

United States' Military Assistance to Nigeria 2007-2015: Wither Nigerian Sovereignty?

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Abstract

Contemporary international system is characterized by increasing relations among sovereign states, part of which come in the form of aid, including military assistance. This study examines the link the military aid granted to Nigeria by the United States between 2007 and 2015 has on Nigeria's sovereignty. The study interrogated research questions, among which is, has United States' military assistance under the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) enhanced capacity of the Nigerian state to address national security challenges within the period under review? The study was anchored on power theory while ex post facto research design was adopted. The study hypothesized that United States' military assistance under the AFRICOM did not enhance capacity of the Nigerian state to address her national security challenges from 2007-2015. Qualitative method of data collection was utilized and data collected was analyzed using qualitative descriptive method. The study found that United States' military aid to Nigeria from 2007-2015 was shaped and facilitated within the framework of the AFRICOM. However, the aid did not enhance capacity of the Nigerian state to address the national security challenges as the nation witnessed increased cases of insurgency orchestrated by Boko Haram while cases of militancy continued to affect oil production in the Niger Delta coastal region with cases of banditry becoming rife in most northern states. The study therefore recommends *inter alia* that: national security interest of Nigeria must be properly articulated and prioritized to align with such military aid granted to Nigeria by the US in their relations.

Keywords: AFRICOM, Military assistance, National security, Sovereignty, Insurgency

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Background to the Study

Basically, no nation of the world operates in isolation in the global community. But what matters is the nature of relationship among nations. The relations among nations of the global North and those of the global South have however remained asymmetric from colonial era to the contemporary post-colonial period. While various actors contribute to this asymmetric relationship, the mechanism through which such relationship is entrenching includes but not limited to foreign aid and external debt. Foreign aid remains one of the most veritable mechanisms through which the umbilical cord between Africa and the West is maintained. The standard definition of foreign aid comes from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which defines foreign aid and/or foreign assistance as financial flows, technical assistance, and commodities that are designed to promote economic development and welfare as their main objective. (Radelet, 2006).

Historically most aid have been given as bilateral assistance directly from one country to another. Donors also provide aid indirectly as multilateral assistance, which pools resources together from many donors. Howbeit, the United States has consistently been the world's largest donor (except in the mid-1990s when Japan briefly topped the list). In 2004 the U.S. provided \$19.7 billion in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), with Japan, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany the next largest donors. Despite the supposed benefits accruable from the mutual interdependence between and among sovereign states which is epitomized by foreign aids, detractors view it with suspicion. According to Goldberg (2009), "Millions in Africa are poorer today because of aid. Misery and poverty have not ended but have increased. Aid has been, and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic, and humanitarian disaster for most parts of the developing world. "Other critics of foreign aid accuses the interstate benevolence of undermining sovereignty of states given that it is often attached with conditionalities which bring the recipient states dancing to the tunes of the donor countries. (Goldberg, 2009, Aremu, 2014)

Nigeria consolidated her independence by virtue of becoming a Republic in October, 1963, and as such became a full-fledged sovereign state (Nwankwo, 2006). A sovereign state could be seen as an entity having a permanent population, defined territory, one government and the capacity to enter into relations with other sovereign states. Again, for Nwankwo (2008) "a state is sovereign when it has supreme authority, that is, its rule overrides the rule of any other association within its boundary, and does so without reference to any other outside authority". Suffice it to note, that no nation is an Island unto itself, and no nation is hundred percent self-sufficient. This perhaps explains why economic giants like the US, Japan, Germany, China among others still go for one financial or strategic help and the likes from other countries. Hence, Nigeria and US have maintained long standing relationship since Nigeria's independence in 1960. The US and Nigeria share some common objectives based on security and resources. Nigeria gains assistance to prevent and eliminate threats through improved Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), Air Domain Awareness (ADA), security along its borders, improved infrastructure, and anti-crime/terror programs. In addition, security cooperation between the two countries will have important positive effects on the overall African economy by improving access to Nigeria's resources (Rogers, 2009).

Although Nigeria has received some military aids like sharing of intelligence with foreign military personnel, purchased military equipment, and even obtained strategic economic aids (Enyi, 2014), the seeming danger of US foreign military assistance to Nigeria in the form of military cooperation and exchange partnerships with the US military; the issue of US blocking the sale of weapons and fighter jets to Nigeria; the Africa Command (AFRICOM) involving Nigeria's security; the threat of enlisting Nigeria in global terrorist list (Onuoha, 2012), the extent to which US military assistance has impacted on the country's sovereignty has remained worrisome and a key issue in Nigeria's foreign policy. Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to examine the nexus between United States' military assistance and Nigeria's sovereignty between 2007 and 2015.

