AFROCENTRIC FOREIGN POLICY THRUST AND DOMESTIC NATIONAL SECURITY INTEREST: A REVIEW OF NIGERIA'S 'INTERVENTION' IN MALI

Solomon Ayegba USMAN
Department of Political Science, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria,
Email of Correspondence Author : usmansay@oauife.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on Nigeria's participation in the military intervention in Mali in January 2013 to assist the country's beleaguered government fight the al-Qaeda supported Tuareg rebels and restore peace and stability to the West African neighbour. While the paper contends that Africa as the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy since its attainment of independence in 1960 is understandable given the country's vantage position in Africa, it nonetheless examines the rationale for troops deployment to Mali in the face of threat to its domestic national security orchestrated by the activities of Boko Haram in the North and other armed opposition groups elsewhere in the country. This is with a view to finding out whether its action is in consonance with its perceived national interest or African solidarity or both. The national interest approach is utilized for the paper.

Keywords: Military, Foreign Policy, National Security, Terrorism, al-Qaeda/Boko Haram

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's foreign policy thrust has largely remained afro-centric or Africa as centre-piece since attainment of the country's independence in 1960. For this the country has long been considered the natural leader of Africa and the black world (Akinterinwa, 2013). And more importantly, this has fetched the country the label of 'big brother' on the continent. This commitment to Africa has severally impelled Nigeria to bear Africa's burden with smiles (Usman, 2013; Ogwu: 2005 and Adetula, 2005). According to Saliu (2005: 204), this could be as a result of the fact that "Nigeria is, indeed, a leading country in Africa". Indeed, Nigeria's specific emphasis on Africa in the conduct of the country's foreign policy is understandable for obvious reasons: Nigeria is located in Africa, endowed with enormous human and natural resources, having the largest black population on earth and the thinking of Nigerians and their leaders repeatedly affirm that Nigeria has 'a historic mission and manifest destiny' on the continent. To Omole (2010: 5) and Mustapha (2008: 369), this is possible considering Nigeria's preponderant demography, natural resource endowment like crude oil, bauxite, iron-ore, gold and tin among other resources including formidable military strength seen as the greatest power in Africa from the standpoint of elements of national power in terms of number of men and military hardware than any of the states Army in Africa.

Corroborating this assertion, Osuntokun (2005: 34) noted that afro-centric behaviour of the country's foreign policy is predicated on the demographic consideration which the country no doubt, parades on the continent. Therefore, he submitted that

> Being the most populous Black Country in the world compelled her to shoulder, wittingly or unwittingly, the leadership of the black world. This led to Nigeria's feeling that she had a responsibility far beyond her borders. Some might say beyond her means.

Therefore, Afrocentric generosity can be described as the foreign policy posture of Nigeria since independence where legitimate aspirations of Africa and Africans continue to charitably dictate Nigeria's external behaviour. In other words, Afrocentricism of Nigeria's foreign policy means Africa's centrality in Nigeria's thinking and reactions on issues outside its immediate environment (Usman, 2018). It is aptly captured in the statement of the Nigerian only former Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (quoted in Clark, 1991: 501), who stated that "no matter where the African is – in South Africa, in Britain, or anywhere else – if he is discriminated against, I feel it as if I am discriminated against personally". In a nutshell, as promised by the then Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa at the UN General Assembly, the underlying principle of Afrocentricism in Nigeria's foreign policy reinforces the country's avowed intention and determination to "make the African cause its top priority" (Amao and Okeke-Uzodike, 2015: 7). Over the years, this principle has grown to become the cornerstone of the country's foreign policy thrust. Therefore, it can be argued that Nigeria's commitment to pursue African-centred foreign policy is in tandem with the psychological belief of many in what one of the country's founding fathers, late Nnamdi Azikwe, described as 'Nigeria's historic mission in Africa and its manifest destiny to rule and dominate the continent' (Fawole, 2004; Gambari, 2008; and Amao & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). Interestingly, this belief was not only passionately impressive among Nigerians but also, it was validated by the members of the international community who saw Nigeria as being capable of shouldering the responsibilities of Africa in global arena given its vantage positions on so many factors on the continent. Nigeria's generosity towards Africa and people of African descent is such that the country had severally defended interests of the continent and black people even when such interests contradict its citizens and domestic interests.

