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Utility of Military Strategy as an Instrument of Foreign Policy (Pp 217-231)

Ebaye, Sunday E. N. - Department of General Studies, (Peace & Conflict Studies Unit), Cross River University of Technology Calabar- Nigeria

E-mail: sundayebaye@yahoo.com

GSM: 08027511954

Abstract

In the pursuit of foreign policy objectives, states adopt different strategies, one of which is military strategy. This research has taken a critical appraisal of state actors in the international system, and the utility of military power as an instrument of foreign policy. The paper asserts as Osgood did, that one of the main prerequisite of a credible state actor is to develop the military compatibilities and political will, to back its diplomacy by force when necessary. For the use of force is considered as the ultimate tool of international relations following the Clausewitzian conception of war as the continuation of politics by other means. However, as Klaus Knorr rightly concluded in his typology, in either case, whether used defensively or offensively, military power lends a measure of international freedom of action to the state involved (Knorr in Bassey 2005:26). Thus, affirming the political theory of war which argues basically that, in a world system of competing states, the basis of diplomacy, and of all contractual obligations beyond the boundaries of the state rest on the capacity to use (the diplomacy of) violence, both to protect the state, and to protect one's interest in the face of opposition from other states.

Introduction

The capacity of states to defend themselves and their evident willingness to do so provides the basic framework within which the business of international negotiation is carried on (Howard cited in Bassey 2005:21-22).

The above assertion is in tandem with Osgood's position that military strategy occupies a fundamental place in a country's foreign policy. In the pursuit of states foreign policies and to bolster their national goals, statesmen of different nations regulatory pursue incompatible objectives in the international arena. This conflict of interest varies in many ways. One state may have far more important interest at stake than the others and perceived greater issues in the conflict episode. The manners in which statesmen pursue their goals also vary in some instances, a state may pursue its interest by bringing immense resources such as large military forces, allies, or embargoes on products crucial to others to the support of the issue it perceived to be at stake.

The issue at stake and the resources the state is able to bring to support its interest form the structure of a conflict.

The issue at stake in a particular conflict of interest, and or the resources available for supporting these issues may be such that a state will prefer to stand its grounds or if necessary escalate its conflict activity in order to secure its interest. In situations where both states and parties to a conflict have the same preference, the structure of the conflict is then akin to the game theorist's concept of the prisoner's dilemma where no party to the conflict wants to back down in respect to what it perceived to be the central issue. An attempt by one party to challenge the other on this issue, will lead to the other party standing its ground. The conflict episode will therefore persist and probably escalate.

An alternative structure exist when a party does not perceive sufficiently important interest to be at stake in a conflict or does not have the resources suitable for this particular instance and so prefers to acquiesce in the face of an adversary who appears willing to escalate the conflict. This acquiescence is akin to the 'chicken game' theory where a party with a chicken preference will give grounds before an adversary who appears to be committed to winning its way on the issue field. These conflicts structures are always present in the relations between states, thus, an important variable for

statesmen in the accurate identification of the structure underlying any particular conflict of interest. Inaccurate identification of the structure of conflict of the interest could lead to grave consequences because each structure calls for a different strategy. Just as statesmen have difficulties identifying the structures of a particular conflict, they also have difficulty in applying the strategies appropriate for these structures. However, strategy merges with the conduct of states activities abroad implying foreign policy.

Foreign policy implies the instrument upon which the interest generated by the national goals of the state are protected and advanced. The strategies for attaining these goals are said to be the core determinants of foreign policy. A country's foreign policy is a set of political goals that seeks to outline how that particular country will interact with other countries of the world. It is a

complex and dynamic cause of action that a nation follows in relation to other states policies on specific issues as well as commitments to certain positions on the current forms of interest and objectives ... in international relations and the means and methods by which it pursues them (the Brookings institution 1975, 375, cited in Eminue, 2006).

