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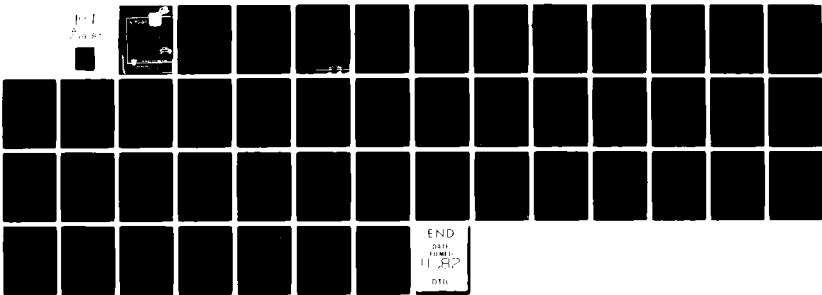   SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S CHANGING MILITARY ENVIRONMENT.(U)
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SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S CHANGING MILITARY ENVIRONMENT

by

WILLIAM G. THOM

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ing Africa's military environment.

US ARMY WAR COLLEGE

MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S CHANGING MILITARY ENVIRONMENT

BY

WILLIAM G. THOM

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ing Africa's military environment.

PREFACE

This study was undertaken with one goal in mind: to present an updated picture of the general military situation throughout sub-Sahara Africa and the important trends as I see them. Aside from the nuts and bolts area of military growth trends, it touches on murkey topics such as the evolution of African armies toward becoming truely national forces, the military as legitimate factors in the international power politics of the region, the emergence of African military powers, the consequences of military power imbalances, and the probable characteristics of future wars. The audacity to write on such a broad subject comes from years of stuuying the African military scene and the excellent opportunity provided by the War College to conduct research. Indeed, aside from normal library sources and domestic contacts, I was able to conduct field interviews abroad with recognized experts in the UK and Nigeria. Few sources entirely agreed with the thoughts and prognostications I present here, but most pointed in the same general direction.

To most casual observers of the African scene, mere mention of the term 'African military' conjures up images of undisciplined troops, political intrigue, and foreign manipulation — characteristic of well publicized disorders in the early years of independence. The armies of sub-Saharan Africa have, however, been gradually evolving toward more professional and capable armed forces. Focusing on this evolution, this study attempts to assess how far African armed forces have come, and where they might be heading through the remainder of this decade and on toward the end of the century.

This cursory investigation deals only with the sub-Saharan states, analyzing their military establishments. It attempts to challenge some of the long-held conventional thinking about African armies and proposes that a new approach to analyzing the African military will prove useful.

Up until now, much of the literature assessing the African military has concerned the political role of the army within various countries, socio-economic motivations for the politicization of the military, and the army's susceptibility to Eastern and Western influences especially through the provision of military assistance. Sparse attention has been given to the role of the military as a factor internationally. The principal reason for this is a lack of appreciation for Africa's changing military environment. As Chester Crocker adroitly commented in 1974: "The significance of African armies for Africa's international relations has been obscured or ignored."[1]

A common error for those unfamiliar with Africa is to take its military establishments at face value. That is, to make the naive assumption that African military forces are comparable with forces in more developed areas. An equally common, but less forgivable, distortion is committed by African specialists. In an effort to compensate for 'face value' assumptions by the uninitiated, there is a tendency to over emphasize the negative side of the African military. That is, to describe the shortcomings of African armies in excruciating detail or discount them as a factor in international relations altogether. The danger here is that an analysis heavily weighted on the negative can obscure positive developments.

For example, unfavorable comparisons are often made that are irrelevant to the sub-Saharan environment: The level of training and determination of African troops is exceedingly low by almost any standard. Intelligent and resolute leadership is almost entirely lacking. African military capability is far removed from the standard displayed by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army.[2]

Africa's military environment has been changing since independence — over the past 20 years or so — and has now reached a watershed where in many states the military are becoming credible national forces. Back in 1966, however, little change was perceptible ". . . events since 1964 have served to illustrate the essential military weakness of the independent African states in the starkest possible way."[3] By 1981, however, it was apparent to many that the small, lightly armed forces inherited from the colonial administrations were being armed rapidly.[4]

But the more subtle appreciation for military capability has often lagged behind. Increases in capability — difficult to measure and sometimes under estimated in importance — are gradual and can go

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virtually unnoticed.

Before discussing military growth trends, the changing role of the military, power imbalances, multinational military forces, and the characteristics of future wars, a few disclaimers are necessary. First, the inherent weakness of any macro analysis such as this is perilous at best. No doubt, I fully recognize that many individual cases can be cited that run counter to trends I describe here. Second, any attempt to look ahead at military-political trends up to 18 years into the future taxes the realm of serious analysis. My purpose here is not to be an oracle but to point hopefully in some different directions; to provide a framework for more substantial research and analysis. I also do not purport to have discovered any military trend coming out of Africa with profound implications for the global community. Important for Africa watchers? I think yes.

GROWTH TRENDS AND EFFECTS

The characteristics of Africa's changing military environment easiest to quantify are the growing size of the armies and the increase in modern weaponry. Table 1 shows the personnel strength of African armed forces at five year intervals beginning in 1966. In most countries the size of the armed forces have continued to grow since the early years of independence (represented by the 1966 figures).

In almost all the countries listed, on which data were available, the size of the armed forces in 1981 were substantially larger than in the early years. In many countries the most recent figures are many times greater. In addition, quite a few states show a sizeable increase from 1976 to 1981.

Historically, the larger armies tended to develop in the larger countries where ethnic and regional cleavages threatened disintegration (e.g. Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria, Zaire). Indigenous armies have also grown rapidly in southern Africa as a result of the decolonization process (e.g. Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa). Dramatic increases in strength have also occurred as a result of local conflicts (e.g. Tanzania, Somalia, Ethiopia). But even in smaller countries that have been relatively free from conflict, armies have tended to increase. Thus, military growth seems to be part of a long term trend rather than a temporary condition.

