of becoming officers.

Thus, alleged level of civilization was one criterion employed to distinguish between potentially recruitable tribal groups. Another basis was the alleged 'martial' quality of any African ethnic group. Those tribes perceived by Europeans to possess warrior traditions were looked upon favorably by the builders of the new armies.¹⁴ Creating a trustworthy as well as competent army was easiest for the colonial regime when those tribes with clearest martial credentials were also the tribes that, due to size and geographical remoteness, looked at service in colonial forces as a good way to protect their own long range tribal interests. Thus French administrators in West African colonies were able to recruit among the tall Northern tribesmen, and it was only after independence that new French-speaking regimes made a point of drawing soldiers from among more cosmopolitan coastal tribes.¹⁵ In Ghana there was not the convenient overlap of warrior tradition and political peripherality. The Ashanti, a "proud, self-conscious and cohesive people with a strong warrior tradition," were prohibited by the British from joining the colonial army. And even after the recruitment barrier was lowered the Ashanti were not allowed to enlist in great numbers. According to Ernest Lefever, Ashanti provided less than 10 percent of the Gold Coast military enlistment during World War II, although they amounted to some 20 percent of the total population. As late

as 1956 the Ashanti represented a mere 5 percent of the country's military personnel.¹⁶ It appears that when the colonial military designers faced a choice between functional attributes and political expediency, they chose the latter - a preference that doesn't jibe with the assumption that military organizations promote Weberian rationality. In fact, it might even have been believed by Europeans that *lack* of sophistication went along with military potential.

This common pattern of recruitment in colonial Africa, then, encouraged less developed ethnic groups to envision the military both as a vehicle for promoting communal interests and as a means for achieving social mobility. More advantaged ethnic groups not only often were barred, but had communal resources available to them which made military service less necessary in the striving for mobility. In an ethnically divided colony or nation it is common for different groups to rely on different mobility ladders. The French, Belgian and British military recruitment policies reinforced this bulwark of ethnic fragmentation. But such fragmentation became even more complicated when ethnic distinctions were made *within* the colonial institutions. The rank and file soldiery would be drawn from illiterate northern groups, while Africans of officer rank, few though they might have been, were more likely to be selected from among coastal, Christian groups. This intra-military ethnic differentiation marked both the Nigerian and Ghanaian colonial forces.¹⁷

With mobilization of nationalist movements and achievement of independence these colonial recruitment strategies gained a new importance. For those tribal groups which had utilized the colonial army as a means of compensating for development inadequacies, it was now necessary to prove that such close association with the imperial power did not constitute national disloyalty. The ground rules had changed over-night. What was advantageous before independence now might be a severe political liability to a tribe. For the more populous and prestigious groups which previously had not needed a military connection, the army for the first time became a desirable institution. Condescension or contempt for the military had to be replaced by effort to gain entré or by policies to assure that the military, manned as it presumably was by ethnic groups of lesser competence, was kept outside the top policy-making circles. In understanding the dynamics of change in the role of the military brought on by the transition from colonization to independence we obviously are dealing with at least two things: first, the function of the military as determined by the ethnic groups used as recruitment pools; second, the public image of the military as determined by Africans' beliefs about

who enlisted and why. Both function and popular image were so formulated by the colonialists that it no wonder that African armies were institutionally unsettled by national independence. Furthermore, as the military was transformed - or at least subject to new expectations - so the ethnic group calculations that hinged on the military also were upset.

Post-independence Political Fluidity

One aspect of the military's role in Africa did not change drastically after Independence. The military remained primarily an instrument for assuring *domestic* order. As in the colonial period the disorder that armies were supposed to handle could be either between social groups in the general population or between some section of the citizenry and the central regime. Thus once again the army's effectiveness would be judged by governing elites in large part by their political reliability. At a time of change when political calculations are so muddled with uncertainty, it is hardly surprising that regimes should look for the simplest bases for predicting reliability: communal identity with the regime. So while the colonialists favored lesser tribes, the new regimes would look to the same groups able to capture political influence. On the other hand, most post-independence rulers were conscious of the tenuousness of national unity, and were anxious to dilute ethnic tensions and foster political institutions which would integrate rather than fragment crucial groups. Both of these often contrary goals - securing regime hegemony and bridging social cleavages - had to be sought in the midst of escalating socio-economic expectations, some of which could be satisfied via promotions in the newly Africanized military. The results of the three pressures on African armies has been that ethnic composition and/or differentiation of the military has increased in political saliency, not only in countries which have had coups, but in non-coup countries as well.