Statement of the Problem

The United States government has provided development programmes and security assistance funding to help strengthen security of waterways in Africa. In 2005, the White House introduced the National Strategy for Maritime Security, with the facilitation and defense of commerce as top national priorities (Ploch, 2011). In 2007, US Naval Forces Europe launched the African Partnership Station (APS). Under this initiative, a navy ship was deployed to the Gulf of Guinea for seven months to serve as a sea base of operations and a floating schoolhouse from which to provide assistance and training to the Gulf nations (Ploch, 2011). In the waters off the coast of East Africa, the US Navy partners in Coalition Task Force 150 (ctf-150), conducted maritime security operations to protect shipping routes in the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean (Ploch, 2011). By February of 2007, the United States announced officially the decision to create a Unified Combatant Command for Africa, known as United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), as a new approach to respond to security challenges in Africa (Brown, 2013).

Meanwhile, Nigeria has continued to experience various forms of insecurity and internal insurrections which threaten the country's sovereignty. Some of the insecurity situations include militancy in the Niger Delta, oil theft, illegal refining and other security challenges in the waterways (Nwachoko, Bekinbo and Tetam, 2020). There are still other security challenges like banditry, Fulani herdsmen attack on farming communities and Boko Haram insurgency in the North where Boko Haram's campaign of terror has been the biggest security challenge facing Nigeria, the group's ideological objective has evolved from simple advocacy for Islamic puritanism in northern Nigeria to the creation of the Islamic State in West Africa and Lake Chad region using a campaign of violence started as a less organized and less sophisticated until it acquired in 2015 the infamous title of the “world's deadliest terrorist organization”, all of these have continued to threaten the sovereignty of the Nigerian state (Onuoha and Oyewale, 2018, Reuters, 2022). In addition, minority groups agitations such as the resurgence of the secessionist movement by the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and Yoruba nation separatist agitators have all added to insecurity. These forms of criminalities potentially constitute threat to the efforts of the US government and other western powers to secure access to energy resources in Africa. At once, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) stated that the attacks by sea bandits and pirates off the Coast of West Africa are on the increase in Nigeria. While the United Nations Security Council observed that Nigeria was

losing about \$1.5 billion on a monthly basis to piracy, armed robberies at sea, smuggling, and fuel supply fraud, which are on the increase in the Gulf of Guinea and these have added to the reduction of crude oil production by as much as 25 percent thus affecting world oil prices. (*This Day*, 2017, July 23, *Vanguard* 2022, June 22).

Nevertheless, there is still the need to systematically examine whether the advancement of military aids to Nigeria under the AFRICOM has enhanced Nigeria's capacity to address its national security challenges and at the same time, examine if the link between US national security interest and efficacy of the aids to Nigeria requires empirical inquiry.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the link between US military assistance and Nigeria's sovereignty between 2007 and 2015. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To access the implication of the United States' military assistance on Nigeria's sovereignty.
2. To access whether US military assistance under the AFRICOM enhanced the capacity of Nigerian state to address her national security challenges between 2007 and 2015.

Review of Literature

This paper proceeds thematically on the major variables so as to locate the *lacuna* in literature. Accordingly, this review will pay attention to:

1. The Concept of Foreign Aid
2. AFRICOM and Sovereignty of African States
3. United States military aid and Nigeria's Sovereignty

The Concept of Foreign Aid

The term foreign aid is generally used in the sense of flow of resources from the rich countries to the poor under developed countries (Enyi, 2014). But it can also be from rich to rich or multilateral aid. The concept has been variously defined. According to the United Nations, economic aid means outright grants and long-term loans for non-military purposes by Governments and various international organizations. What could be considered an appropriate definition of foreign aid is given by Murdock (2012), who pointed out that "foreign aid is a Transfer of real resources or immediate claim on resources from one country to another which would not have taken place as a consequence of the operation of market forces or in the absence of specific official action designed to promote the transfer by the donor country". Thus, foreign aid so defined includes both direct government transfers and those promoted by special official action such as government guarantees. The concept of foreign aid is also widely used and accepted as a flow of financial resources from more developed countries to less-developed countries on development grounds (Arimonu, 2012). However, the role and effects of foreign aid in the economic development matrix of less developed countries have been and have remained as controversial issues. In the last decades much have been written on different aspect of aid. No study of economic aid can go very far unless there is first an attempt to define exactly what is meant by the term "Aid"(Adetayo, 2012).