As such foreign policies are generally designed to help protect a country's national interest, national security, ideological goals, and economic prosperity. This can occur through peaceful cooperation with other states, aggression, war and or exploitation (Wikipedia, cited in Haukkala 2006). The means and methods open to states may include strategic planning which implies states decisions to employ armed forces impressively in their pursuit of national goals by exerting influence and making covert inputs on the output of other states policies.

Military Strategy as an Instrument of Bargaining

... Whether conceived in terms of its direct or indirect employment, military power has become in the modern era, the legally sanctioned instrument of violent which states use in their relations with each other and when necessary in an international security role (Bassey 2005:24).

When diplomacy breaks down or seems to promise little, states today, as in the past, at times resort to the use of armed forces in their relations as a strategy to enforce their interest. Force can be used to seize objectives or to apply sufficient pressure to persuade an adversary to negotiate. Hostilities

may continue while the war is on in order to induce concessions and adopt acceptable terms of settlement. Thus, cost benefit analysis or rational calculations underline decisions and that war is a deliberate, conscious policy designed to achieve political goals. State men pursue goals and strategies meant to acquire a slice of territory, complex, as in trying to remake an enemy's entire political system or to alter the world balance of power. War could be based on simple or limited objectives and confined to geographically narrow limits. These are easier to resolve or win than wars that involve complex goals, many regions or many participants. For instance, Adolph Hitler carried out a systematic plan to conquer Western Europe, and therefore strategically was rational, although his ultimate goals; world domination and selective genocide, were diabolical and demented (Bonchucks 2002).

Some statesmen calculate the expected utility before employing military strategy. These may consist of the values or priorities the nation attaches to outcomes that might stem from a war, or the willingness of the nation to take risks, and an estimate of key possibilities such as the possibility of winning an armed struggle against one or opponents, the probabilities of receiving assistance from other actors, and the probabilities of encountering opposition from state and non- states actors. War is therefore a planned strategy for political goals. Thus when emotions become involved in international violence, Freud argued. They inevitably give way to unlimited and unreasonable applications of force. Freud believes that humans have a life and dead instinct and culture should be shaped to control destructive impulses (Freud, 1953). Human instinct to violence, complex emotions of fear, frustration, and anger arising from crisis moments, a high degree of threat, finite time frame as in hijacking, involvement of the highest foreign policy establishment in the decision process during a crisis situation, are all war potentials.

Since 1945, there has been the paucity of war involvement by countries considered to be major powers and, in particular, the absence of war involvement between major powers themselves; in spite of the crisis and confrontations in which the USA and the USSR supported their allies, e.g. Korea, Vietnam, Angola, etc, they did not fight each other in a war. In many instances, force has been used more as a political instrument or as raw military instrument. This is coercive diplomacy or diplomacy of violence, e.g- Israeli strategy of harsh reprisals against Arab states hosting Palestinian raiders or civil war between states which are legion (Bonchucks 2002).

Leaders weigh options and make decision based primarily on their strategic situation and an assessment of relative power. State autonomy vis-à-vis society, organizational politics, and civil-military relations can hinder the efficiency of statesmen responses to systemic imperatives. For instance, state capability, implying the extractive capacity of a state's central political institution, influences both the amount of military power a state can project in its foreign policy and the scope of its grand strategy (Desch 1996: 237-268). The gross distribution of power and the relative share of the international system's material capabilities that each state controls affect the capabilities that individual states carry out particular diplomatic and military strategies. This in turn influence the severity of the security dilemma between particular states or regional subsystems.

The possession of particular military technologies and weapons' systems influences the relative state with which a state can support its foreign policy and or threaten, or attack another in the pursuit of foreign policy. Military strategy may not necessarily be applied against the greatest threat in the international system but against states that pose an immediate threat to their foreign policies or survival (Waltz 1987:21-34 and 262-285). Waltz further holds that the needs for survival often force states to forgo mutual beneficial cooperation. Cooperation becomes difficult because states are sensitive to how it affects their current and future relative capabilities.

In the views of Mearsheimer, states must constantly worry about their survival because potential competitors may try to eliminate them at any time. He argued that "states operate in both international political environment and international economic environment, and the former dominates the latter in cases where the two come into conflict" (Mearsheimer 1992: 213-237).

