The Emptiness of Human Rights Violation Argument, AFRICOM, and the United States’ Anti-Jonathan Administration Disposition on War against Boko Haram Insurgency and the Outcome of the Presidential Election of 2015 in Nigeria

Hillary I. Ekemam

Department of Political Science, Imo State University, Nigeria.

Abstract

Though the United States foreign policy in Africa as well as Nigeria in particular has imperatives that serve America’s economic interest, yet this foreign policy, especially as it relates to fight against terrorism and protection of human rights is not only hypocritical but has been couched under the banner of altruism. Similarly, the rejection of AFRICOM - an American rapid-response military outposts in Africa - by the Yar ‘Adua-Jonathan administration, is seen in Washington as incompatible with the aims and objectives of U.S. Africa policy. This led to what seemed a dogged but covert attempt by Obama administration to effect a change of Government in Nigeria, replaced with one disposed to U.S. objective interest, albeit, through a verifiably contrived free and fair presidential election of 2015, as Washington claims that Jonathan’s government has human rights questions to resolve as a result of the activities of its military in the war against Boko Haram insurgency. This paper aims at highlighting the hypocrisy of America’s foreign policy in Nigeria; to offer more valid explanation for the cold disposition of Obama’s administration towards President Jonathan’s reelection; to question the validity of the projected image of altruism in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria as well as strip bare the hypocrisy that underbelly its human rights mantra, for which it had faulted Jonathan government; and to place AFRICOM within its proper geo-strategic context for realizing America’s foreign policy interests in Africa. Data for the study are from secondary sources while analysis is qualitatively textual. While the method of analysis is qualitative - content analysis, ‘Power’ is our adopted theoretical and conceptual paradigm.

Keywords: AFRICOM, Militarization of Foreign Aid, Economic Sabotage, Soft Power, Human Rights, Propaganda, Hypocrisy, Vuvuzela, Insurgency, Boko Haram, Bring Back Our Girls.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Until recently the U.S. has not considered Africa in its strategic thinking, a situation that subsisted until the Soviet Union, during the cold war years of the 1960’s, began to groom friendship with Africans, particularly Egypt and Libya, following the America’s support for Israel in the latter’s wars with its Arab neighbors. Over the last 1½ decades, the “soft power diplomacy” of China, particularly in Africa, manifesting in its economic penetration of Africa has become a source of worry in Washington. But besides China, the activities of the terrorist groups in Africa in recent years, and particularly of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, has called for a re-think in Washington over the strategic importance of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

The United States relations with Nigeria since the return of the democratic dispensation ushered in by the election of General Olusegun Obasanjo as president in 2007 had been cordial. However, such cordial relations witnessed a downward spiral since the election of Yar’Adua, and its spill-over has been felt in Goodluck Jonathan’s administration, stemming in our view, from its rejection of the United States' Africa High Command, (AFRICOM), in the
sub-Saharan Africa sub-region of West Africa. AFRICOM is a rapid response military base established by the United States from where it could respond to conflict and crisis areas in Africa, south of Sahara, excluding Egypt, particularly if such crisis has the potential of detrimentally affecting America’s African interest.

In rejecting AFRICOM, late President Umaru Yar’Adua noted: “I did not agree that AFRICOM should be based in Africa... Assistance to Africa should be in form of weapons, gadgets, and training of soldiers for the joint military command in every sub-region without allowing Americans to site their base in Nigeria” nor establish any bases typical of the one it has in Germany and other parts of the world. Yar’ Adua went further to state that when he met with President Bush “I told him that we African countries have our own plans to establish a joint military command in every sub-region (as we) have in economic groupings” without compromising Africa’s collective sovereignty and territorial integrity. “That instead of them coming by themselves to Africa they should assist us ... to form and manage our own military commands ourselves...I asked him that they should help us African countries in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea - seven countries – how we will unite, since we already have plan, to establish a joint military command to protect our territory...” [1].

For Nigeria of Yar’Adua-Jonathan era, AFRICOM had been viewed with suspicion particularly in light of recent experiences in the contemporary Middle Eastern region where governments freely allowed the presence of American “peace keepers” who left worst footprints in their region than they met it. The case of Iraq and Libya are instructive but not the focus of this study.

For Nigeria, the establishment of AFRICOM portends danger for its national survival particularly as a country dependent on oil for a highly disproportionate portion of its national revenue. Over these scenarios, Ayokhai and Ogbang [2], were to note that: “For Nigeria and her interest in the Gulf of Guinea (where AFRICOM was to be based), the region is an integral part of the South Atlantic. It constitutes Nigeria’s most strategic environment and security interest. This is because if it is open to hostile incursion, so much so even economic resources exploited off shore could be endangered. This area is also reputed to be a vital artery to Nigeria’s trade serving as it does as the main shipping route transiting the Atlantic corridor. The presence of foreign interest there could mean that this vital security environment is vulnerable to external forces.”