Generally, foreign aid is advocated as necessary for the promotion of economic development in the Less Developed Countries (LDC's). Substantiating further, Adetayo, (2012), Aremu, (2014) noted that the purpose of foreign aid programme to LDC's is to accelerate their economic development up to a point where a satisfactory rate of growth can be achieved on a self-sustaining basis. Therefore, the general aim of foreign aid is to provide in each LDC a positive incentive for maximum national effort to increase its rate of growth. However, the effects of foreign aid on the economic development of LDCs have remained as controversial issues. Some economic studies of foreign aid suggest that it is successful, while other studies find no relationship between foreign aid and growth rate, but argue that it rather retards economic growth in less developed countries by leading to the structural distortions of the economy. According to Jhingan (2009), "foreign aid is plainly neither a generally necessary nor sufficient condition for economic development".

There are several motives which inspire financial assistance from public bodies on concessionary terms, such as humanitarian, political, commercial, military and economic. These aids generally point in the humanitarian aspect of foreign aid with its usefulness in promoting social stability in the recipient countries. At any rate, the motifs of foreign aid by and large appear to be in the domain of national economic, political and strategic interest, these are according to Aremu (2012) are encapsulated in the Moral and Humanitarian motives, Political motive, Economic motives and Military motive.

AFRICOM and Sovereignty of African States

Sovereignty is one of the most contestable concepts and/or attribute of government in Political Science as well as international law, (Brown, 2013). In like manner, Nnoli, (1986) notes that sovereignty as a political concept has to do with the capacity of a ruling class to make and implement decisions which are of interest to it. Similarly, Brower-Berkhoven (2014) conceives sovereignty as the supreme power of the government over life and property in the state. They contended that "it also means the absence of external political control over the government of a state". Ultimately, sovereignty is the authority or oversees the decision-making process of the state especially in the maintenance of order. Sovereignty, though its meanings have varied across history, also has a core meaning, supreme authority within a territory. It is a modern notion of political authority. The state is the political institution in which sovereignty is embodied. An assemblage of states forms a sovereign states system (Asobie, 2005).

It is on the above premise that Onor (2016), explores the notion of security in the context of Africa and how the imposition of the dominant and traditional preoccupation of security with state, military and national security in the continent has led to the neglect of human and societal security considerations. Burgess (2008) argues further that security and the perceptions of security in the context of Africa are not driven by the logic of military security or hard security, but rather by human security considerations or soft-edged perceptions of security around poverty, marginalization, basic human needs, lack of human dignity, empowerment and participation. In explaining the retreat of African regional and sub-regional organizations from development issues to militarized security considerations, and

why Africa needs a different perspective on security, Burgess (2008) offers a human security framework as a strategy to respond to and interrogate the conditions of survival on the continent and further outlines the human security challenges and problems facing Africans and the continent, and why the traditional military and security preoccupations of African regional organizations and AFRICOM will potentially reinforce the militarization of human security in Africa.

In a similar vein, Arimonu (2012) focuses on the imperative for the US defence and military establishment to develop a human security approach, since the national security strategy does not fully capture or take into serious consideration other strategic security threats. Beebe (2015) further contends that the traditional security thinking and approaches to Africa are of limited relevance to the diverse and multi-faceted human security challenges facing Africa in the twenty-first century. Mandanda and Ping (2016) has opined that peace and stability have evaded Africa region for over three decades, as countries in the region were ravaged by conflict. Ethiopia experienced a civil war and was engaged in conflicts with Eritrea and Somalia. Sudan was torn apart by a civil war and Somalia was ravaged by clan warfare. These conflicts became interrelated, with factions in the various countries obtaining and giving support across national borders. However, the situation in Somalia was different and this impacted on maritime security in the waters surrounding the Horn of Africa (Osaretin, 2011). After 16 years of violence and anarchy, Somalia is still without strong central government authority. It is one of the failed post-Cold War efforts at conflict resolution and the international community have become little more than bystanders.