Very few African military organizations have escaped some significant alteration in their ethnic composition. At minimum the army has widened its recruitment net, perhaps not displacing any of the traditionally recruited groups but at least bringing in a greater assortment of tribal peoples, even if only into the non-commissioned ranks. One military organization which has not undergone major ethnic transformation over the past three decades is Ethiopia's. As in earlier years, the Ethiopian military, especially the officer corps, is dominated by the Amhara and Tigre, a condition which is unlikely to change so long as these two communities continue to dominate all other sectors of Ethiopian public life as well.¹⁸ The rank

and file is somewhat more ethnically representative of Ethiopian pluralism, though military units themselves remain ethnically homogeneous, a situation which limited the army's effectiveness in those geographic regions where sympathy for Somali-speaking irredentists is strongest.¹⁹

More common than either a demographically representative military or a military fully capable of resisting ethnic change have been militaries that have experienced shifts in the distribution of ethnic personnel mirroring shifts in political power. Ethnic shifts had the effect sometimes of solidifying the army, though around a new ethnic allegiance: while at other times such shifts served to divide the army internally. The armies of Uganda, Nigeria and Dahomey have followed the latter. In Burundi the minority Tutsi continue to monopolize positions of prestige and influence, but have brought the military more into line with that dominance. While under Belgian rule the military was relatively mixed with both Hutu and Tutsi members; it has become since independence more a strictly Tutsi organization.²⁰ Independence increased the symmetry between political and military stratification while at the same time it heightened the threat of Hutu resistance to Tutsi dominance and thus made it more important than ever to the Tutsi to have an armed force committed to the ethnic elite. The coup that occurred in post-colonial Burundi widened military political activity, but did not have a fundamental effect on the ethnic tendencies at work in the military.²¹

Para-military units are likely to be most critical when, as in Uganda, the military is internally split along communal lines. Since the 1971 coup led by General Idi Amin overturned the government of Dr. Milton Obote there have been a number of analyses dissecting the motivations behind the military action. Some have described the coup as a class action, an essentially proletarian army, symbolized by Amin, ousting a socialist but still bourgeois civilian elite.²⁵ There is yet insufficient data to say with conviction whether in fact the ascendancy of Amin opens a genuine proletarian era in Uganda politics. But in addition to the class attributes of Amin and his supporters, there are the ethnic circumstances surrounding the coup and Obote's failure. Ethnicity and social class may of course be coterminous in a country, just as the ascendancy of the essentially Hutu army in Rwanda represented both an ethnic and a class reversal. Under the British the Ugandan army recruitment did indeed combine class and ethnic elements, for soldiers were drawn chiefly from the tribes of the northern regions which not only possessed 'warrior' traditions but were outside the mainstream of economic and social development.²⁶ But after

independence the army became more ethnically diverse without becoming unified.

By the time of Obote's regime the cleavages within the army itself were as troublesome as the divisions within the general populace, between the northerners and southerners with the powerful Baganda seeking alliances among groups from the south. The military was composed of several tribes, but the Acholi and Langi, both from the north, were most visible. Amin is from the north but is Muslim and belongs to the Kakwa tribe. Obote was a member of the Langi community but received Amin's support as a fellow northerner when he moved against the commonly resented Baganda in 1966. From 1966 til 1971 Obote sought to implement a new Ugandan policy which favored the average citizen and combatted tribalism. But the very boldness of Obote's socialist program meant that he would attract growing antagonism and thus feel compelled to build up assurances of regime protection. He encouraged two para-military organizations and seemed to rely more heavily on ethnic linkages in the regular army: National service began to look like a recruiting ground for Obote supporters and a future para-military force; within the army Langi and Acholi officers were given rapid promotions and an attempt was made to isolate and neutralize Amin.²⁷ The Amin intervention may have been as much motivated by fear of Langi and Acholi domination of the military as by proletarian objectives. Reports of post-coup attacks by pro-Amin soldiers on Acholi and Langi troops suggest that class identification alone was not at work.²⁸ While the Ugandan society at large is divided between northern and southern ethnic groups, the cleavages within the military were among different northern groups. Since the coup there has been a government policy to expand the army and to launch a new recruiting drive aimed especially at expanding the Muslim component of both the officer corps and the rank and file.²⁹ Since the 1971 coup the Ugandan army has increased from 9,000 to 12,000 men.³⁰ Thus while the Ugandan political system has absorbed several violent transfers of power during the last decade, there is a certain continuity in the nature of the military; it remains an arena for communal rivalries.³¹