On its part, and perhaps justifying its strategic interest, the Pentagon analysts have referred as “area of instability” countries that stretch from the Western hemisphere including the Middle East and Africa who they see as harboring terrorist organizations and cells which have links to Al Qaeda. Thus to establish such security outfit in Africa considered more porous for terrorism would, in the opinion of Washington, “save the world for democracy” which ultimately serves the national economic interest of the United States.

During the period of Good luck Jonathan’s administration, U.S. relations came to its all-time low culminating in America’s seeming disinterest or dilly dally in assisting the administration on its fight against Boko Haram insurgency which had practically made three north-east states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa ungovernable. The most worrisome of the activities of Boko Haram is that it began to establish Islamic caliphates in those regions where it had “captured.”

In response to the outrage expressed by the Jonathan administration and well-meaning Nigerians around the world over the apparent non-definitive position of the U.S. over Nigeria’s war against the insurgency, the United States began to play the human rights (violation) card against the Nigerian government and its military (which was in pursuit of Boko Haram). The American government also accused Nigerian government as ineffective in bringing the alleged violators of human rights to justice—a position that this paper see as mere propaganda ploy not only to curry global
sympathy but to achieve greater economic ends in the sub region.

Objective of the Study

The major objective of this study is to offer an alternative explanation for the United States cold disposition toward Jonathan administration’s fight against internal insurgency. The paper therefore seeks to rigorously question (as pure propaganda) the Obama administration’s human rights violation argument as the basis for its lack of support for Nigerian government under Jonathan.

The study equally attempts to see this Washington’s cold disposition within the context and intent of a wider geo-political strategy to save-guard America’s wider economic interest in Africa, and of which the establishment of AFRICOM is compatible.

This paper wishes to argue that altruism, couched in the name of bolstering human rights international, is a far-fetched argument, a propaganda, and hence, not a significant or persuasive determinant or motive of U.S. foreign policy in Africa, nor its cold disposition towards Jonathan’s fight against Boko Haram-an organization which the U.S. government incidentally and ironically had branded and enlisted as an “international terrorist organization.”

In consideration of its wider African interests, the United States must adopt strategies to realize them without losing face, hence the propriety and political-correctness of its human rights ‘vuvuzela’. Part of that strategy was to look for more pliable governments and individuals across Africa, regardless of their poor track records on matters of human rights. Hence very dogged yet covert efforts and mechanisms were put in place to undermine and make Jonathan’s administration less and less popular and unacceptable in the eyes of many within Nigeria as well as in the Diaspora. In the light of the foregoing, it was logical, in Washington’s calculations, to ultimately substitute Jonathan for General Buhari, in spite of the latter’s well documented historic human rights violations as a former head of state; the glaring cases of electoral frauds committed through the use of underage voters; mass thumb-printing of ballot papers in the north; and the systematic hoarding of voter registration cards at constituencies considered Jonathan’s stronghold during the 2015 presidential election.

Theoretical and Conceptual Perspective

Reflecting over this study, two competing theoretical frameworks became attractive and somewhat complementary, viz: “dependency” and “power” theory imbedded on “realism”.

“Dependency” is a relationship theory espoused by such writers as Raul Prebisch, Celso Furtado, Theotonio Dos Santos, Charles Wilber, Fernando Henrique Cardoso et. al, whose notion of the nature of the relationship between the north and south is “unequal” in the sense that resources flow from the periphery of poor and undeveloped states of the south to the “core” of wealthy states of the north, enriching the latter at the expense of the former, and to that extent reinforcing dependency.

As much as dependency has some theoretical implications to this study in the light of our suggestion that protection of resources and their route to the United States explains U.S. disposition towards Jonathan’s administration, it nevertheless fails to capture the whole essence of this relationship. This is so because when AFRICOM and the Russo-Chinese interest in Africa are brought to bear in our analysis, a bigger picture begins to emerge. The power theory, therefore, becomes more appropriate for two reasons, viz: (a) power expressed in terms of real and potential economic gains and (b) power expressed in terms of militarism, (to be discussed later).

Nations relate, according to Morgenthau, simply to acquire power. He holds that the possession of power is the possession of the capacity to change the minds of others and/or to get them to do what they would have otherwise refused to do if they had a choice. Power, in
Morgenthau’s view is analogous to the biblical Kingdom of God which Christians are admonished to ‘seek first’, and the possession of which guarantees unlimited heavenly goods.

Power as the ability to get one’s wish carried out regardless of visible and invisible opposition. Power is “the capacity to impose one’s will on others by reliance on effective sanctions in case of non-compliance”. This imposition can be achieved physically through military intervention or psychologically through well publicized military exercise at locations near its intended target.