United States Military Aid and Nigeria's Sovereignty

Osaretin (2011), articulates three reasons why the US wants to set up AFRICOM. First, the US appears to have become increasingly dependent on Africa for its energy requirements through crude oil sales. Instability, such as that in the Niger Delta, could significantly reduce this supply, which the US National Intelligence Council had projected would account for 25% of total United States imports by 2015. The importance of the African oil source was underscored by the fact that in 2006, the US imported 22% of its crude oil from Africa compared to 15% in 2004.

Second, Africa is an unstable region with badly governed states that can only manage their affairs, particularly security-related, with outside assistance. Following the 9/11 scenario, the US foreign policy has heavily focused on preventing and combating global terrorist threats. The events of 9/11 changed the way the US views and relates to the rest of the world. Likewise, the foreign policies of Western powers were seen to have increasingly been militarized to secure and defend Western interests. Terrorism was identified as one of the biggest threats to these interests. AFRICOM is expected to stop terrorists being bred in Africa's weak, failing and failed states from attacking these interests. Among the targets of these terrorists are Western interests such as oil sources and supply routes. Improvement of African security became inevitable as a way to promote US national interests by making it less likely that the continent could be a source of terrorism against the United States.

Third, it was proposed that through AFRICOM, African troops will be trained and aided to keep the peace in African conflict zones. This was expected to come in handy when it is considered that all African Union-led peacekeeping operations deployed so far have encountered monumental problems. The most recent deployment, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), is on the verge of folding because of a lack of financial and logistical support, as well as trained troops to keep a peace that is not there. Furthermore, it is stated that the medical assistance given through AFRICOM could reduce the high prevalence of HIV in African militaries. In sum, the whole idea of AFRICOM is, to a large extent, a bureaucratic issue within the US government on the best way of promoting American interests in Africa-securing investments and oil sources, fighting off Chinese competition and waging the war against terrorism.

The decision to create the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) generated considerable controversy, not only in Africa, but also within the United States. Dickson (2013) notes that in spite of the seemingly lofty declarative purposes of AFRICOM, nearly all African leaders have been skeptical about the establishment of such a military organization on African soil, except President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson of Liberia- who incidentally was the only known African leader that publicly clamored to host AFRICOM in her country. To the contrary, several African States criticized the plan to locate AFRICOM in Africa. It appears that the refusal of African countries to host AFRICOM, despite belated US diplomatic overtures, occasioned a temporary change of plan with respect to its relocation from Stuttgart in Germany to any location in Africa.

Burgess (2008) presents a detailed examination of the history and formation of AFRICOM, its mission statement, the rationale for its creation and its operational activities within the wider purview of the US foreign and security policy approach to Africa, driven by the imperative of the post-Cold War and post-9/11 security and military considerations. He also explains that AFRICOM assumes operational responsibility and implementation of a range of military, security cooperation and security assistance programmes funded through the State Department and the DoD which include bilateral and multilateral joint training programmes and military exercises, such as Flintlock 2005 and 2007 (Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET)), the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), the East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI), the ACOTA, the International Military Education and Training Programme (IMET), the CJTF-HOA, the Joint Task Force Aztec Silence (JTTFAS), the Naval Operations in the Gulf of Guinea and the base access agreements for cooperative security locations and forward operating sites.

The complex connections between AFRICOM, US security interests and the primary goals of dominating Africa militarily have been explored. McFate (2008) examines the strategic relevance of Africa to the United States, mapping out the history of neglect of the continent and the increasing strategic significance of Africa to both US strategic national interests and the global security environment. Whelan further posits that AFRICOM is part of the shift and the change in paradigm in US foreign and security policy in the post-Cold War period and thus the unified geographic command for Africa is not only about facilitating greater consistency of

focus on Africa and harmonization of the activities of the different government departments and military commands with responsibility for the continent, but also to make Africa more secure for the attainment of long-term peace, stability, durable security and sustainable development in strategic partnership with African states, peoples and regional institutions. Similarly, Aremu (2014) argues that AFRICOM is not merely a post-Cold War experiment to respond to the security challenges of the twenty-first century, but also a much-needed updating of the internal structural framework that has long handicapped efforts by the US military to build bilateral and multilateral partnerships and engagement with Africa, given the increasing strategic significance of the continent to US national security and the global security environment. Baiyewu, (2015) has noted that

In recent years, Africa has steadily burnt up its capacity to independently address African issues. The international community should provide support and help to the resolution of African issues. China believes that such help should be based on respect for the will of the African people and should be constructive. It should reinforce rather than undercut Africa's independent efforts to solve problems interference in Africa's international affairs by outside forces out of selfish motives can only complicate the efforts to resolve issues in Africa.