War and the Composition of the Military

War is the ultimate justification for the existence of a military establishment. But in reality there are relatively few wars in Africa. More frequent are actions in which the army is called upon to supplement the national police. But those wars that African states have waged have had long-range consequences for the respective armies. Three challenges that

wars have posed for the military that relate directly to its ethnic composition are:

- 1) The challenge of expansion
- 2) The challenge of absorption of surrendered enemy troops (in civil war).
- 3) The challenge of demobilization.

The Nigerian case is most often cited to illustrate how ethnic conflict can divide an army internally. The coups and counter-coups of the late 1960's revealed the incapacity of even a well-trained army to withstand ethnic cleavage once it had begun to undermine the state's basic political structure.

A. R. Luckman has pointed out that recruitment and promotion strategies inside the Nigerian army, however, were also to blame for the ethnic coloration of the January and July coups of 1966.³² A glance at the breakdown of rankings by ethnic identification just prior to the first coup suggests why so many officers were growing impatient with the persistence of Yoruba and northern tribal domination stemming from colonial years. Ironically, it was the effort after Britain's departure to rapidly broaden the ethnic base of the army that brought in so many Ibo of one age group, which in turn shows up in promotion ladders and rank-differentiations:

Regional - Ethnic Origins of Nigerian Combat Officers³³

Rank	Ibo	Yoruba	North	Other	NN
Colonel and above	14	57	29	0	7
Lt. Colonel	36	14	21	29	14
Major	66	22	6	6	32
Captain	29	23	33	15	52
Lieutenant	34	17	38	10	58
Second Lieutenant	25	19	42	14	167

60-65% of Other Ranks Northern (75% N General Duties Branch)
Branch)

War in Nigeria's case was civil war based on regional-ethnic cleavage. The military headed the central regime waging war. Both conditions exacerbated the intra-military ethnic shifts that war brought. After the second coup of 1966 in which the Ibo officers were ousted by northern colleagues, the Nigerian military became more ethnically exclusivist.

War has a second effect not so directly related to the domestic character of the conflict: War typically means the expansion of the military. In fact, if war has any critical attribute, it is mobilization. By the end of the war the Nigerian armed forces had swollen to one of the largest in Sub-Saharan Africa. By 1973 the Nigerian military employed some 250,000 men, most of them in the army.³⁴ The expansion generated by the war against secessionist Biafra included more Hausa and especially Yoruba who earlier had not been attracted to military service but who now entered into the officer ranks in significant numbers.³⁵ The forces were also swollen by enlistments from the same small northern tribal groups that traditionally had supplied the colonial and post-independence military with the bulk of its ordinary soldiers. For these minority tribes the war increased the stake which young men had in the military. Wartime and a military regime also gave these smaller, less developed tribes greater collective political leverage. General Gowon himself was not a Muslim Hausa but a Methodist from a small northern tribe, the Angas.

With the end of the war in January, 1970, Nigerian political and military leaders faced the prospects of demobilization. If war is symbolized by mobilization, then peace may be characterized by *demobilization*, an image that perhaps explains why it is so hard to whip up enthusiasm for peace and why modern social scientists find it easier to explain the nature of peace by concentrating on what precipitates war. In many respects we are students of mobilization. The Nigerian armed forces have, in fact, not demobilized. Estimates of the Nigerian defense expenditures range from 87 million per year (1972) to 20 million per month, or 25 percent of the national budget.³⁶ Revenues from Nigerias' newly exploited oil resources are helping to meet these tremendous defense expenditures, but the swollen military remains a major drain on the budget of a developing nation trying to rebuild after three years of damaging war. There are at least two reasons for the reluctance to demobilize. First, precisely those ethnic groups which increased their numbers and stake in the military are those which have the most limited group resources to compete in an economy marked by significant unemployment: "...with unemployment a serious problem already, demobilization would compound it in ways no one thinks advisable."³⁷