This implies that states will heavily rely on military strategy and exert their capacity for armed coercion to support their foreign policies.

Thomas Christensen's domestic mobilization theory addresses the problem of how domestic politics constraints states' abilities to adjust their foreign policies (Christensen 1996: 256). In the late 1940s and 1950s the U.S and Chinese leaders fought to mobilize domestic resources to balance against the then USSR, but lacked sufficient national political power to do so as they pleased. President Harry Truman and Mao Zedong used domestically popular but unnecessary foreign policies in secondary areas as a diversion for necessary, but unpopular policies in primary areas. These secondary policies set in motion a chain of events culminating in the U.S subsequent Chinese

interventions in the Korean war and the 1959 Quemoy - matsu crisis (1996; 32-72, 194-241).

Considering the grand strategies of the superpowers during the cold war, Freiberg argues that while the capacity for armed coercion push the U.S and the then USSR toward confrontation in pursuit of their foreign policies, internal factors shaped the types of strategies each side adopted. In the case of the U.S, a combination of weak states institutions, the material interests of various societal actors, and embedded antistatist ideology eventually led to the pursuit of a flexible response strategy and a limited program of power creation. The former USSR on the other had lacked all of the countervailing domestic influences. As a result, during most of the cold war, the USSR pursued a more ambitious military doctrine, full war fighting, than the U.S and undertook a far expansive program of power creation (Friedberg 2000: 66 and 75).

The central theme running throughout this paper is that for any state to become an effective and credible international actor, able to shape its immediate environment and contribute to global peace and security, it must develop the military capabilities and political will to backup its foreign policy by force when necessary. Advocates of civilian power without armed coercion have argued that security today even for the super powers; consist in shaping the international milieu often in areas which at first sight have little to do with security.

Citing the case of Western Europe, Duchene wrote that Europe would be the first major areas of the old world where the age old process of war and direct violence could be translated into something more in tune with the twentieth century citizen's notion of civilized politics where its relative lack of military compatibilities would not be a problem (Duchene 1972; 43 -44). The civilian power concept was subsequently developed by Hans Maul and applied to West Germany and Japan (Maul 1990, 2000) Maul drew heavily on Nye's concepts of soft (or persuasive) power (Nye 1990), arguing that civilian power was committed to multilateral co-operation, institution - building and supranational integration rather than national pride, unilateralism and the unbridled defense of sovereignty.

They sought to 'civilianized' international relations by constraining the use of military force and strengthening the rule of law, the peaceful resolve of disputes and human rights. The concept of civilian power has been widely applied to the EU/ the EC as international actors (Hill 1990). These

arguments all reflect an influential line of reasoning rooted as Hedley Bull (1981) noted in the idealist and progressivist interpretations of international relations of the 1920s. For Bull, the views of Duchene, Nye, Keohane, and others, who emphasized factors such as the declining utility of military forces as a currency of power, the vitality of civilian power, the inadequacies of the state-centric paradigm and the power ideals, constituted the neo-progressive or the neo idealist approach of the 1970s. The approach has enjoyed a renewed lease of life with the end of the cold war.

The problem with the civilian power concept is that it ignores the strategic and geo-political context within which the European integration process developed. At the time Duchene wrote, Western Europe was locked into a bipolar confrontation with the USSR and its allies, and relied on NATO and the U.S nuclear and conventional forces for its security. France and the UK also possessed their own nuclear weapons, and most Western Europe countries based their defense around man conscript armies. What was then still call the EEC could only be a civilian power because of NATO and the US security guarantee. Bluntly speaking, the EC was a classic case of a free rider benefiting from security provided by others. As noted by Bull, the civilian power concept was a contradiction in terms because the power of influence exerted by EC and other such civilian actors was conditional upon a strategic environment provided by the military power of states, which they did not control. Europe, he concluded is not an actor in international affairs and does not seem likely to become one (Bull 1981: 151).