The above view is simply of the notion that foreign interference in Africa's internal affairs may stand to jeopardize the cause of Africa's indigenous capacity. Substantiating further, Baiyewu, (2015) argued that locally, reports have it that Nigeria is seeking foreign assistance in checking the activities of the deadly Islamic sect, which is generating argument among some Nigerians. While some argued that such step could jeopardize Nigeria's sovereignty as a nation, others believe it would lead to self-imposition by expatriate forces. From this view, one can deduce that foreign aid to Nigeria especially strategic aid from developed country like the US has the prospect to weaken the national sovereignty of Nigeria.

Moughalu (2016) has noted thus:

Nigeria could seek foreign intervention while describing the idea of any ulterior motive as archaic. It is a good idea. The world has become a global village. Nigeria is free to seek assistance from any country to ensure that issues that affect her properties and peaceful co-existence are resolved as long as it will solve the problem. It will be wrong to compare what is going on in Nigeria now with what happened between the US and Iraq. The presence of the US in Iraq was based in its policy to set up a regime change (www.punchng.com/politics/Boko-Haram).

The above view is simply of the notion that foreign aid is needed for a country like Nigeria especially when she finds it difficult to tackle the slimly challenges facing her government. Again, Enyi, (2014) submitted with reference to foreign military aid and its impact on Nigeria's sovereignty that: “there is no atom of assistance these foreign countries give to the

third world countries without an ulterior motive. That is why we should be very careful the way we accept foreign aids. Substantiating further, Guy, (1985) holds that foreign aid is given with some strings attached and it is not always charitably as it appears. Arguing in the line with Guy, (1985), Akpuru-Aja (1998) states that “it is not out of sheer generosity that advantaged nations extend aid to needy nations; it is because they are more mindful of certain political, economic, technical, and military interests”. Stressing further on this, Helleiner (1979) submits that:

within the context of international system in which industrial powers are dominant and vigorously pursue their own self-interest against much weaker Third World states (as well as each other), and each individual African government has an interest to pursue in its relations with the various industrial powers, which differs from the interests of each of the powers.

These views are simply of the notion that little or no good comes out from foreign aid as it's always with some ulterior motives or conditionalities and therefore Nigeria should discontinue with it. Suffice it to note however that even when an aid should be granted in strategic matter such aid should:

Simply be the transfer of military personnel, arms, armament and advice from a given state to a recipient state. Basically, it comprises of the outright gift of military weapon and training to a recipient nation. This is carried out without any gruesome cost as it is free of charge. Sometimes, the weapons are sold at a reduced price in comparison to those sold or procured at the world market. Helleiner (1979)

Akin to the above view Wapmeik and Agbalajobi (2012) further submitted that another aid, which differs from the above yet respect national sovereignty, is technical assistance aid. This form of aid involves the transfer of expertise and knowledge from the donor state going to the recipient state to educate and train personnel of recipient nation in the act of handling technical and extra ordinary machines. Although this view tends to picture aids without ulterior motive as very objective for the recipient nation (including Nigeria), however, one key factor that can hardly be swept under the carpet stems from the fact that nations put their national interest first in any behavior they exhibit in international politics. This perhaps explains why Animantele (2012), argued that achieving the national interest isn't all about military might and diplomatic negotiation, it is achieved through a range of means, including soft power, and one of the most powerful and better resourced gift power tools developed country has is its aid programme. This view also explains why Morgenthau (1956) opined that states interest forms and shapes international framework of world politics and that every behavior a nation exhibit be it humanitarian, economic or strategic is not without prejudice to the enhancement of its national interest which is but sacrosanct.

From this view, this paper deciphers that any strategic aid given to Nigeria with respect to its security challenges is not without prejudice to the fact that such nation is poised at enhancing its national interest, which may even integrate trespass in the jurisdiction of the recipient sovereign state. Although the above view tends to picture foreign aid as not impeding the

country's national sovereignty. Enyi (2014) notes that though from economic perspective foreign aid has recently been under severe scrutiny as several observers argued that a large portion of foreign aid flowing from more developed to less developed countries are wasted and only increases unproductive public spending, poor and weak institutions, corruption, inefficiencies and abysmal bureaucratic failures, therefore, one can infer from the foregoing, that foreign aids sometimes seem not to be beneficial to less developed countries.