In general, African armies are better at mobilizing than at demobilizing. Three recent wars (the Angolan Civil War, the Ogaden War, and the Tanzania-Uganda War) illustrate a mobilization capability that was previously not recognized. They show how a national Army or guerrilla army could be expanded rapidly to meet a fast developing conflict situation.

Aside from maintaining Army veterans in reserve, many countries have organized national youth movements or national service organizations whose members are given some form of paramilitary training. Originally intended as internal security back up forces, in time of national emergency they form another pool of manpower for the armed forces. Also, little is known about the extent of reserve military structures in most countries. Given these factors and the recent examples cited above, it is probable that most African countries can mobilize significant manpower for the military when hostilities threaten.

Most sources tend to agree that the continued growth of African armies can be anticipated, but often disagree on the extent of the increases. Some say simply that the trend is toward an increased number

of men under arms.[5] Others believe military growth will continue at a
measured pace except in circumstances where special stimuli accelerate
the process.[6] And at least one writer has stated that quantitative
military expansion will be an accomplished fact by the year 2000 with
numerous African states attaining a military participation rate of one
percent or higher.[7] I believe the size of African armies will continue
to grow through the remainder of this century. The rate of growth will
vary widely from country to country depending on local circumstances.
The economically more prosporous countries will have an advantage in
increasing the size of their forces but this will not be a finite
limitation. Some of the poorer nations are likely to achieve signifi-
cant military growth with the help of foreign patrons.

ARMS AND EQUIPMENT

Parallel growth is anticipated in the area of armaments, not only
in quantity but also in the types of weapons to be acquired. The pace
of arms transfers to sub-Saharan Africa has been quickening, particu-
larly since the mid-1970s. Table 2 indicates the proliferation of
modern armaments in recent years. Again using five year intervals since
1966, the data show that few states possessed heavy weapons systems such
as tanks and field artillery in the mid-1960s. The same is also true
for more sophisticated arms such as surface-to-air missiles, guided
missile attack boats, and jet combat aircraft. By 1981, there were
significant increases in the number of African countries possessing
these types of weapons.

A change in the buying habits of African armies has also been noted
recently. The period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s was one domi-

nated by the acquisition of primary systems, such as armored vehicles and combat aircraft. They were intended to improve the firepower of the embryonic military forces. The emphasis may now be changing in many countries as buyers become more purposeful and seek the support equipment necessary to improve the infrastructures of their armed forces.[8]

Four years ago Claude Welch wrote that "at the time of independence African states were among the most lightly armed in the world by almost any criterion. The change by 1978 has been noteworthy; by 2000 it will have been substantial."[9] Again, however, the availability of economic resources or foreign donors will be a factor.

The shear number of heavy and modern weapons will almost certainly continue to increase in aggregate, but not necessarily the number of countries fielding them. That is, the number of states having these weapons will probably not increase very rapidly as many small states will be unable or unwilling to obtain modern sophisticated arms. As much higher force levels are generated in some states, however, the number of heavy weapons in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole will increase.

One factor indicating further acquisition of modern weapons is that many of the first generation systems acquired in the 60s and 70s are now becoming ripe for replacement.[10] This means that many states will be in the market for more modern armored vehicles, aircraft and naval craft in the years ahead — even in cases where increased force levels are not a prime motivating factor.

As a result of this expected pattern of procurement, the requirement for foreign military technicians to service new weapons systems will be perpetuated. Very few African armies are likely to produce enough of their own skilled technicians to avoid dependence on foreign advisors from the principal arms suppliers. In some cases, foreign

personnel may be required for extended periods, not only to train indig-
enous personnel and perform maintenance, but also to help operate the
equipment.[11] This is not to disregard the progress likely to be made by
sub-Saharan armies in improving their technical skill levels, but growth
in new weapons technology will almost certainly preserve an important
role for the foreign military technician.

Certain types of equipment that have proven useful in the military
operational environment of Africa will likely continue to be popular
with African armies. Such equipment includes light wheeled armored
vehicles, helicopters, light STOL (Short Take Off and Landing) aircraft,
armed jet trainers, and naval patrol craft. According to one knowledge-
able observer, recent wars have indicated that the types of equipment
employed by an African force is important. Armored vehicles, for exam-
ple, have proven particularly effective.[12]

MILITARY CAPABILITY

A much more difficult area of growth to assess is military capa-
bility. This is the pay off in building a military force. The area in
which manpower and equipment are vital components, but where intangibles
such as morale, discipline, leadership and levels of training are the
ingredients that translate mere numbers of men and machines into a
combat capable force. Combat capabilities have been improving and will
continue to improve. It used to be stated rather glibly that African
armies were not oriented towards combat. The last few years, however,
have shown no shortage of African armies in combat or potential combat
situations.[13]

It must be remembered, that military capability in the African

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context is relative. That is, disparities in leve.r of capability between African states are often such that a little capability by extra-African standards can have a disproportionate impact in the sub-Saharan environment. Put another way, African armed forces can be eminently successful when there is an absence of competent resistence.[14]

Despite a history of negative assessments, recent examples of improved military capability are extent. The Somalia invasion of the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and Tanzania's invasion of Uganda in the late 1970s have been cited as representing a quantum leap in sub-Saharan military capabilities.[15] In the early success of the Somalia National Army's advance into the Ogaden, the operation proceeded with consider-able efficiency, especially the coordination of supplies to the regular army and their guerrilla auxiliaries. This feat reportedly greatly impressed American military intelligence.[16] A slow, subtle improvement over a broad range of military skills probably underlies demonstrated increases in combat capability. African armies are learning the essen-tials of modern conventional warfare. This is likely to continue in the future, being accelerated in instances where actual combat experience is gained.