Presumably, to many, it is in realization of this expected and/or self-imposed role that Nigeria intervened in the terrorist instigated crisis in Mali in January 2013. No doubt, Nigeria similar roles in Africa, particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone and elsewhere in the world are widely acknowledged. In fact, many African leaders admit how significant and strategic Nigeria is to them. For instance, while erstwhile President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe said Africa without Nigeria is hollow, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda noted at the June 1991 OAU Summit held in Abuja, Nigeria, that African countries are very lucky to have a country like Nigeria in their midst (see Akinterinwa, 2005). Reaffirming the incontrovertible leadership of Nigeria in Africa, former Liberian President, Mrs Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, on Tuesday, September 23, 2008 in New York, at the 63rd session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly revealed and reminded her listening audience of Nigeria's immense

contributions to end the recent war in her country. Emphatically, she reiterated that Nigeria's military effort was instrumental to stabilising Liberia and noted that the leadership displayed by Nigeria during that chaotic period was unparalleled in history. A year earlier, her former Vice President, Joseph Boakai, had equally commended Nigeria for the solidarity it demonstrated by standing with Liberian people during the 14-year civil conflict during when he recounted: "Nigeria spent millions of dollars and lost scores of her troops just to stop Liberians from killing each other" (Nweke, 2010: 52). He went ahead to acknowledge Nigeria's true 'big brother' in view of the country's role in the formation of the ECOWAS Peace Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1990 which helped to prevent a bloodbath in Liberia. But if these African leaders were silent on what placed Nigeria at such vantage position over them (and others), General Ibrahim Babangida (quoted in Fawole, 2003: 161) clearly identified them when he argued that

> Nigeria was the only country that had the capacity to take the lead because of its vantage demographic superiority, large standing army and weapons, economic wherewithal to bankroll the operation and other ancillary requirements for military intervention abroad.

However, the contradiction and reactions that the country's troop deployment to Mali has generated rest on the simple question: in whose interest is the Mali intervention, the Nigeria's domestic national interest or the stability of Mali or both? These concerns are justifiable considering the security challenges arising especially from the violent Islamic sect called Boko Haram in the northern part of Nigeria and other banditry groups that the country itself is facing. Arguably, the swiftness with which Nigerian troops were dispatched to Mali belies the security challenges at home. For this reason, it is now habitual and policy priority for Nigerian authorities to resolve crisis in (neighbouring) African countries faster than the insurgency at home. It is therefore the contention of this paper that perhaps, if the federal government had responded in similar manner to the Boko Haram threat during its formative years, their activities could have been effectively nipped in the bud before escalating to the present proportion. Hence, writing on 'Father Christmas' foreign policy posture of the Nigeria's government since inception, Nwanolue and Iwuoha (2012: 76) averred that the country has given too much to African states at the detriment of its core domestic interests. To them, Nigeria's flamboyant foreign policy thrust in Africa ironically diminishes its prominence and economic value both home and abroad. They put it more aptly when they submit that:

> The country had overwhelmingly given both solicited and unsolicited supports to African neighbours: intervened positively in their internal crisis provided humanitarian services, doled out billions of dollars as charity, sent technical aid corps, formed and sent military supports, and so on. In most cases, these flamboyant gestures were defiantly done against home interest and survival. However, there seems to be a disconnect between what is given out and what is given in return… the superfluous involvement of

Nigeria in Africa's problems, in defiant of home problems, aimed at acquiring cheap fame, rather makes her unpopular and diminishes whatever prestige that had been built already. Not only that, these beneficiary countries never appreciate such, they rather sabotage Nigeria's interest in global politics in recompense.