Impact of US Military Assistance to Nigeria

AFRICOM currently has numerous programmes and activities taking place in Nigeria. The African Partnership Station (APS) has focused on the western coast of Africa with maritime safety and security through training, supply, and medical missions. The program is intentionally flexible based on what each nation requests during an APS visit. During the recent 13 March 2009 visit to Lagos, Nigeria by the APS Nashville, the multinational team worked a joint hydrography project, workshops on fisheries enforcement by the Italian Coast Guard, and dive medicine for navy divers. The plan is for the APS to provide more support in the future. In addition to APS, Nigeria also participates in the exchange of personnel through programs like International Military Education and Training (IMET). Through IMET, Nigerian military are able to gain familiarity with the American military while also receiving training in US military strategy, doctrine, and tactics. The IMET programme is also a chance for members from both militaries to share their views of good governance and the role of the military in a democratic state. AFRICOM also established offices of Security Cooperation, Defense Attaché, AFRICOM Liaison, Bilateral Assistance, and Maritime Assistance Officers, as well as other OEF-TS activities to further develop trust and partnerships. (Burgess, 2008, Osaretin, 2011, Ukeje and Ela, 2013, Onor, 2016)

A third area of cooperation between Department of Defence (DoD) and Nigeria is through the Funded Military Funding and Funded Military Sales programs. In these programs, Nigeria is able to receive funding to purchase American made military systems to improve their security. For fiscal year (FY) 2008, Nigeria received, \$1.3m with a projected increase to \$1.35M for FY 2009. These programs provide Nigeria with funding and equipment to modernize its force with equipment that is more compatible to the systems used by the U.S. military and allies. An example of these programs would be USAFRICOM providing or assisting the purchase by Nigeria of smaller boats for riverine operations to secure the oil platforms, while also linking up the Nigerian military with other coalition partners with specific expertise, like the Columbians who are now experts in riverine operations (Ukeje and Ela, 2013, Onor, 2016).

However, Murdock (2012), Dickson (2013), Onusigie and Folamn (2014) as well as Onor (2016), maintain that between 2010-2015, Nigeria received \$3 billion grant from US Government. This was based on Military Assistance, Anti-Terrorism, Defence and Security, Global HIV/AIDS Initiative, Global Health and Child Survival, Development Assistance etc. Again, in January 2016, US donated 24 Mine-Resistant and Armor-Protected (MRAP) vehicles valued at \$11m. In May 2014, The US government also donated a new warship by name NNS OKPABANA, 80-foot flight deck that is capable of handling helicopters. In a bid

to free the 270 Chibok girls abducted by Boko Haram United States government has offered technical assistance and expanded intelligence sharing assistance. (Onusigie and Folamn, 2014)

Generally, this section of the paper has demonstrated that much of US military assistance to Nigeria between 2007 and 2017 were administered within the framework of AFRICOM which focused on building capacity of the Nigerian state to address internal security challenges such as insecurity in the Niger Delta and insurgency in the North East. However, despite the military assistance provided under the AFRICOM platform, the Nigerian state still demonstrated lack of capacity to address her internal security challenges. It needs to be noted that capacity to address internal security challenges is a key measure of a nation's sovereignty. To further underscore the strategic importance of Africa as a continent to the United States, Brown (2013) noted the comments of AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham at Chatham House when stated thus;

I think amidst military engagement in other parts of the world, there was a growing recognition in the United States that Africa was increasingly important to the United States in a number of areas, certainly economically but politically and diplomatically as well from a development standpoint and also from a security standpoint (Brown, 2013).

The above comment apparently reveals that Africa especially West Africa has an increasing strategic importance for the United States. Given the current political climate in the Middle East, which has disruptive effects on oil prices and causes shifts in the structure of oil demand, coupled with robust economic growth in China and India, the Gulf of Guinea is expected to occupy a more important place in US energy strategies. The United States is paying increasing attention to the Gulf of Guinea. For instance, it is expected that the United States will invest more in the region over the next years in oil activities; oceanic research in the deep-sea waters of Equatorial Guinea; the restoration and preservation of the forests of Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, the implementation of a training framework for African peace-keeping forces; and discrete political interventions. This interest is driven by the United States' desire to diversify their sources of energy supply so as to reduce the risks associated with high dependence on Middle Eastern oil. The production of oil and natural gas in the Gulf of Guinea has the potential to fulfill the United States' excess demand for energy. Again, The Gulf of Guinea is strategically located with direct access to U.S. East Coast refineries, avoiding more costly and dangerous routes. The region's light, sweet grade crude articulates closely with U.S. environmental considerations and the design of U.S. refineries. These same high-quality crude oil supplies are also highly prized by other markets, notably China (Goldwyn and Morrison, 2005).