Some observers believe the attitudes of African military leaders are also changing. There is less preoccupation with major weapons and a corresponding increased emphasis in the areas of logistics, training, and command, control and communications. Notably, there is a trend toward formalizing training within the military.[17] Sub-Saharan Africa's three most prominent military powers -- South Africa, Ethiopia and Nigeria -- have been among the few states to establish military aca-demies and/or war colleges.[18]

The development of small indigenous defense industries will not

result in any significant reduction in the dependence of African forces on foreign sources of materiel. It may provide a degree of self-sufficiency, however, for some smaller items such as basic ordinance, landmines, quartermaster type items, and light motor vehicles.[19]

IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL CONFLICT

The trend toward greater military capability is certain to have an effect on the level of conflict as military-political relationships between states are altered, and as more countries become capable of conducting modest military campaigns. The means to engage in armed conflict and to project power into neighboring states is on the rise. Conflicts will continue to occur between African states, who will be better prepared to engage in hostilities.

Several analysts see military growth itself as contributing toward more armed confrontations. Some believe that since the mid-1970s there has been a militarization of Africa, a condition that has resulted in a proclivity to seek solutions by violent means.[20] Others believe that with Africa at a most difficult stage of development, quarrels within a country or between countries are more likely to erupt into open conflicts.[21]

Henry Bienen has described this condition:

The relative weakness of African nation's ability to influence each other militarily is changing. Until recently, foreign policy options have been narrowed by the legacy of colonial military policy in Africa and by African dependence on outsiders for military wherewithal. But military capability is being acquired unevenly, and this . . . spells more rather than fewer interstate military conflicts.[22]

The availability of more military power not only increases the likelihood that it will be used, but also that the parameters of armed

conflict will widen. Regional conflicts in Africa have been increasing

in scope and intensity. In part, this is because African nations now

have the material and logistical base to translate their disagreements

into armed conflict. Armies can now sustain warfare for a longer time

and over a wider area. Moreover, African countries with territorial

demands on other countries, or ongoing political conflicts with their

neighbors, appear more willing to act militarily. And, the alarming

infusion of more sophisticated weapons and greater expenditures on arms

will intensify the scale of such conflicts. More capable armed forces

will have the capacity to increase their scope as well.[23]

IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN INTERVENTION

Another result of growing African military capabilities will be

less direct foreign military intervention in regional conflicts, whether

by an outside power or by proxy and mercenary forces. There will be

fewer states vulnerable to small outside forces and fewer conflict

situations where the insertion of such small forces will have a dramatic

impact. The risks associated with direct military intervention will

rise. An outside power will have to be prepared to pay a higher price

in the form of larger and longer force commitments, not to mention

higher casualties. In some cases, military intervention by an external,

non-African power will be politically untenable.

If less foreign intervention can be expected, and the high water

marked of proxy forces has already been reached, than the day of the

mercenary is over. One need look no farther than the recent attempt to

topple the government of the tiny island nation of the Seychelles. The

small force of white mercenaries was stymied when it encountered stiff

resistance from local forces. Unsuccessful mercenary attacks on a

Seychelles military barracks and a small Tanzanian Army camp caused the invaders to flee back to the airport where they had landed. A diplomatic source was quoted in the press as stating a key factor was that the army shot back.[24]

Although this may seem a somewhat innocuous statement, it strikes at a basic change in the African military environment. Not too long ago African troops in many countries would not stand and fight at the sight of mercenaries or any other organized force. That this is no longer the situation indicates that a basic confidence has been instilled in the African soldier. It is also germane to the central theme of this paper, that the fledgling Seychelles forces have been trained not by a European power but by a sub-Saharan country (Tanzania).

France, which has been labeled the policeman of Africa, also has limitations as an intervention force despite its status as a major power. It has been pointed out that the arms possessed by French intervention forces in Africa often do not compare well with weapons supplied to local rebels. French aircraft have reportedly been lost to surface-to-air missiles in Chad and the Western Sahara. And, French support systems in extended conflicts such as these, have reportedly proved inadequate.[25]

Even a super power like the Soviet Union may not casually take on an African commitment. Robert Jaster, for example, suggests that Moscow is unlikely to encourage an assault against South Africa by black African states because it might ultimately entail a far heavier military commitment and present more serious risks than the Soviets are willing to assume.[26]

Of course, this does not mean that foreign military intervention in

Africa will cease. Outside powers still retain a capability for direct
involvement if important national interests are believed at stake. A
new, more difficult military environment in Africa, however, will likely
call into question how important certain interests really are when
military force is required to defend them.

TOWARD NATIONAL ARMIES

Aside from size, resources and capabilities, there is a more basic
change occurring in African military establishments. Their roles are
changing as they move toward becoming national armies. During this
metamorphosis, in which we have reached a middle stage, the military is
becoming more aligned with the nations' international comportment. In
doing so it is evolving toward an instrument of national interest with a
greater orientation toward external problems.

At the time of independence African armies had insignificant roles
(with the exception of internal security), outdated equipment, and often
lacked a tradition of their own. Armies which had played no part in
achieving independence had little status.[27]

As Crocker pointed out in 1974, the British and French territories
achieved sovereignty with a remarkably low level of defense capability
that had direct implications for the continent's international rela-
tions: in the most basic sense, African states lacked the traditional
tools which nations possess to shape or alter their external environ-
ment. Within black Africa, armed forces have hardly begun to play their
national role as instruments in the evolution of African power balances
and conflict patterns.[28]

But, as ideological and other differences between states have become
clearer and more embedded in institutional arrangements, numerous states

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are evolving conceptions of their own interests.[29] As these interests are defined and identified as national goals, the armed forces grow in stature. In general terms, African countries are experiencing a gradual nationalization of their armed forces.[30] The development of established national systems also contributes to this changing role of the military. After having been important chiefly as internal security forces working to preserve national unity, they are becoming elements in national security in an international environment.[31]

Most observers agree that the external role of the military in Africa is becoming more prominent, but few would go so far as to say that it will equal or surpass the internal role. Some believe that African concerns with external defense and internal security are evening out. Others state that greater emphasis on external defense will apply only in isolated cases where a legitimate threat materializes. Colin Legum has struck a middle ground in stating that external defense concerns will become larger than they have been in the past, in some cases as important as internal securiy. African states will generally become more involved with defense, but most will still be more concerned with internal security.[32]

Firmer national identities in African states also helps to promote national armies and vice versa. Tanzania is an example of a country where a growing sense of national unity was accomplished by a substantial buildup of the armed forces. The Army then performed effectively in the war with Uganda, which was national effort.[33]

Looking toward the end of the century, Welch foresees African armed forces that are more representative of the diversity of their states, and that are characterized by much greater cohesion. They will have

come, as he says, closer to the national army model than to some
slightly modified ex-colonial military organization.[34] By that time the
transition for the majority of African armed forces is likely to have
been completed.