From the foregoing perspective, the paper suggests that in American view, the rejection of AFRICOM by Yar’Adua-Jonathan government necessarily demanded some consequences (sanctions) which her anti-Jonathan disposition in the 2015 presidential election is a manifestation

**Power: The Economic Element**

United States considers Nigeria’s oil as very vital to the sustenance of its economy. This is all the more valid when one considers the fact that Nigeria had been for years the fifth largest import source of oil to the United States. At its peak in 2006, Nigeria exported 1.3 million barrels of oil to the United States per day.

According to a US Army official, Lovelace: “Nigeria is the key country in sub-Saharan Africa for the success of American policy and interest... Nigeria is an African powerhouse blessed with a large growing economy, huge reserves of oil and natural gas, the largest population in Africa, a rich cultural diversity, and powerful regional influence” [3].

As at July of 2014 U.S. oil import from Nigeria stood at 89,000 barrels per day until the sudden reduction-for-effect to zero in 2015, just months leading to the presidential election. This sudden reduction to zero has been viewed by analysts as a case of arm-twisting of Jonathan’s administration or a calculated attempt to put the economy in a precarious state, thus creating disaffection. Granted that with improvement in oil drilling technology - a well-stimulation technique in which rock is fractured by a pressurized liquid referred to as horizontal (hydraulic) drilling-the United Stated is expected to reduce its demand for Nigeria’s oil. But the abruptness and level of the reduction is emblematic of a relationship gone awry. That notwithstanding, the volatility of the Middle East region has made access to Nigeria’s oil even all the more important to the survival of U.S. economy. So power expressed in terms of economics in germane for our analysis.

**Power: The Military Element**

Similarly, power expressed in terms of militarism is useful for our analysis when we consider the role and aim of AFRICOM and the “soft power” Russo-Sino diplomacy in Africa which has become a thing of worry to Washington.

Since the end of the Cold War, Russia and China have adopted a policy approach in the Sub-Saharan Africa referred to as “soft-power diplomacy”. Russia’s interest in contemporary Africa is not viewed by analysts as hegemonic in the sense that characterized the immediate post-World War II era when the United States with its western allies and the Soviet Union were competing for spheres of influence.

“Although Russia’s trade and investment footprint in Africa is not as widespread as that of China, cultivating mineral resources and retaining control over sources of gas and oil is a key driver for Moscow. Russia’s energy doctrine is designed to be expansionist, seeking control over resources to meet energy demands. As its natural gas and oil reserves continue to diminish, Russia will need to find other sources of energy. Gazprom’s interests in the planned Trans-Saharan gas pipeline, and Russian involvement in the Angola oil sector, carry potential implications for the energy security of the United States and its European allies... Even Russian interest in uranium mining may also have strategic implications, as the U.S. foreign policy continues to prioritize nonproliferation of nuclear materials” [4].

United States has been a primary competitor of Russia in Africa arms market.
Russia like China remains wary of any arms control treaty with the United States that may be tied to human and humanitarian right thus limiting Russia’s chances of enjoying a good proportion of the Africa’s arms market.

On its part, China is well known to have penetrated the African economy through creative direct investment partnerships that many African economists have seen as non-imperialistic in nature. As observed by Ekemam et al [5], Chinese firms have been in desperate “need to cultivate new export markets to their manufactured goods. In its search for resources and new export markets, China has turned to Africa which is endowed with vast natural resources, including oil and gas, metal ores, and cotton... China is also seeking to deepen alliances with African countries to enhance its global standing or prestige in a seemingly “soft power” dynamics in order to counter Western influence in such world bodies as the UN and World Trade Organization”.

In light of these interests, it was not surprising that Russia and China jumped in to the rescue when the United States did not only block Nigeria’s attempts to buy military weapons from South Africa and Israel, but equally discouraged its western allies from offering military assistance to Nigeria at the heat of the insurgency of Boko Haram in 2015 [6].

From the scope of the foregoing, AFRICOM then, is a multi-pronged military “power” strategy. It is aimed (a) as a counter force in a potential face of any Russo-Chinese military alliance with Africa as a result of their perceived/seeming warming relationships with African governments, and (b) as a project to protect US oil access route in the West African sub-region at a time Ghana is poised to join Nigeria, Gabon Equatorial Guinea and Angola as oil exporters in the Gulf of Guinea. As we write, (June 19, 2015) there are reports of fighter jets bombing the South-South of Nigeria in an attempt to dislodge militants of the Niger Delta from the creeks, whose “pirating activities” are blamed for disruption of vessels’ access to and from crude oil loading bays. Hence the presence of AFRICOM is aimed at not only checking the militants, but to bolster American power equation vis-à-vis those of other major powers in the African sub-Saharan region.