In the early 1970s, claims that inter dependence had led to low politics replacing military concerns at the top of the international agenda underpinned arguments that the militarily weak and politically disunited countries of Western Europe constituted a great civilian power. The hollowness of this claim was apparent from their behaviour after the 1973-74 oil crises. Not Western as any kind of power, but the separate states of Western Europe, responded to the crisis by behaving at once like Hens and Ostriches (Waltz 1979:152).

However, in recent years, the EU has developed in ways that cast doubt on the explanatory utility of self power' based theories such as civilian and normative power. Such theories have become increasingly marginal to the current debate on security and defense cooperation. It is beginning to emerge as a strategic actor in its own right with both hard and soft power capabilities

and is also acquiring the status of an actor in the sense of the ability not just to define its strategic interest, but to pursue them in policy initiative.

Structural realism would also suggest that whatever its original features may be, the pressure of the international system will lead it over time to acquire the attributes and capabilities of other states actors, in particular, a capacity for exercising coercive military power. Since the theory depicts international politics as a competitive system, Waltz argues, one predicts more specifically that states will display characteristics common to competitors. (1979:128) such as utilizing the capacity for armed coercion in the pursuit of their foreign policies.

Coercive Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

Brute force succeeds when it is used, whereas the power to hurt is most successful when held in reserve. It is the threat of damage, or of more damage to come, that can make someone yield or comply... (Schelling, 1966:3).

Coercion entails using what Schelling termed the 'diplomacy of violence' to influence the cost-benefit calculations of the adversary. In coercive strategies, diplomacy is backed up by just enough force of an appropriate kind to demonstrate resolution and to give credibility to the threat that greater force will be used if necessary' (George in Freedman, 1998: 20). The aim is to convince the target state of one's political resolve and military capabilities.

Even in deterrence strategy, important signaling, bargaining, and negotiating dimensions are built into the strategy of coercive diplomacy. Coercion involves the use of threat of force, or the limited use of force with the threat of further escalation, to change the decision making calculus of the target actor. Strategy, Hedley Bull argued, is the art or science of shaping means so as to promote ends in any given field of conduct' and involves 'exploiting military force so as to attain given objects of policy'. In any conflict situation, the strategic aim is to break the enemy's will to resist. There are many ways in which this can be achieved, but the classic distinction is that drawn by Thomas Schelling between what he termed 'brute force' and 'coercion' Brute force involves using military power in an all-out assault to destroy the target's military assets in order to remove his power to resist and impose one's will upon him. Coercion, on the other hand, involves the threat of force and, if that is insufficient, the actual use of limited force with the threat of more to come. The crucial point to note is that with coercion, in

contrast to strategies employing brute force, the target retains an element of free choice.

The distinguishing feature of coercion, as Lawrence Freedman points out, is that, the target is never denied choice, but must weight the choices between the cost of compliance and of non-compliance (1998:36). The perfection of strategy, offers the prospect of achieving foreign policy goals without serious fighting or undue cost in blood or coin, yet coercive strategies are notoriously difficult to devise and implement, and the historical records is not particularly promising.

Four problems in particular stand out: Coercion involves a spectrum of military force from threats to the actual use of force. It can be seen as a form of “limited war”, particularly in its emphasis on politics, diplomacy and psychological factors (Kissinger 1957).

The problem here is that military force is a notoriously blunt instrument, which is more like a sledgehammer than a scalpel. Using force discriminately and effectively is difficult, military strategy in crisis management situations must be framed with a view not just to winning the contest, but building a post-conflict peace order. At the same time, the requirement for political direction and control of the conflict must not lead to micro-management of the battlefield: a balance must be found between political accountability and military effectiveness.

Coercive strategies seek to change the decision-making calculus of the adversary, not to establish control via a decisive military victory and the defeat of the enemy. The target always retains an element of choice. Such a strategy assumes that interests are not zero-sum and incommensurate, but that there is some shared ground, and that compromise is possible. In a sense therefore, it assumes some underling agreement about the nature of the conflict, which might not be the case with rogue states or warlords in a failed state.