THE MILITARY IMBALANCE

In the latter part of the colonial period the great powers enforced
a balance of power in Africa as an extention of their policies in
Europe. After World War II this artificial, externally maintained
balance all but vanished with independence. As African armies grew in
the post-independence era, military imbalance became the rule, and it
has been growing more acute year by year. As alluded to earlier, uneven
military growth in Africa tends to promote both the chances of armed
conflict and the severity of it. This section focuses on the widening
gap in military power between African states and its consequences.

More than the mere availability of greater military power, the
growing disparity in military capability between African states
increases the chances of seeking military solutions. As African states
become more differentiated by wealth, power, and military capability,
more not less conflict can be expected between them.[35] Military power
is the main component of this trend which is changing the African inter-
state system as well as the military environment.

The African interstate system in its original post-independence
state was characterized by certain norms that proved fairly effective
barriers to armed conflict between states. These norms included sub-
scription to territorial integrity, the stability of borders, noninter-
ference in the internal affairs of other countries, self-determination,
and recourse to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to mediate

disputes.[36] This preventive system is being eroded by the ever widening gap between militarily weak and strong nations.

It seems likely that certain African countries will manifest military strength far in excess of their neighbors. This being the case, military desparities will make conflict between states more feasible. Once a country has the military capability to take effective action against a neighbor, the more likely it is to use that capability.[37]

There are those who argue, however, that even with serious military imbalances on the continent, political pressures for seeking peaceful solutions to bilateral problems will continue to defuse many potential military conflict situations. Some believe that such pressures will still be a factor, especially if the OAU overcomes its divisive tenden- cies and if a multinational African military force is formed. In any case, national interests to use acquired military force seem likely to be pitted against a sense of Pan-African responsibility to use restraint.[38]

Others see self-restraint as growing along with military power. Although military stratification will grow more intense and power imbal- ances will be exacerbated, they believe this is insufficient to neces- sarily cause more conflict. Growth in military power, they argue, can be accompanied by political maturity and restraint.[39] There is little doubt in the author's mind, however, that these political pressures — whether international or self-generated — will be less effective in preventing armed clashes from erupting as the imbalance of military power in Africa becomes more pronounced. This is not meant to create the image of wide-spread, uncontrolled warfare sweeping the continent, but to establish that the potential for armed conflict will be signifi- cantly enhanced.

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The trends already discussed point obliquely toward another blossoming feature of Africa's military environment: the development of regional military powers. These regional powers will be the states where the attainment of significant military proficiency will be generally recognized, and where a capability will exist to influence events (i.e. intervene) beyond their borders. In some instances, regional sub-Saharan powers may become more important than non-African powers in resolving local conflicts. These powers will be capable of waging conventional warfare on a significant scale within the local area, and of projecting their military influence farther afield through the provision of military advisors, equipment, and even small combat forces.

The coming of regional military powers is all but certain. The evolution of medium powers worldwide also applies to Africa. Already a few states on the continent have emerged as regional powers and this trend will continue.[40] What is less clear is whether their emergence is likely to have a positive or negative effect on conflict resolution efforts. As key states consolidate their power and establish effective regional leadership, they could serve as a force for peace and stability. Or, they could touch off new rivalries, new conflict and further competition between indigenous states and between aspiring foreign patrons.[41]

It is also questionable as to how far emerging powers will be able to project their influence militarily. They will be quite capable of going into neighboring countries, but more distant areas remains uncertain. For deployments at great distances from the home ground, external support from an outside power would very likely be required.[42]

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Detrimental to achieving regional power status, are the severe internal problems that beset many of the larger countries. Of the three countries we shall examine as current regional powers (South Africa, Ethiopia, and Nigeria), all suffer from internal weakness that detract from their image. While it is true that internal strife prevents them at times from acting as regional leaders, it has also contributed to their amassing the military power requried to achieve regional prominence. One need only look at the expansion of Nigeria's army during the civil war, Ethiopia's massive build up in response to internal and external threats, and South Africa's steady gain in power over the past decade as white rule in southern Africa contracted and the liberation struggle pressed in on the its borders.[43]

Among military powers -- both actual and potential -- in sub-Saharan Africa there are three contries that stand out. A case can be made that South Africa, Ethiopia and Nigeria have become or are becoming African military powers. South Africa is widely regarded as the strongest state south of the Sahara, and has been identified as a permanent power in southern Africa. It is the only state in the entire region comparable to a medium-sized European power.[44]

A recent thorough study of South Africa's security situation maintains that the country experienced an increased militarization during the second half of the 1970s. The evidence given includes increased threat perception, a sharp rise in defense spending, more military involvement in policymaking, and a mobilization of the population.[45] One can only conclude that Pretoria's military capacity is growing.

Although few would argue South Africa's regional power position, there are those who question the country's reputation of preponderant strength and invincibility. They point out gaps in Pretoria's military

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armor in the areas of arms supply, military technology, training, manpower resources, and military isolation.[46]

Ethiopia is much less recognized as an important regional power even though it is probably the strongest black African state. Detractors point to its lack of economic potential, problems of national unity, and the threat of foreign intervention.[47] Nevertheless, the post-1974 coup expansion of the Ethiopian Army cannot be ignored. The army became the vanguard of the Ethiopian Revolution; the force to secure it against all threats.[48] The US-trained Ethiopian military adopted well to Soviet equipment during intense training in 1977-78.[49] Ethiopia is one of the few sub-Saharan states currently capable of readily absorbing modern arms and converting them into military capability.