Secondly, one condition that General Gowon made a part of Biafra's cease fire was the effort to reabsorb Ibo soldiers into the regular Nigerian army. This has been done with surprising success. The majority of Ibo soldiers simply carried

out an unofficial demobilization, returning to their former civilian occupations. But the 20 percent of Biafran soldiers who wanted to be merged into the regular national force - mainly men who had had military careers prior to 1967 - were divided into three categories: 1) those to be taken back at their pre-war rank; 2) those to be retired with full benefits; 3) those retired with no benefits. By 1973 only 30 Ibo officers, those involved in the original coup or in the initial invasion of the Mid-West State were detained. Sixty-five men were reabsorbed; 32 retired with full benefits; 16 were compelled to retire without benefits.³⁸ To underscore the conciliatory nature of his regime and his commitment to a multi-ethnic military, General Gowon uses two former Biafran officers as his personal pilots. There is currently a "trickle" of Ibos newly enlisting in the military, frequently into technical posts. In post-war Nigeria the military clearly offers a ladder to good salaries and quick promotions. But it remains a heavily Northern regime which continues to control the "faucet."³⁹

In the Sudan, war had very similar consequences for the military. The war was even more costly and prolonged than the Nigerian civil war, lasting from the mutiny of the southern-manned Equatoria Corps in July, 1955, until the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement in February, 1972. Like the Nigerian conflict, the war was domestic, pitting major ethnic groups against each other along regional lines, the ethnic rebels seeking secession or autonomy. As in Nigeria, the ethnically mixed but imbalanced pre-war military was made even more ethnically lop-sided by wartime mutinies and by widened recruitment among the loyal ethnic groups. In Sudan, as in Nigeria, the central government was controlled by the now ethnically-exclusivist military, while the rebel ethnic group created its own military organization, though the Biafran force of 40,000 men was far larger than the southern rebel force, the Anya Nya. In both Sudan and Nigeria, competing foreign powers encouraged ethnic-military expansion by pouring in large amounts of military aid and equipment.⁴⁰

The Addis Ababa Agreement brought an end to the Sudanese war, but again posed the dual problems of demobilization and rebel absorption. Both were ethnically loaded. Before the peace agreement with the Anya Nya could be affected, President Numeiri, an army officer and Arabic northerner, had to tour the northern troop garrisons occupying the south to convince them that the agreement's stipulations for military mergers would not be injurious to the northerner's now deepened stake in the army. Northern troops stationed in the south, especially the officers, had been receiving generous hardship

allowances, local perquisites and "the run of the land." Furthermore, wartime, southern mutinies, and coups among the northerners in Khartoum had generated rapid promotions. The pledged absorption of Anya Nya troops, some at officer rank, along with the pledged reorganization of the southern garrisons so that they would be half-northern, half-southern both jeopardized these wartime ethnic benefits.⁴¹ On the other hand, Anya Nya rebel forces were not guaranteed any definite percentage of army posts and the agreement was carefully worded to say that the southern garrison would be composed of 6,000 northerners and 6,000 men recruited among "citizens in the south." The latter phrase presumably allowed for recruitment of men in the south of Arabic origin.⁴²

By March, 1973, one year after President Numeiri's agreement, 6,000 Anya Nya arms-carrying rebels had been retrained for the regular army. They and their equal number of northern troops now man the permanent military garrison in the south. But army units remain ethnically segregated and redundant northern units (over the 12,000 man unit) remain in the south.⁴³ The northern African Sudanese troops are still a small minority in Sudan's enlarged total armed force of 38,600 men.⁴⁴

Conclusion

This brief discussion is notably lacking in systematic data. But the very piece-meal character of information on ethnic compositions of African military organizations is suggestive of the casual observation of this important dimension of African military policies. The prevailing neglect of the ethnic factor, in turn, mirrors our social science preoccupation with the "colonels in the palace" - that is, an unrealistic concentration on only one level of military personnel, and that level only as it intervenes directly into civilian politics.