Framing a coercive strategy is also difficult because one must consider both the balance of interests involved and the strength of motivation, in other words, not just what interests each side has, but how strongly they feel about them. It thus involves understanding the identity and fundamental value of the two adversaries; how they construct and interpret reality; and the “bounded rationality” within which they operate. Moreover, interests can

change in the course of a conflict as positions harden and negotiating positions become less flexible.

The key to the successful use of strategic coercion is to identify the appropriate “coercive mechanisms” i. e the vulnerabilities and pressure points of the adversary. Once the target’s center of gravity has been identified, force can be used discriminately and effectively.

This is the crux of the problem, but accurately identifying the coercive mechanism, is extremely difficult, as the example of the Kosovo campaign illustrates. At the end of the day, coercion is not a science and certainly does not involve the application of mechanical formula and rational calculation. Rather, it is an art, involving the creative use of resources and skilful bargaining-what Clausewitz regarded as creativity and genius.

Coercion, to paraphrase Clausewitz, is the continuation of politics by other means; it involves using the skills and instruments of diplomacy and combining them with the threat of force. The problems here are manifold. It is difficult to combine carrots and sticks because of the mixed signals this can send: carrots can suggest a lack of resolve and a propensity for appeasement, while sticks can imply that the coercer has more far-reaching and aggressive intentions

Coercion also involves complex games played at two or more levels: coercers need to convince domestic public opinion of the justness and urgency of their cause, they must build and maintain consensus at the international level between allies, and they must communicate clear messages to the adversary. Coercive strategies are often implemented in multi-actor environments, above all, crisis management involving coercive diplomacy; like all strategic interaction, proceeds with a non-linear, paradoxical logic, unlike domestic conflicts which are constrained and patterned by law and custom. Escalation is an ever present risk, and thus as Hill (1990:143) notes, coercive diplomacy involves a gamble on big returns and big loses.

Impact of Military Strategy

The power to hurt can be counted among the most impressive attributes of military force. Hurting... is not unconcerned with the interest of others. It is measured in the suffering it can cause, and the victims’ motivation to void it. Forcible action will work against weeds or floods as well as against armies but suffering requires a victim that can feel pain or has something

to loss... it can only make people behave to avoid it. The only purpose... must be to influence somebody's behavior, to coerce his decision or choice. To be coercive, violence has to be anticipated and (only) avoidable by accommodation. The power to hurt is bargaining power. To exploit it, is diplomacy- vicious diplomacy, but diplomacy (schelling, 1966:2)

In the strategic domain, and in the contemporary international order, the power of war and the capacity for armed coercion which it sustains play a veritable role in international politics. Consequently it has become a standard to refer to military power as one of the various techniques of statesmanship alongside diplomacy, economic sanctions, propaganda and subversion.

Drawing from the EUS aspiration as a regional hegemon, it has pursued milieu goals with the aim of reshaping European order in ways advantageous to the security and prosperity of its members. It has done so by wielding a mix of hard and soft power. Its hard power resources have primarily been based on economic carrots and stick. Linked to politically determined conditionality clauses. The not- inconsiderable instruments of economic statecraft available have provided a set of coercive instruments, which constitute the mailed fist within the velvet glove of diplomacy. In the immediate wake of the end of the cold war, there was a widespread feeling that the pattern of the international relations has changed and that military coercion has been significantly devalued as a currency of power. Such sentiments fuelled the revival of the neo-idealist and neo-progressivist fashion identified earlier by Bull, and led some policy makers to conclude that soft power supported by the skillful exercise of economic statecraft would suffice for justice and liberty to triumph. It was illusion such as these in the efficacy of civilian power that led to the tragedy of the Balkans. In 1990, the foreign minister of Luxemburg and then acting president of the EU council- Jacques Poos, grandly announced- 'this is the hour of Europe, not the hour of the Americans...if one problem can be solved by the Europeans, it's the Yugoslav problem. This is a European country and it is not up to the Americans and not up to anybody else.' (Quoted in White, 2001:108). This was however followed by force, and then by tragedy as 'Europe' in the shape of the EU failed to stop the descent into violence and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. In the end, it was hard-nosed U.S. diplomacy, NATO bombs and Anglo - French military action that brought an end to the cycle of bloodshed in Bosnia and later Kosovo. The wars of Yugoslav succession demonstrated all too starkly the limits of civilian power. The major lesson of

the Balkans was that if the EU wanted to be credible and effective international actor, it needed to be able to backup its diplomacy with military coercion.