Ethiopia's future as a military power will be dependent to a large extent on continued good relations with the Soviet Union, and this is far from assured. If a rupture in Ethio-Soviet relations occurs, it is doubtful that any other country would be willing to supply the expanded Ethiopian forces. Should the Ethiopians fail to subdue the active insurgencies they face on several fronts, it is possible that the Soviets could come to recognize the potential of the guerrillas and dramatically shift their support to the ethnic minorities in revolt.[50]

Nigeria is regarded widely as having impressive military potential bolstered by its population and oil wealth. Nigeria has emerged as a regional power at least in West Africa, if not a continental power. Clearly it influences issues continent wide, although in stictly military terms its power is more regional.[51] In the long-term, Nigeria probably has more military potential than any other black state.

Aside from the big three powers, there are a number of other countries that have some potential in the long term to develop as military powers in their respective areas. A few states mentioned in this category are Zimbabwe, Zaire, and Senegal. There is a wide divergence of opinion here, however, with some arguing that Tanzania already is a regional power, and others advocating the military potential of countries such as Kenya and the Cameroon.

The emergence of regional military powers within Africa is a characteristic of the changing military environment, a product of growing capabilities. These changes are likely to have an important effect on the major zones of conflict in Eastern and southern Africa.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MAJOR ZONES OF CONFLICT

At the risk of reducing all major future conflicts to two geographic areas of Africa, this section will address how the changing military environment may impact on smouldering confrontations in southern Africa and the Horn. Of course, significant conflicts can occur outside these two areas; the Tanzania-Uganda War for one is proof of that. But it is these two well-worn areas of crisis that are likely to produce the most significant conflict with the most far-reaching results.

In southern Africa, the question is whether South Africa's military power can keep pace with the growing threat from insurgent forces and the nearby black states that support them. If South Africa is loosing ground, how long will it be before a significant charge in the military balance occurs?

South Africa is committed to insuring that the military equation in its region does not turn to its disadvantage. Many astute observers believe South Africa is capable of achieving this, even during a transi-

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tion to a political power sharing arrangement with its multiracial populations. South Africa will remain, it is said, the dominant military power in its region through the transition period, i.e. the next 10 to 20 years. Only the introduction of a major outside power could upset the present military balance.[52]

Crocker summarized the South African approach when he wrote that Pretoria will maintain a tough external posture with the aim of pre-empting the establishment of guerrilla bases in neighboring countries, detering an Afro-Cuban conventional threat, and raising the price for any possible Soviet intervention.[53] Jaster and others believe that Pretoria can succeed with this strategy. South Africa will continue to almost certainly defeat any conventional attack through at least 1990, with the possibility of major power participation in such an assault, similarly remote.[54] Intensive South African defense planning is designed to perpetuate the existing military balance and is probably based on worst case scenarios of the threats facing Pretoria.

There are those who maintain, however, that South Africa has embarked upon a military race with black Africa that it cannot win in the long run; that its attempts to fall back and defend the laager can only postpone an inevitable reversal in the military balance, a change that will yield political reform or revolution. The impregnability of white South Africa is coming under scrutiny. Conventional beliefs about the country's unassailability, its capacity to survive as a white minority state in the face of mounting threats, must be evaluated in light of vastly new conditions which have arisen. The 'citadel assumption' is an overstated premise, a fundamental misperception of the changing strategic balance in southern Africa.[55]

To prevent the military situation in southern Africa from turning against it, South Africa has opted for an aggressive defense in addition to improving its own military potential. This consists of cross border raids on guerrilla bases, and a closely related campaign of destabilizing those nearby countries that support the guerrillas. The apparent success of the cross-border raids has persuaded South Africa's leaders that aggressiveness achieves results while concessions do not.[56]

There are two points to be made here concerning the raids. First, their tactical success may in fact hasten Pretoria's long term decline in relative military strength. The black states will react to what they see as South African aggression by taking further steps to improve their security, in effect speeding up their military development. Thus, a causal relationship exists between South African efforts to thwart insurgents based in neighboring black states, and efforts by those states to build up their military forces.[57]

A second point is that South African forces must be able to successfully conduct these raids with great precision, minimizing losses, and intimidating its foes. Mere tactical success is not enough. Pretoria must be able to operate with impunity. Should this overwhelming operational capability begin to fade, it will indicate the military balance is beginning to shift against Pretoria. If so, the most telling change we are likely to see in the military situation in southern Africa, will be South Africa's loss of the ability to conduct cross-border raids with the ease that it currently does.[58]

The destabilization effort includes, but is far from limited to, the cross-border raids. Although South Africa would like to see a stable region in southern Africa that it could dominate economically, it feels it has no choice but to destabilize those countries that support

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the black liberation movements that threaten white rule.[59] Sustained
military and subversive interference by Pretoria in the affairs of
regional states raises the prospect of South Africa becoming a neo-
imperialist power capable of manipulating the affairs of black states.
This shift in strategic thinking in Pretoria is probably a sign of
weakness, in that South African leaders believe such a devious destabili-
zation effort is necessary.[60]

The threat of a black multinational force challenging South Africa
is given much less credence than the growing guerrilla threat. Never-
theless, there are those who believe that the greater mobility and fire-
power of black African armies will make some form of coalition warfare
against South Africa at least more feasible.[61]

The military threat facing South Africa may be seen as building
momentum as white controlled buffer states to the north are replaced by
black regimes of growing military potential. This trend will not neces-
sarily produce a showdown with white South Africa, but will gradually
widen the struggle in scope. A permanent state of low intensity warfare
along South Africa's northern borders seems one likely result, as the
black states come to grips with confronting South African raids. On, as
Colin Legum has said, "What seems likely is that white South Africa will
find itself in a state of isolation on the continent and probably also
in a state of siege."[62]

Turning to the Horn of Africa, we find Ethiopia the dominant mili-
tary power. The consequences of Ethiopian power are often not recog-
nized because of the severe insurgency affecting the country. However,
should Ethiopia succeed in consolidating its revolution, its military
preeminence on the Horn could have several possible results: the draw-

ing of Djibuti and Somalia into Addis Ababa's orbit, a subversive threat to the Sudan backed by Ethiopian power, Ethiopian involvement on the Arabian peninsula in support of South Yemen, and conceivably intervention in Kenya should that country experience extreme instability.