In actuality, the impact of the military on a polity is far more complex. An army (or a navy or airforce - they being more recent creations and thus less reflective of colonial era recruitment patterns) is not only a potential surrogate for parties and legislatures. It is also a competitor in a country's labor market. It is a distributor of salaries and statuses: An army is a distributor of manpower (and often family units) geographically. Internally it is a differentiator of skills. It is a reinforcer or reformer of collective stereotypes. And finally it is a shaper of images of central regimes and national identities.

In each of these various roles, ethnicity is salient. African military organizations have been manipulated by others ethnically - by colonial governors, by party leaders, by ethnic group spokesmen. But the members of the military themselves have manipulated ethnic images and attachments to suit their respective self-interests. In both instances, African armies have defied the modernizer-theorist's ideal and have contributed to national disintegration.

Footnotes

1. Elsewhere I have discussed the relationship between ethnicity and political development cross-nationally. See *Ethnic Conflict and Political Development*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973.
2. Bengt Abrahamson, *Military Professionalization and Political Power*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972, pp. 52-54.
3. Harvey Glickman provides an exception in his monograph, *Some Observations on the Army and Political Unrest in Tanzania*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1964.
4. See especially, Claud Welsh's forthcoming *Military Role and Rule*, Duxbury: Duxbury Press, 1973. Also Alfred Stepan, *The Military in Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971; Samuel Decalo, "Military Coups and Military Regimes in Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, March, 1973, pp. 105-128.
5. Decalo, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
6. Ernest W. Lefever, *Spear and Scepter*, Washington: Brookings Institute, 1970, p. 177.
7. Personal correspondence with Warren Weinstein, July, 1973.
8. Personal communication with Kenyan Ph.D. candidate, May, 1973. In several instances, African informants preferred to remain anonymous.
9. Personal communication with a Nigerian social scientist, October, 1973.

10. Carey C. McWilliams, "Introduction," *Garrisons and Government*, ed., McWilliams, San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967, pp. 23-24.
11. Warren Weinstein, "Contrasting Patterns of Military Dependence: The Former Belgian Ruled States of Central Africa," paper presented at the Conference on Dependence and Development in Africa, February. 16-18, 1973, Ottawa.
12. Samuel C. Sarkesian, "The Southern Sudan: A Reassessment" *African Studies Review*, April, 1973, vol. xvi, no. 1, pp. 2-5.
13. *ibid.*, p. 6.
14. See Stephen Cohen's analysis of the British ethnic recruiting in India: Cohen, "The Untouchable Soldier," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. xxviii, no. 3, May, 1969, pp. 453-468, or Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971. Also Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Generals and Politicians in India," in McWilliams, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-149.
15. Guy DeLusignan, *French Speaking Africa Since Independence*, New York: Praeger, 1969, p. 363.
16. Lefever, *op. cit.*, p. 41. See Also William Gutteridge, *The Military in African-Politics*, London: Methuen and Co., 1969
17. Pierre L. Van den Berghe, "The Role of the Army in Contemporary Africa," in McWilliams, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-285.
18. Lefever, *op. cit.*, p. 163.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
20. Warren Weinstein, correspondence, July, 1973.
21. Among the more informative accounts of ethnic conflict in Burundi and Rwanda are: Marvin Howe, "Slaughter in Burundi: How Ethnic Conflict Erupted," *New York Times*, June 10, 1972; Thomas A. Johnson, "In Rwanda and Burundi," *New York Times*, June 6, 1973; Stanley Meisler, "Rwanda and Burundi," *Atlantic Magazine*, September 1973, pp. 6-16. The subtlety of ethnic divisions has been underscored by the most recent military coup in Rwanda. In July, 1973 the Rwanda army, manned largely by northern Hutus, overthrew

the civilian government controlled by southern Hutus. See *New York Times*, July 6 and 7, 1973. The northern Hutus had dominated the army partly because of less ambiguous feelings toward the deposed former Tutsi monarch and partly because of apparent inclinations toward more physical sorts of pursuits. But they felt that the southern-dominated civilian Hutu regime had long neglected northern interests. Communication with Rwanda graduate student, October, 1973.