Similarly, the presence of AFRICOM vents the utility of power analysis when we consider that power exists between one state and another as long as both states are unequally knitted. Thus power is apparent in the relations between the United States and Nigeria” [2]. This is why [7], noted that AFRICOM is an expansionist tool aimed at defending the vast economic interest and empire of the United States,

In light of the foregoing, few study questions emerge, viz:

- Was the United States disposed to a change of government in Nigeria in 2015 by actions and decisions aimed at making Jonathan’s government weak and unpopular to the electorate and the international community?
- Does the wider aim of AFRICOM offers a more persuasive explanation for Obama administration’s disposition towards Jonathan’s government?
- To what extent is the human rights violation argument (thesis) valid in explaining the U.S. anti-Jonathan disposition leading to the outcome of Nigeria’s 2015 presidential election?
- Is the Russo-Chinese soft-power diplomacy in Africa a concern for the U.S. government?

U.S. Interest, AFRICOM and Nigeria’s Response

U.S. interest in Nigeria is a part of its overall African interest though Nigeria remains a special area of interest because of its known oil reserve which has served U.S. oil import needs for many decades. In his testimony at the U.S. House AFRICOM Hearing, Dr. Wafula Okumu, Head, African Security Analysis Program, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa noted that:
There are many reasons why U.S. wants to set up AFRICOM. First, the US has become increasingly dependent on Africa for its oil needs. Africa is currently the largest supplier of U.S. crude oil, Nigeria being the fifth largest. Instability, such as in the Niger Delta, could significantly reduce this supply. The US National Intelligence Council has projected that African imports will account for 25% of the total U.S. imports (in the nearest future). This oil will come primary from Nigeria, Angola, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Nigeria, Africa’s largest producer has now taken Saudi Arabia as the third largest oil exporter to the U.S. The importance of African oil source can be gleaned from the fact that in 2006, the U.S. imported 22% of its crude oil from Africa compared to 15% in 2004. President Bush appeared to have oil supply in mind during the 2006 State of the Union Address when he announced his intention “to replace more than 75% of (U.S) oil imports from the Middle East by 2025. Continuing unrest in the Middle East has increased the urgency for U.S. to build a security alliance in order to achieve this goal. Likewise the foreign policies of the western powers have increasing been militarized to secure and defend western interests” [8].

So as Africa, but Nigeria particularly, is becoming hot bed of terrorism which could easily spread to its neighboring states, Washington has become increasingly nervous as terrorists in this porous region could undermine those interests. So the establishment of AFRICOM is viewed as compatible with the sustenance of Americans vital economic interest in Africa.

United States’ AFRICOM

Announced Feb. 6, 2007 but established Oct. 1, 2007, African command otherwise known as AFRICOM is an arm of the United States Armed Forces temporarily head-quartered at Stuttgart, Germany. It is responsible for the United States military operations as well as her military relations with 53 African nations, covering all African countries except Egypt which is within the United States Central Command.

Its mission statement notes that this “command” works in concert with other U.S. government agencies and international partners, to conduct sustained security engagements through military-to-military programs and activities to “help” African states - at their request - to meet the goals of building capable and professional militaries that are subordinate to civilian authority, respect human rights, and adhere to the rule of law [9].

Critics of this program have derisively branded it as “militarization of foreign aid”, suggesting that it is in the main, a “carrot and stick” foreign policy program.

When AFRICOM was announced in 2007, the Umaru Yar'Adua-Jonathan’s administration received the news with cynicism. This was even more so as the targeted headquarters of AFRICOM was the Gulf of Guinea considered a vital artery of Nigerian water-way to the world outside.

From the time of its announcement by the Bush administration, and in spite of the fact that some scholars have accused Nigeria’s first official response to AFRICOM as “contradictory” and “nebulous” in the sense that perhaps, unschooled about its overall implications to Nigeria’s security, Yar’Adua was reported to have stated at a Washington visit that: “We shall partner AFRICOM to assist not only Nigeria but also the AFRICOM in the continent to actualize its peace and security initiatives” of having standby forces in each of the regional groupings. However, having later understood the wider implications of the program, Yar’Adua was to clarify his position thus: “I did not agree that AFRICOM should be based in Africa...Assistance to Africa should be in form of weapons, gadgets, and training of soldiers for the joint military command without allowing Americans site their bases in Nigeria nor establish any bases typical of those it set up in some European territories.

To further clarify his position at Washington (which had received a knock from scholars and foreign policy analysts), President Yar’Adua noted that “when I met President Bush I told him that African countries have
our own plans to establish a joint military command in every sub-region as we have economic groupings” [1].