The Gulf of Guinea bears numerous advantages for the US First, the crude oil from the region is of better quality than that from Latin America, with API gravity typically above 30° and often close to 40°, while that of Latin America rarely exceeds the 30° mark. Second, the region's oil contains little sulfur by international standards, an appreciable characteristic for

US oil companies. Third, oil in the region is mostly extracted from offshore fields, far from ground, political instability and wars, and as such, can be easily protected from turmoil. Fourth, the numerous transit chokepoints facing other world oil suppliers add to the comparative advantage of producers in the Gulf of Guinea, in terms of shipping ease, lower transportation costs, and less environmental hazards. In addition to its strategic importance as an alternate supply of energy, the Gulf of Guinea also has political importance for the United States in their efforts to safeguard world security. A greater presence of the United States in the region bears political advantages, given terrorism concerns that have arisen in the aftermath of 9/11. Besides oil, the natural gas production potential of the Gulf of Guinea is another reason for the increased interest of the world's major energy consumers (Mandanda and Ping, 2016, Osaretin, 2011).

Another strategic interest of the US in West Africa is to curb the growing influence of China in the sub-region and Africa as a whole. It is important to mention that China's deepening integration into the global economy and emergence as an economic power has seen her influence expand in the Gulf of Guinea, reshaping political and economic relations and heightening concern in the West. The feeling in the West is that one of the greatest challenges facing it in the 21st century is “managing” the inevitable rise of China. Though opinions differ greatly in the US, for example, about China's true motives, the realists proposed that as China becomes more powerful, she will try to reshape the international system to better serve her national interests. By 2025, China is expected to double her oil consumption while that of the US will increase by almost 4% (Osaretin, 2011). As China's economy has exploded with about 8 per cent increase per year, her thirst for energy has influenced her foreign policy to meet these new requirements. In 1998, Beijing nationalized most state-owned fuel operations under the direction of the State Energy administration. In January 2006, Nigeria extended licenses to China for a commitment to invest \$4.4 billion in refining and power generation, giving Chinese companies a 45% stake in new oil fields (Jacobsen and Nordby, 2015). China is following the same business model with other African countries which the US has little or no oil imports. By courting Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, China has acquired diplomatic and economic influence that the US and her Western allies do not enjoy. Thus, future energy requirements by the 'great powers', will necessitate increased competition with one another for access to oil from the Gulf of Guinea.

Trade flows between China and SSA have expanded dramatically during the past decade and show no signs of slowing in the foreseeable future. China-SSA trade has grown by a remarkable 26 percent per year since 1995, reaching a total value of US\$170 billion in 2013. China now accounts for roughly 24% of Sub Sahara Africa's (SSA) total trade, up dramatically from a mere 2.3 percent in 1995. Yet despite China's enormous and rapidly increasing importance in the region, its economic relationship with SSA is not symmetric (Pigato and Tang, 2015). China needs Africa as a source of oil to fuel its rapid industrialization and diversify supplies away from the volatile Middle East. One-third of its imports now come from the continent, versus only 18-19 percent for the United States (Brown, 2013). China-Africa trade passed the \$1 billion mark in 1990, jumped to \$10 billion in 2000, and accelerated again, increasing 15-fold in a little over a decade to \$150 billion in 2011. China's rapidly expanding

ties with Africa catapulted China past the United States in 2010 as Africa's top trading partner. With China Ocean Shipping Group Company (COSCO), the largest shipping company in China, establishing its West Africa hub in Nigeria's economic capital, Lagos. (Osaretin, 2011)

There seem to be little evidence that the US intense militarization policies contribute to African security. To the contrary, there are substantial indications that they are in fact counterproductive, both increasing insecurity in Africa and energizing potential threats to United States interests. Apparently, the event of combatant collision between AFRICOM and the various militant and radical groups and other external anti-American radical groups which AFRICOM's presence and operations have attracted and produced cataclysmic effect that have left the country unsecured with the attraction of anti-western terrorist groups like Boko Haram (Onuoha and Oyewole, 2018). In this conflagration, a multiple case of deaths, human rights abuse and wanton destruction of lives and properties have occurred. Unfortunately, Nigeria which now seemingly lacked the military capacity to confront this danger is highly vulnerable to the dictates of the U.S and its allies who are wont to offer military and financial aids to Nigeria and thus dictating and driving Nigeria's military activities and strategic policies from Washington. This depicts a big blow and holistically whittles down Nigeria's sovereignty in diverse ways (Mane, 2015).