22. Communication with Kenyan Ph.D. candidate, June, 1973. Also communication with Ivory Robinson, Clark University, October, 1972.
23. The appeal of the KYNS is likely to stem in large part from the tightness of the Kenyan labor market. Kenyan population growth rate was 3.7 percent in 1972. A record 180,000 pupils are expected to finish primary school in 1973, but more than 100,000 will not find places in secondary school or in employment, despite Kenya's economic growth rate being one of the highest in Africa: "an army of the unemployed - of all tribes - is building up in the shanties at the edges of Kenya's burgeoning cities." Jim Hoagland, "Kenya's Rich Soil is still the Prize," *Washington Post*, January 7, 1973.
24. Similar para-military youth organizations, also with implicit partisan ties, are to be found in other developing nations, for instance in the Caribbean state of Guyana. There too the organization is heavily weighted toward one ethnic group, the Afro-Guyanese, with few Indo-Guyanese joining. Analysis of such para-military groups should include study of the recruitment of women or teenage girls. Very little attention has been paid to the recruitment of women into military organizations and yet especially in these para-military groups they are apt to be present and perhaps even more mono-ethnic in their distribution.
25. Ali A. Mazrui, "The Lumpen Proletariat and the Lumpen Militariat: African Soldiers as a New Political Class," *Political Studies*, March, 1973, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 1-12. Also: Michael Lotchie, "Uganda Coup: Class Action by the Military," *Journal of Modern African States*, May, 1972; Ali Mazrui, "Racial Self-Reliance and Cultural Dependency: Nyerere and Amin in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1973, especially pp. 113-115.
26. Garth Glentworth and Ian Hancock, "Change and Continuity in Modern Uganda," *African Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 288, July, 1973 p. 249.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
28. *New York Times*, May 14, 1973 and May 27, 1973; *Washington Post*, September 12, 1971.
29. *New York Times*, May 14, 1973; Glentworth and Hancock, *op. cit.*, p. 252.
30. *The Military Balance*, 1973-74, The Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1973, p. 42.
31. A detailed analysis of similar regional-ethnic conflicts within Dahomey's army and the impact of this intra-military instability on the political system is found in Samuel Decalo, "Regionalism, Politics and the Military in Dahomey," *Journal of Developing areas*, vol. 7, no. 3, April, 1973, pp. 449-478. Regional-ethnic fragmentation in Dahomey is also explored in Dov Ronen, "Is National Integration Essential to Modernisation?" paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, Chicago, April, 1970.
32. A. R. Luckman, "Institutional Transfer and Breakdown in a New Nation: The Nigerian Military," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 6, December, 1971, pp. 401-402.
33. *Ibid*, p. 402.
34. Jean Herskovits, "One Nigeria," *Foreign Affairs*, January, 1973, vol. 51, no. 2, p. 404. The same figures were reported in the *New York Times*, October 6, 1973. The Institute for Strategic Studies, *Military Balance*, 1973-74, gives Nigerian military total as 157,000 men (*op. cit.*, p. 40).
35. Personal communication with Claude Welsh, New Orleans, Sept., 1973.
36. *Military Balance*, 1973-74, p. 40. Higher figure was estimated by a Nigerian social scientist in personal communication, Oct., 1973.
37. Herskovits, *op. cit.*, p. 404.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 398. Also personal communication with Nigerian social scientist, Oct., 1973; *Washington Post*, February 25, 1973.

39. Communication with Nigerian social scientist, Oct., 1973.
40. See Sarkesian, *op. cit.*. A detailed journalistic account of the Sudanese conflict has been written by Jim Hoagland *Washington Post*, June 27, 1971.
41. "Sudan: Salute Your Rebel General," *The Economist*, March 11, 1972, pp. 44-46.
42. *The Sunday Times* (London), March 26, 1972.
43. "Sudan: When Peace Costs More Than War," *The Economist*, March 31, 1973, p. 28.
44. *Military Balance*, 1973-74, p. 36.

* * * * *

CYNTHIA H. ENLOE is a Professor of Government and International Relations at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts.

* * * * *
*
* ADVERTISE IN UFAHAMU *
*
* * * * *