Despite military commitments at home, Ethiopia has produced a force structure large enough to employ surplus military forces elsewhere. The Military Balance credits the army with 225,000 troops organized into 17 divisions with over 800 tanks. This force has operated effectively against the Somalis and initially against the Eritrean rebels in 1978. Earlier this year Africa Confidential reported that Ethiopia was preparing a military campaign of unparalleled size against guerrillas in Entrea and Tigre provinces. Some ten divisions with 100,000 troops were likely to be involved.[63]

Ethiopian leaders have alluded to the use of their forces beyond their borders. In 1977 LTC Mengistu Haile-Mariam, Chairman of Ethiopia's Provisional Military Administrative Council, threatened a counter-invasion of Somalia.[64] In 1978 Mengistu promised to repay his debt to the socialist world by carrying forward the torch of prolitarian internationalism, a reference to support for wars of national liberation.[65] In 1981 Ethiopia, along with its allies Libya and South Yemen, affirmed their backing of the Front Line States in southern Africa which have become the targets of South Africa. They appealed for all possible assistance to these states, particularly Angola and Mozambique, in their battle against repeated invasions.[66]

Ethiopia has always been the most important country on the Horn from a geopolitical standpoint. The advent of Ethiopian military power and the Ethiopian Revolution have given Addis Ababa the opportunity to asert itself over its long time rivals in the region. Provided that the

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revolution does not become a permanent source of discord, and the regional insurgencies do not constitute a serious threat to the central government, Ethiopia will have the power to reshape the Horn of Africa politically and extend its influence into contiguous areas possibly including the southwestern Arabian peninsula.

AFRICAN MULTINATIONAL FORCES

Having discussed the probability — that Africa's changing military environment is likely to produce more rather than less conflict, it is appropriate to look at a conflict supression mechanism that has been an African goal since independence. A greater need will exist for an African multinational force to help police the continent. The desire among sub-Saharan states for such a force will grow as regional security problems threaten further outside intervention. The question is whether Africa can produce such a force, and whether it can be effective.

Africa watchers are beginning to believe the chances for a multinational force are improving. Some believe that it will be organized either by the OAU on a continental scale, or based more regionally. Certainly by the end of the century the OAU could be expected to have developed a more sophisticated means for conflict resolution than the ad hoc approach of consulting national leaders and organizing temporary peace-keeping forces.[67]

The greatest impetus for a multinational force will continue to be the desire to preclude non-African military intervention (whether direct or indirect) and the subsequent internationalization of local disputes. No doubt, persistent ethnic, religious, territorial and ideological conflicts will provide attractive openings for outside powers who would

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intervene to gain political leverage in the region.[68] Bilateral con-
flicts, civil wars, and the liberating effort in the south, will all
present fertile ground for foreign involvements. The Africans' desire
to avoid such foreign entanglements, will continue to be the greatest
incentive for creating a multinational force.

Other factors favoring a Pan-African force include concern over the
political instability of many countries, and the growth of economic and
political integration. Progress toward a multinational force is likely
to be gradual, however. It has taken 20 years to get a draft written on
an OAU force, and according to some sources, it may take another 20
years to take a decision on it. Within the next 10 years, however, a
catalyst may arise to speed up the process and make the force a real-
ity.[69] Such a catalyst could take the form of a military-political
crisis that threatened or produced serious foreign intervention.

How such a multinational African military force would be created
and the long recognized obstacles overcome, is another area of divergent
opinion. Such a force may be more regionally oriented than continental,
perhaps constructed around a regional organization such as ECOWAS (The
Economic Community of West African States). Its affiliation with the
OAU could be more nominal than actual. It could be built around one or
two main participant states that would determine its mission, specific
objectives, and political coloration. And, conceivably more than one
force could be formed. One near certainty is that the most significant
African military forces, such as Nigeria and Ethiopia, would play a
leading role in the force's organization and staffing.

Some sources question the chances of a really effective multina-
tional force in the foreseeable future, but concede that regional secu-
rity arrangements tied to specific problems could materialize. Nigeria

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is mentioned as the leader of a possible West Africa grouping.[70] Legum agrees that multiple groupings of African forces are possible either under the OAU or regionally. He points out though, that such a southern Africa grouping would have to be continental in scope with the participation of the significant African military forces.[71]

In the absence of an OAU force, it is possible that an outside power could support a regionally oriented African force. The superpowers need not directly back such an effort. Medium powers, or lesser countries willing to supply the financial resources, could play a key role in getting a multinational force off the ground. In any case, the possibility of such an African force will be more realistic in the coming years.

FOREIGN AND AFRICAN INTERVENTION FORCES

As previously discussed, the outlook is for less direct military intervention in Africa by outside powers. This does not mean, however, that foreign powers will not be attracted to African conflicts. They could play more subtle roles short of direct intervention or involvement through surrogates. An increase in military conflicts will create more opportunities for outside involvement. Rival African forces in local struggles tend to seek foreign support to strengthen their own positions. This can cause an internationalization of local conflicts depending on how the outside powers see their own interests.[72] The tendency for each side to secure external allies is strong despite the desire to limit outside influence in African affairs. The success of one conflict participant in seeking foreign backing, encourages the other to do likewise. Recognition that the side failing to secure

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adequate outside help will be at a disadvantage, tends to encourage this process.[73]

The OAU, while thus far not being able to organize a Pan-African army, has ironically sanctioned intervention by non-African powers in the name of state sovereignty. This has contributed to the altering of the African interstate system. Basing their foreign policy more clearly on what they perceive as their own interests, African states not party to a dispute are inclined to support or reject outside intervention in that dispute depending on whether they are in support of, or opposition to, a particular regime.[74]