**U.S. Disposition to Change of Government in Nigeria in 2015**

Nigeria’s official position towards AFRICOM during Yar’Adua’s presidency—also sustained by Jonathan’s administration—was not received with enthusiasm in Washington, hence it began to show disinterest in Nigeria’s stability which become more and more evident in the war against Boko Haram. This thinking was also echoed by Nile Bowie when he noted that: “As the United States African command (AFRICOM) begins to gain a foothold into the continent with its troops officially present in Eritrea and Uganda, the sectarian violence in Nigeria provides a convenient pretext for military intervention in the continuing resource war. It is interesting to note that United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania conducted a series of African war games scenario in preparation for the Pentagon’s expansion of AFRICOM under the Obama Administration”.

Bowie further noted that: “in the presence of U.S. State Department officials, employees from The Rand Corporation and Israeli Military personnel, a military exercise was undertaken which tested how AFRICOM would respond to a disintegrating Nigeria on the verge of collapse amidst civil war. The scenarios envisioned rebel factions vying for the control of the Niger Delta oil fields (the source of America’s top oil import) would potentially be secured by some 20,000 U.S. troops if a U.S. friendly coup failed to take place.” The “smoking gun” in this US preparation for a disintegrating Nigeria is the statement by General William Ward (March 28, 2008), when he noted that “priority issues of America’s growing dependence on African oil would be furthered by AFRICOM operating under the principle theatre goal of “combating terrorism”.

To better capture the whole essence of US disposition to change of government in Nigeria in 2015, the following major issues deserve considerable attention, viz: (a) The US Response to Ebola Virus Outbreak and Vaccine Request (b) Washington’s Response to Electoral Irregularities in Nigeria (c) The Bring Back Our Girls Harshtag & Axelrod Factor (d) The Cash-For-Arms Debacle and (e) The Economic Sabotage

**US Response to Ebola Outbreak in Nigeria**

When the Ebola disease outbreak in the West Africa sub-region became the most important issue of national and region survival, the Nigerian government of Goodluck Jonathan on August 7, 2014 requested for the “experimental drugs” (ZMapp and brincidofovir), already being successfully administered in the United States. The response from Obama’s government was outright refusal claiming that “such move would be premature”. This response was received with shock by Jonathan’s administration and Nigerians alike, especially in the light of the fact that a Liberian-born American diplomat, Mr. Patrick Sawyer, who was its first victim, “transported” the virus into Nigeria, having flown into Lagos from Monrovia where he contacted the disease. The question ought to be asked is: what is the essence of America’s humanitarian and altruistic grandstanding in the face of such a potential human catastrophe in Nigeria?

**Washington’s Reaction to Electoral Irregularities in Nigeria**

Similarly, when it became clear that distribution of voters cards was skewed in favor of the north considered General Buhari’s stronghold, the United States looked the other way as the masses in the south especially the south-east and south-south cried of a systematic attempt by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, to disenfranchise them with the knowledge that these zones constituted Jonathan’s stronghold. When pressure mounted over the need for date extension, the Chairman of Nigeria’s Independent Electoral Commission, Professor Attahiru Jega, was forced to shift the scheduled presidential poll by two weeks, lamenting “heightened insecurity situation” in the North-East. Washington’s quick reaction to that announcement was
echoed by the US Secretary of State, John Kerry who noted that “the United States was deeply disappointed by the decision to postpone Nigeria’s presidential election”, adding that “it is critical that the government not use security concerns as a pretext for impeding the democratic process.” This in our view smacks of meddlesomeness aimed ultimately at realizing a preordained electoral outcome in that exercise.

The Bring Back Our Girls Hashtag and the Axelrod Factor

The use of Axelrod’s consultancy, and the Bring Back Our Girls hashtag, to bring about a change of government in Nigeria favorable to Washington, exploiting the chances of potential break down of law and order in any event of Jonathan’s refusal to accept defeat, was no longer a question of how but a question of when.

When Boko Haram insurgents abducted nearly 300 school girls from the town of Chibok of the northeastern border state of Bornu in Nigeria, the first international ‘hashtag’, Bring Back Our Girls carried by Michelle Obama and unnamed “e-rat” sources went viral instantly on the social media. While the ‘hashtag’ was drowning favorable opinion of Jonathan’s administration leading to the 2015 presidential election, the U.S. government went further to refuse the sale of arms to Nigeria as well as blocking any such purchase from its western allies including Israel [6].

As the Nigerian presidential election was nearing, AKPD, the political consulting group founded by an Obama confidant David Axelrod was brought in 2014 to assist Buhari camp with the state-of-the-art propaganda information dissemination network. It should be recalled that David Axelrod had been the principal strategist bringing about Obama’s election victories in 2008 and his reelection in 2012.

Axelrod is renowned for his media savvy and very effective in using e-media, including the social to dilute if not drown its target’s areas of strength. For example while the official data of the Transparency International for the years of Jonathan administration showed a steady and marked improvement on the global Corruption Perception Index, CPI, the ‘vuvuzela’ of Nigeria’s alarming corruption became deafening around the world. Indeed, under President Jonathan, Nigeria was for the first time not in the 1-10 most corrupt countries in the world yet the Axelrod’s group continued painting contrary but negative picture of Nigeria’s global corruption status.