The United States unflinching and uncompromising stance towards ensuring supreme and utter control over the strategic oil resources of the Niger Delta is no longer obscure. This is because of its voluminous importance to the US burgeoning economy. As a voracious oil consumer, by 2003, the US was consuming about 7 billion barrels of oil per year when the total worldwide consumption of petroleum was about 29.3 billion barrels per year. Also, in 2006, the US total oil consumption stood at 20.7 million barrels per day (Lysias, Uzodike and Isike, 2009). Hence not only does the US economy rely on access to vast amounts of cheap foreign oil supply for its burgeoning economy, the US military, which is heavily mechanized and tactically dependent on air power also relies significantly on oil for combat effectiveness and efficiency. However, the September 11, 2001 terror attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre, exposed the vulnerability of the United States to imported oil supply, particularly as global supplies continue to tighten and its reliance was only on too few traditionally volatile oil supply regions. (Onuoha and Oyewole, 2018).

Thus, to shelter itself from the ominous dangers of sudden energy starvation, Onuoha and Oyewole (2008) further opined that the United States embraced a coherent oil security strategy which identifies diversification as an intricate principle of energy security and the consequent deployment of military command apparatuses to secure supply regions and transport routes. With traditional supply taps running dry, United States has pinpointed and turned attention to the Gulf of Guinea which account for 15% of US total oil import in 2005, which the US strategic thinkers have estimated to swell to 25% by 2025. In fact, about 70% of Africa's oil production is concentrated on the Guinean Gulf and that accounts for about 10% percent of global oil reserves. The enlistment of Nigeria in global terror list by the US is yet another attempt to undermine Nigeria's sovereignty especially by reducing her supreme authority to protect its own citizens and that of US citizens within the country. (Osaretin, 2011, Onuoha and Oyewole, 2018).

The foregoing has demonstrated that United States' military aid to Nigeria is anchored on US national security interest in Africa and specifically focus on: ensuring unhindered flow of oil to the US; ensuring that Africa does not provide safe haven for terrorism to thrive; and curbing the growing influence of China. Driven by this national security interest, US military aid to Nigeria prioritized objectives that protected the national interest of the US. Consequently, the military aid provided by the US was ineffective in addressing the national security challenges of Nigeria largely because, as the aid recipient country, Nigeria's national security interest was not given the desired attention.

Conclusion

Since, the end of the Cold War, the United States has continued to intensify efforts to increase her power position in the world particularly in Africa. This explains the effort by the US to grant various forms of aid to African countries including Nigeria. Hence, over the years, US military aid to Nigeria have continued to grow within the framework of the AFRICOM with the intent of building capacity of the Nigerian state to address national security challenges. However, empirical evidence provided in this paper demonstrate that the military aid granted Nigeria by the US under the platform of AFRICOM did not enhance capacity of the Nigerian state to address her national security challenges as the country was plagued by militancy in Niger Delta and insurgency in North East Nigeria as well as banditry in a growing number of States of northern Nigeria. Again, findings of the study revealed that the US military aid to Nigeria was driven by the national security interests of the US specifically as it concerns maintaining flow of oil to US, preventing proliferation of terrorist groups in Africa and curbing the influence of China on Africa and globally. Consequently, the aid was ineffective in actualizing the intended objectives of bolstering Nigeria's sovereignty within the period under study.

Recommendations

This paper recommends as follows:

- i. Nigeria should revisit her national military industrial project, which is a project geared at encouraging the indigenous production of arsenals. It will go a long way in making Nigeria not only realizing her independent capacity, by averting the need for foreign strategic aids in the first place.
- ii. The Nigerian state should enhance her technological well-being and military intelligence along with stabilization of economy to give direction for the country's realization of her indigenous capacity.
- iii. Nigeria must articulate and prioritize its national security interest in her relations with the United States so as to ensure that military aids from the US align with Nigeria's national security interests.

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