The prospects for intervention must also be seen in light of the success or failure to organize a multinational force. The lack of such an indigenous military resource would continue to leave a vacuum to be filled directly or indirectly by non-African powers. In looking at the legacy of recent important African military conflicts, none has been settled without foreign involvement. Significant conflicts tend to draw in outside intervention, and this is facilitated by the logistical weaknesses of African armies.[75]

Most observers believe that the role of non-African proxy forces is waning. We may see a new wrinkle in this practice, however; namely the use of African forces for unilateral intervention in local conflicts. The trend toward African solutions for African problems has resulted in more interference by some African states in the affairs of their neighbors.[76] To the extent that an African country intervening military in some local dispute between other African parties aligns itself with a major external power, it can be argued that it is in fact supporting the geopolitical interests of that power. This may well be based on a commonality of interests rather than adherance to any specific direction

from outside. For example, it has been suggested that to support their position abroad, the Soviets would rather use the Ethiopians in Africa and the Cubans in Latin America.[77] Whether or not such unilaterial military involvements by African states can be classified as surrogate functions, some states will have the capability to step in and help decide local conflicts.

FUTURE WARFARE

The type of warfare we are apt to witness in Africa will also change. Up until now unconventional, guerrilla and counterguerrilla operations have been by far the most frequent form of military conflict south of the Sahara. Conventional warfare will become a more prominent feature of the African scene because more conflicts will occur between established governments, and because these interstate contests will be the most significant form of war in Africa.[78]

The guerrilla wars that have beset Africa for decades are themselves becoming more conventional. That is, they have tended to develop conventional dimensions. To some degree this can be explained as part of a normal progression from the hit-and-run tactics of the early stages of an armed insurgency, to the more set piece clashes of the later stages. The availability of modern weapons, training and host nation support has in the African situation tended to short circuit or at least accelerate this process. In Namibia and southern Angola for example, the increasing use of sophisticated weapons by both the SWAPO (South-West Africa People's Organization) guerrillas and South African counterguerrilla forces has inflated casualty figures. The SWAPO insurgents use ground-to-air missiles and multiple rocket launchers,

while the government uses more air power. And in Ethiopia, insurgents are organized into larger conventional-type formations. The Tigre Peoples Liberation Front now talks of conducting conventional operations at brigade strength (i.e. units of 2,000 + men).[79] The distinction between conventional and guerrilla wars will become less clear.

The recurring frequency of interstate disputes — often based on boundary issues — coupled with the greater capacity to engage in combat operations, seems likely to yield more conventional type wars. Further, it has been predicted that the ability of the OAU to use its influence to preserve existing boundaries will have become greatly weakened by the end of the century.[80] Conventional wars may not become the most characteristic African wars by number, but they will be more common than in the past. A careful study of future conflicts will probably indicate an increasing number that can be categorized as low intensity, conventional wars.

African warfare in general will become more orthodox if not more sophisticated by world standards. This will raise the prospect of greater damage to the countries participating as heavier, more devastating weapons are brought into play. It will also pose a threat to the often delicate infrastructures of African states. The costs of these modern African wars could be minimized by two factors. First, it is possible that better trained African officers will use their weapons selectively thereby reducing damage. Second, because many of these interstate conflicts will be border wars, the area of combat and physical destruction may be restricted to border areas.[81]

It seems more likely, however, that expanding African military capabilities and the loosening of past inhibitions against using military force will increase the scope, duration, destructiveness, and

lethality of future conflicts.[82] Although accurate casualty information from recent wars is lacking, they have in some cases been heavy. In the Ogaden War Somalia had three brigades totalling 6,000 men routed at the battle for Jijjiga alone.[83] The belief that African wars have few if any pitched battles may also be bankrupt.

LESSONS LEARNED

Perhaps with the exception of the Nigerian Civil War 1967-70, the three most significant military conflicts in terms of show casing military trends in the region, were fought between 1975 and 1979. Each can tell us something about the changing pulse of African military conditions, and together point to some future trends. The point for analysis here is whether these three wars in Angola, the Ogaden and Uganda were unique occurrances or do they represent some precendent.

The Angolan Civil War 1975-76, can be seen as ushering in a new military age in sub-Saharan Africa. For the first time modern weapons such as tanks and heavy rocket launches were used in quantity and on a large, country-wide scale. The opposing Angolan faces, which were heavily backed by foreign troops, contested for the control of territory in fighting that was sometimes conventional and sometimes unconventional. According to students of the Angolan War, the rapid advances and retreats of the opposing forces — especially when their was a discrepancy in capability — was one outstanding feature of the fighting. The presence of more heavy weapons on one side was often the determining factor. An organized attacking force had to do little more than shell the target and make a show of force to persuade the defending garrison to leave the field. The MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of

Angola — Marxist forces), the South Africans, and the Cubans all reportedly did this in turn.[84]

The 1977-78 Ogaden War was Africa's most modern war to date. It had many features reminiscent of recent conventional wars in other parts of the Third World. It featured a calculated military invasion, the use of large ground forces equipped with armor and artillery, and the effective use of airpower by Ethiopian which played a significant role in determining battlefield results. The timing of the July 1977 Somali invasion of the Ogaden was well chosen. The Somali forces were at the peak of readiness while the Ethiopians were caught in a transition between military suppliers, not to mention the upheaval of their revolution and menacing insurgencies in the countryside. The initial result was a series of quick Somali victories that won them control of over virtually the entire Ogaden area by mid-August.[85]

Initially Somali tactics succeeded, but the invaders seemed to lack a coherent strategy that defined their ultimate military and political goals and the methods to achieve them. It is almost as if Somali capability on the ground out paced Mogadicio's ability to harness it to a well crafted strategy. Even without dwelling on specific Somali planning weaknesses, it seems evident that the Somali Army could not have defeated Ethiopia in the long run because of the disparity in military potential between the two countries. The massive support Ethiopia received from the USSR and Cuba only speeded up Somalia's ultimate defeat.