In the 2014 Transparency International’s CPI issued in December, Nigeria was ranked 136 out of 175 countries surveyed. This ranking placed Nigeria of Jonathan’s last 5 months in office alongside five other countries as 39th most corrupt country globally. With this ranking, Nigeria leapfrogged eight countries within a space of one year - from the 31st most corrupt in 2013 to 39th in 2014 [10].

In fact, Nigeria’s corruption rating stood a better contrast from all the civil government years of Obasanjo and the military regimes before it. The revelation of the Executive Director, UN Office on Drugs and Crimes observed that “our (Nigeria’s) past leaders stole $400 million” …but “five years into his (Obasanjo’s) administration, Nigeria was rated the number one corrupt country in the world with the presidency leading the table by this same organization. There were roars and uproar by the top members of OBj’s cabinet, with Oby Ezekwesili and co., proffering all sorts of explanations and defense that couldn’t stand the test of this period”. The subsequent year in that administration (Obasanjo’s sixth year in office), Nigeria was ranked 4th most corrupt nation in the world by Transparency International [11].

Accordingly, “the report so far indicated that from May 1999 when Obasanjo was in office till mid 2006, the monies stolen within the period … was more than what our past leaders stole put together from independence” before handing over to president Olusegun Obasanjo. Obasanjo expended over N1.3 trillion in the power
sector, N700 million on our refineries, N300 billion on our roads. If one matches these with returns in terms of achievements and results, the economic variables look a downward slope” (ibid).

These statistics underscore the true picture in contrast with the contrived image of Nigeria’s standing on global corruption watch during Jonathan’s administration painted by Axelrod’s media propaganda machinery which intensively carried damaging reports to create a loathsome image of that administration to a point where it seemed as though official corruption was novel in Nigeria.

The point being made is that while Obama administration continued to pay lip service to Nigeria under Jonathan, it however used both public and private channels to undermine the administration, internationally magnify every setback by the Nigerian government in the fight against Boko Haram, as well as underplaying its positions of strength – a position that smacks of hypocrisy.

**War against Boko Haram, Nigeria’s Cash-For-Arms Debacle and US Suspicious Role**

On September 17, 2014, Nicholas Ibekwe in [12], reported that Nigerian officials blame the Obama Administration for blocking its attempts to purchase arms from its allies in disregard for the legitimacy of the processes adopted by the Nigeria government to do so. So when the South African government seized the initial cash of $9.3 million flown in a private jet to South Africa, Nigerian government did not hide its suspicion when it stated through official channels that: “America has kept posturing to the world that they are helping us fight Boko Haram but that is far from the truth. We have money to buy all the arms we need but America has continued to stand in our way...Just recently we placed orders for tanks and jet fighters and it was ready to be delivered but suddenly the Americans again came in the way. So we were left with no choice than to explore ways to get arms in the best interest of our country and people...The US government has frustrated Nigeria all the way in our war against terrorism despite its public statements in support of Nigeria, as it fights the Boko Haram insurgents... They want us to fight Boko Haram with our arms tied to our backs. They have blocked us from procuring the helicopter and would not provide us with intelligence despite the fact that they have several drones and sophisticated aircraft overflying the north-east from bases in Niger and Chad where the Boko Haram fighters and movements are clearly in their sights... We are convinced that the U.S. government is playing out a script. They are desperate to demystify Nigeria’s Armed Forces and make it incapable of defeating Boko Haram. And they have an international network to frustrate our effort to get arms from alternative sources. It is even possible that they were the ones who tipped off the South African government on this failed (cash-for-arms) deal” [6,12].

All these suggest that Jonathan’s administration had strong suspicion that Obama administration was behind the first and second cash seizure debacle in South Africa.

**The Economic Sabotage**

As if that was not enough, U.S. also decided to cut petroleum purchase from Nigeria to zero, thus plunging the country’s economy into a great turmoil and raising concerns about its ability to fund the battle against Boko Haram which was now gaining more grounds in the north-east and establishing Islamic caliphates in areas under its control. Such action has been viewed as economic sabotage and a deliberate attempt to undermine the war against Boko Haram as well as making President Jonathan appear weak and ineffectual and, to that extent, unpopular and unacceptable to the Nigerian electorate.

It may be germane here to note that following the cut in the Nigeria’s oil purchase by Washington the reverberating effect was the value of Nigerian naira instantly assumed a downward spiral as cost of imports bourgeoned, leading to inflationary pressure down to the
commonest imported as well as locally produced commodities. In reaction to that cut, Nigerian government cancelled a Bi-national Military Training Agreement between Abuja and Washington. Under this seeming show of nerves, the United States began to tighten the noose on Nigeria aimed at bringing down the government of Jonathan albeit through verifiably contrived free and fair election processes.