...Perhaps the classical and in many ways the most celebrated definitive statement of this interplay between the military instrument and policy objective is incisively represented in the Clausewitzian aphorism that 'war is nothing than a continuation of politics by an admixture of other means: In order words from the standpoint of Clausewitz, war is a purposive, functional thing which states utilize at an appropriate moment in the pursuit of their respective policy objectives... (cited in Bassey 1998.6)

Utilizing the capacity for armed coercion (war) to support foreign policy, in Clausewitzian's view is a rational, national instrument of policy. The events of the Balkans in the early 1990s, in conjunction with the Iraqi invasions of Kuwait and the problems of failed states such as Somalia and Afghanistan, demonstrated that although Europe's heartlands might enjoy a more peaceful and benign security environment, the world remained a dangerous and threatening place and international peace and security remained threatened by a mix of old and new security issues. The lesson from the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Somalia was that diplomacy and moral posturing. - The primary instruments of civilian power were on their own rarely effective to reverse aggression. The common theme in this failure was the inability of governments to back principle with decisive military force. Reflecting on the Balkan wars, Carl Bildt, among others, argued that military force is sometimes essential in order to backup diplomatic initiative. Force, he argued should never be a substitute for diplomacy but under the right conditions it can give strength to the search for political solutions represented by diplomacy. The former U.N secretary Kofi Annan argued; in the context of their Kosovo war, that there are times when the use of force may be legitimate in the pursuit of (foreign policy) peace. By the end of the 1990s, it was evident that the EU had learnt the hard way of enduring relevance of Machiavelli's allegory of the centaur, half beast and man. Machiavelli believed that the foundation of any political order was good laws and good - arms a judicious mix of force and authority, coercion and consent, power and hegemony. Indeed, he believed that good arms were inescapable prerequisite for good laws and that where there are good arms, good laws inevitably follow. Machiavelli therefore believed that political leaders needed to learn

both how to act in the context of a stable environment governed by the rule of law and settled institutions, and in a situation of anarchy when the laws of the jungle applied.

...you should understand, therefore, that there are two ways of fighting: by law or by force. The first way is natural to man, and the second to beasts. But as the first way often proves inadequate, one must need have recourse to the second, so the Prince must understand how to make a nice use of the beast and the man... a Prince must know how to act according to the nature of both, as he cannot survive otherwise (Machiavelli: 1962).

Conclusion

...The historical as well as contemporary prevalence of inter and intra- national wars and military alliances have sustained the view that until the nation state system is radically transformed and superseded by a different international order, the military power and the capacity for armed coercion which it sustains, is likely to continue to play a significant part in international politics (Bassey, 2005: 22)

Strategic thought is never separated from political thought, state must recognize that if they are to act as a civilian power, they need to add coercive military power to their foreign and security policy instruments. The finish armed forces in the world and the most effective crisis decision- making may be useless if a state fail to develop a common strategic culture and military doctrines. States that intend to become serious players in the international system must be decisive on how to use military force in support of foreign policy.

Coercion is a very difficult strategy to implement as it is replete with risks and uncertainties. There is an ever present risk of escalation in the context of a changing and dynamic environment. Once force or the threat of force is introduced into a crisis situation, the whole dynamics of the conflict change. States have no option but to try to develop the capacities and political will to make nice use of the beast and the man, if they desire to be ethical powers that can both protect their citizens and save strangers, they must be able to back up their diplomacy with military force and thus actively shape international system.

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