By late 1977 it was becoming clear that the Somali cause in the Ogaden would be lost. The end came in March 1978 when an Ethiopian division and a Cuban brigade bypassed the mountainous front barring the way to Somali-held Jijjiga, out flanking the Somali right and attacking

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from the north with strong air support.[86] This maneuvering was indicative of the level of conventional warfare in the Ogaden.

The Tanzania-Uganda War 1978-79 from the beginning lacked credibility, and seems to have been fought despite all logic. One lesson is that a serious conflict can develop from frivolous initial stimulation -- in this case Idi Amin's brief occupation of Tanzania's Kagera Salient. It is unlikely that Tanzania set out to overthrow Amin and march all the way to the Sudanese border, but they were surprised by the lack of opposition to their probes into Uganda after reoccupying the Kagera Salient. There is evidence that Dar es Salaam was cautious, fearing it would overextend itself militarily. Tanzania is one of the world's poorest countries. The cost of the war must have been an immense strain. Tanzania could not have afforded to fight a more vigorous war against Uganda; the real wonder is that it was able to fight the war at all.[87] Thus, in some instances at least, a lack of economic resources does not seem to prevent military action.

On the Ugandan side, an army employed to keep a ruthless dictator in power proved totally inadequate in defending against a well defined external threat. Amin's army was successful in the internal security role, but was helpless against an organized African invasion force.

There are some factors common to all three of these wars, and they all reflect the changing military environment. Modern weapons, including jet combat aircraft, were used with varying effectiveness in all three conflicts. In each case a significant capability to mobilize manpower to expand the force, and other resources to support it, was demonstrated. Logistic defficiencies were often overcome by makeshift solutions. In all three wars the object or operational art, was to

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maneuver to gain control of territory — strategic areas. The level of fighting varied considerably in each conflict, reaching peaks and valleys depending on the availability of logistical support at any given time. All three wars would be categorized as low intensity by global standards, but by African standards they were major efforts. Finally, in two of the three conflicts outside intervention played a crucial role.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize this discussion, which attempts to sketch in the outline of a changing military environment, I will list its main characteristics which the reader should be left to ponder.

— The military situation in sub-Saharan Africa is dynamic, and change will continue to occur. Stereotypes about the African military are becoming obsolete.

— African armies have reached a watershed as they move toward becoming national armies, and they will be increasingly important as international actors.

— Military capability in Africa South of the Sahara is increasing and so is the propensity to use it.

— Callous military intervention by small non-African forces will be more difficult and risky.

— The imbalance of military power in Africa is becoming more precarious; regional military powers are emerging and will be significant factors in local conflicts and regional security.

— The chances are improving for the creation of an African multinational military force or forces, while the prospects

for direct foreign military involvement in regional disputes is waning.

— Conventional-type warfare will occur more frequently than previously (although not more often than unconventional guerrilla wars), with the probability of more damaging results for the infrastructures of African states.

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TABLE 1

PERSONNEL STRENGTHS OF AFRICAN ARMED FORCES
(ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE) ROUNDED TO THE NEAREST THOUSAND

	1966	1971	1976	1981
Angola*	-	-	30	33
Benin	2	NA	2	3
Botswana*	-	-	-	2
Burundi	1	NA	NA	6
Cameroon	4	NA	6	7
C.A.R.	1	NA	NA	2
Chad	1	NA	5	3
Congo	2	NA	7	10
Djibuti*	-	-	-	2
Ethiopia	35	43	51	230
Gabon	1	NA	NA	2
Ghana	17	19	18	15
Guinea	5	5	6	10
Guinea-Bissau*	-	-	NA	6
Ivory Coast	4	4	4	7
Kenya	5	7	8	15
Liberia	3	NA	5	5
Madagascar	4	4	5	20
Malawi	1	NA	2	5
Mali	4	NA	4	5
Mauritania	1	NA	5	8
Mozambique*	-	-	NA	27
Niger	1	NA	2	2
Nigeria	12	252	230	156
Rwanda	2	NA	4	5
Senegal	6	6	6	10
Sierra Leone	1	NA	2	3
Somalia	10	15	25	63
South Africa	22	44	52	93
Sudan	19	28	49	71
Tanzania	2	11	15	45
Togo	2	NA	2	4
Uganda	6	9	21	8
Upper Volta	2	NA	3	4
Zaire**	32	46	43	22
Zambia	3	6	8	16
Zimbabwe***	4	5	9	34

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*--Armed forces did not exist in the earlier years.
**--Early years' figures may have included the gendarmerie.
***--Early years' figures probably do not include reserves mobilized for counterinsurgency
        duty.
NA--Not Available.

Source: The Military Balance 1970-71, 1975-76 and 1981-82, and Adelphi Paper #27,
        1966. All items published by the IISS, London.

TABLE 2

NUMBERS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES POSSESSING
SELECTED ITEMS OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT

	Tanks	Light Armor	Field Arty	SAMs	MSL Boats	Jet Cmbt Acft	Helicopters
1966	2	13	7	0	0	6	9
1971	7	14	10	1	0	10	11
1976	12	29	19	2	2	15	22
1981	18	36	36	8	6	21	31

Definitions

Tanks=All from MBTs (main battle tanks) to light tanks.

Light Armor=Armored cars, Armored Personnel Carriers, Infantry Fighting
Vehicles, etc. Excludes "homemade" lightly armored trucks.

Field Arty=All sizes, self-propelled and towed.

SAMs=All permanent and mobile launchers, excluding hand-held/shoulder-fired weapons.

Missile Boats=All vessels smaller than major combatant size that mount surface-to-
surface missiles.

Jet Combat Aircraft=All, including combat capable trainers, listed in source
material as combat aircraft.

Helicopters=All regardless of service assignment.

Source: The Military Balance, IISS London 1971-72, 1976-77 & 1981-82; and
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