The US and the Hypocrisy of Human Rights 'Vuvuzela'

If Obama administrations charges of Human Rights violation against Jonathan’s administration must be valid, it has to be measured against its consistency; it must be unbiased and lacking in hypocrisy.

In denying Nigerian arms supply request, the Obama administration has said... “it is barred from supplying weapons by the so-called Leahy Amendment which forbids foreign states that have committed “gross human rights violations from receiving military aid”. Yet, accusation of human rights violation did not stop the U.S. government from sending a special force (a form of military assistance) to Uganda in its effort in capturing Lord Resistance Army leader, Joseph Kony. Similarly, the same Leahy Amendment did not bar Obama from supporting and arming the Al Qaeda-linked rebel group in Libya accused of attacking U.S. Bengazi Mission, and which now has joined ISIS.

President Muhammadu Buhari was severally accused of human rights violations during his days as the military head of state of Nigeria. Buhari’s military regime in 1983-84 had been short, but was nevertheless, considered as dictatorial leading his successor, General Badamosi Babangida to observe that: “he was too rigid and uncompromising in his attitude to issues of national significance” (Naira/and Forum Sunday, 21 June 2015) [13].

Buhari-Idiagbon military government made reporting of truth a very serious offence which led to the imprisonment of Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor, the duo correspondents of the Guardian Newspaper.

The same regime was also to execute Benard Ogedengbe, Batholomew Owoh and Lawal Ojulope [14], for offence committed by them as alluded by the regime in spite of public plea for mercy in disregard to human rights law which the United States anchors its anti-Jonathan disposition. It should be recalled that execution Ogedengbe and co., was made possible by a retro-active decree in violation of the legal principle on the application of “ex-post facto law.”

Buhari and his deputy equally promulgated a decree (DN2) in 1984 to detain any person, citizen or alien suspected of anti-regime disposition without due process. This decree stripped the court of law the power to question the reasons for detention of anyone by the military and became a source of amusement internationally when Buhari handed down 125 years term of imprisonment to the regimes suspects [14].

In 2011, having lost in the Presidential election, supporters of Buhari went into a rampage, destruction, and maiming of suspected non-Muslims in the north leading to killing of five National Youth Service Corps members of Christian faith without any show of remorse on the part of their patron, Buhari.

Incidentally a truth and reconciliation commission headed by Justice Oputa was convened by the Nigerian civilian government of Olusegun Obasanjo and official invitation was extended to General Buhari to give account of his actions while in power. That invitation was ignored with impunity.

In contrast, throughout his presidency, and with all the demeaning name-callings and personal attacks including those on his wife, Patience, no individual, regardless of his political and religious affiliation was arrested, jailed, or executed by the Jonathan government. Where jail terms had been meted, it was not without verifiable probable cause or application of due process of the law.

In a Januuary 2014 article titled “USA: Close Guantanamo Bay And End Human
**Rights Hypocrisy**, Erica Guevara Rosa, Director of Amnesty International’s Americas Program noted that “in spite of the first official promise/decision of president Obama in 2008 to close the Guantanamo Bay maximum facility, the promise has become a human rights failure that threatens Obama’s legacy. Thus, “twelve years (now fifteen) after the first detainees were brought to Guantanamo, strapped down in planes like cargo, more than 150 men are still held there without trial” which seriously flies in the face of international morality as well as contravenes international human rights law.

Rosa further noted that “since it began operating, the facility it, (USA), has continued to proclaim its commitment to Human Right Standards. If any other country was responsible for this human rights vacuum, it would surely have drawn United States’ condemnation. It is long past the US authorities end this double standard”.

The questions therefore begging for answers are: (a) Why has the United States accused Jonathan’s administration of human rights violations in its war against Boko Haram especially in consideration of the atrocities of human carnage committed by this insurgent group? (b) On what moral and legal pedestal is the United States government standing to condemn as human rights violation, the acts of others, when it has, itself, come to equity with filthy hands? Its detention of suspected terrorists at the Guantanamo Bay facility in Cuba has led critics as well as international law scholars to question: “what is human right about a facility holding humans outside the jurisdiction of law?”

Similarly, the U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry made a mockery of Obama administration’s pretext when he hinted in a (January 2014) meeting with Jonathan and Buhari that “the United States might allow weapons sales after the election”, suggesting that it had envisioned a Buhari victory. We therefore venture to query: if the United States was concerned about human rights violations, how could a mere election change that? [6]. And true to suspicion and prediction, within a month of the swearing in of Buhari government, the United States announces a whopping $5 million to a multinational Joint Task Force to boost the military operation against the Boko Haram insurgency [15] thus erasing any doubts about U.S. hands in Buhari’s emergence.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

This paper set out with the assumption that altruism plays an insignificant role in foreign policy of nation states but particularly as it relates to that of the United States in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. It is our view that the claim and/or argument of human rights violation, for which the Obama administration covertly sought for a change of government in Nigeria (demonstrated by its muddled or lack of support for the war against Boko Haram insurgency), is not persuasive. Instead, it was a propaganda ploy to realize the election of General Muhammadu Buhari which it saw as potentially favorable to its interest in the region.

It was such scholars as George Kennan [16], Jerrold Green [17], Theordore Hesburg [18], who seemingly in the words of Kennan asked: “Is it principles that determine our reactions... or are there other motives?” Hence, Hesburg was to observe that “whereas measures taken by foreign governments affect American interest rather than American moral sensibility, protests and retaliations are obviously in order; but they should be carried forward frankly for what they are and not allowed to masquerade under mantle of moralism.”

On his part, Kenneth Thompson [19], observe that: “The security power dilemma preoccupies the foreign policy (of states). Some governments cover the nakedness of their fears and dream of expansionism by moral statements and ideological rationalization. In such cases, hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue.”

Similarly, this study is of the view that AFRICOM (which the Yar’Adua-Jonathan administration rejected) occupies a strategic mindset of the United States for the
realization of its economic interest in the sub-Saharan Africa and not an altruistic military establishment whose ultimate and central object is to benefit Africans. This is why Danu observed that “AFRICOM is an expansionist tool aimed at defending the vast economic interests and empire of the United States, adding that the project has no long term benefit for Africa…it is clear that the project is being perceived by the United States as a strong military companion through which she can intervene in any part of Africa where there are real and imagined threats to American economic interest.” This was why in his “Obama Shouldn’t Get Close to Goodluck Jonathan”, Funmi F. John noted: While oil remains an important factor in the Nigeria-US relationship, America’s military aspirations are equally a reason for a change of American tune… However, now that Yar’Adua is no longer in power, the U.S. has another opportunity to reintroduce AFRICOM to African audience. If Nigeria were to get on board, there is the likelihood that other countries will view the military command more favorably, thus paving the way for an African-based AFRICOM headquarters. This could also prove beneficial to American private military companies that are expanding their presence in the region, and especially in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea.

Harsh critics of AFRICOM have come to regard it as a “militarization of U.S. foreign aid and policy.” AFRICOM is a strategy for destabilization of perceived unfriendly regimes (which Nigeria under Jonathan has been viewed). This is all the more valid, in our view, as Jonathan administration equally called the Anglo-American bluff by ignoring their pressure for a reversion of Nigeria’s Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Bill of 2013 which Jonathan assented to on January 7, 2014. While Washington and its allies viewed that action with utmost reservation as expressed by Thomas Greenfield, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, [20] the Nigerian government abruptly canceled the Bi-national Military Training Agreement Program with the United States when it (Nigeria) began to view America’s body language in its war against Boko Haram with suspicion-this, following the interception and seizure by South African government, of Nigeria’s over $9 million cash-for-arms when the same United States refused to sell same to Nigeria at such a desperate (2015) period in Nigeria’s war against the insurgency.

As that was not enough, Obama’s government also deployed two naval ships off the coast of Tokoradi, Ghana as well as two Hercules C-130 transport planes with well over 200 marines at Kotoka Airport in Ghana just days before the scheduled Nigerian presidential election.

This move has been considered by security experts as psychological warfare aimed at cowing Jonathan administration into accepting what was considered a pre-ordained result that would usher in Buhari’s administration [21], or a move to intimidate groups in the Niger Delta who were suspected to have poised for disruption of sources of crude oil extraction and export in any event of Jonathan’s electoral misfortune.

In view of these developments and especially in consideration of the US announced $5 million for the multinational Joint Military Task Force to fight Boko Haram, the questions begging for answers are: (a) Why was the dilly dallying in its response for military intelligence assistance during Jonathan’s administration? (b) Is Nigeria fighting a different war under President Muhammadu Buhari other than that which Jonathan’s government had faced?

This paper therefore concludes that national interest imperative played a major determinant role in the US anti-Jonathan disposition during the 2015 presidential election; that the administration was perceived to have been towing a policy path conceived as incompatible with the aims and objectives of wider US Africa policy; that a change of government in Nigeria even through a “friendly coup” was a considered option in Washington; and that the Washington’s human rights violation mantra was not only not persuasive and
hypocritical, but a propaganda aimed at achieving both short and long term set

References

8. Intellibriefs.blogspot.com/2007/08/testimony-of-dr-wafula-okumu-us-house.htm/?m=1
10. www.reportefafrica.com/2015/05/transparency-intl-rates-president-jonathans-govt
15. www.thisidaylive.com
20. www.naij.com/59055.html
21. www.topratedgist.com