Therefore, the thrust of this paper among others is to examine the motivations behind Nigeria's military assistance to Mali so as to see whether the action was predicated on the age-long afro-centric and good neighbourliness drive of its foreign policy, ECOWAS policy on camaraderie or its strategic national security interest. Be that as it may, it is pertinent to first and foremost carefully appraise the origin, causes and nature of the Mali crisis that dictated Nigeria's intervention. Accordingly, it is pertinent to interrogate the concept of national interest, what constitute it and ultimately decipher what really form Nigeria's national interests and relate it to the country's military assistance to Mali.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ANALYSIS

In this paper, we adopt the National Interest approach to determine the rationale for Nigeria's military assistance in terms of troop's deployment to restore stability to Mali and see the justification or otherwise of its efforts. The central presumption of this approach in international relations and particularly in foreign policy discourse is that, in the conduct of inter-state relations in the international system, state leaders and policy-makers' behaviours are largely influenced by certain interests that are deemed to be in conformity with the collective aspirations of their citizens. In other words, state does not engage other actors – state or non-state alike – in vacuum but to realize aggregate interests, expectations, wishes and aspirations of individuals and groups within its territory. Thus, the state considers no sacrifice too much to achieve these interests. It is the pursuit of these interests that dictates the actions and sometimes inactions of the state (see Northedge, 1968; Frankel, 1973; Lerche and Said, 1979; Adeniran, 1983; Akinboye, 1999; and Mimiko, 2010 for details). Thus, in describing how Britain perceives and cherishes its national interests, Lord Palmerston (Roskin, 1994) wrote that, "England has neither permanent friends nor permanent enemies; she has permanent interests". These 'permanent interests' that are sacrosanct to states as expressed in Palmerston's statement clearly underpin what national interest is. In his submission, Goldstein and Pevehouse (2009: 74) simply describe national interests as "the interests of the state itself". But what are exactly the interests of a state? Like individuals, available literature on the discourse of national interest indicate that what constitute state interests vary from one state to another and from one particular period of time to another.

Thus, writing from the perspective of scholars from realist school of thought, Kenneth Waltz defined national interest as simply "maximizing power" (Waltz, 1979). This view was shared by a foremost scholar in international relations and one of the pioneers of realist theory, Hans Morgenthau. According to Morgenthau and Thompson (1985), just as money constitute core interest to firms in economic market, competition for power in international system remains critical in pursuit of national interests by states. Therefore, the question worth asking is: what exactly are the composite of Nigeria's national interests?

According to Olusanya and Akindele (see Akpan, 2002 and Usman, 2013), there is however a general agreement in Nigeria what these national interests consist of. These include the defence of the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; the restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world, particularly the eradication of colonialism and white minority rule from the face of Africa; and the creation of the relevant political and economic condition in Africa and the rest of the world, which will not only facilitate the preservation of the territorial integrity and security of all African countries but also to foster national self-reliance in African countries. Others include the promotion and improvement of the economic well-being of the Nigerian citizens and the promotion of world peace and justice.

In the words of Akindele (2000: 61), "all the five objectives remain within the well-known goals which have historically animated and underpinned the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy since 1960" could be said to be portraying the country's national interests. Nonetheless, it was former President Ibrahim Babangida (quoted in Ogwu, 1986: 7) that explicitly articulated what constitute the national interest of Nigeria when he said:

> "Nigeria's national interest can be identified as predicated on the nation's military, economic, political and social security. Anything that will enhance the capacity of Nigerians to defend their national security must be seen as being in their national interest. Anything that promotes Nigeria's economic growth and development is in the national interest. Anything that will make Nigeria politically stable is also in the national interest".

From the above quotation, it can be seen that domestic national security in all ramifications is paramount and must claim first attention of any responsible and responsive government. Additionally, Section 14(1) (b) of the 1999 Constitution unambiguously states that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government". This is without prejudice to the country's afro-centric sentiment demonstrated in Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's speech when he said in his United Nations (UN) acceptance speech that:

> So far, I have concentrated on the problems of Africa. Please do not think that we are not interested in the problems of the rest of the world: we are intensely interested in them and hope to be allowed to assist in finding solutions to them through this organization, but being human we are naturally concerned first with what affects our immediate neighbour (Fawole, 2003: 39).

As we will see in later part of the work, it will be determined the specific interests that precipitated Nigeria's military assistance in the Malian crisis of 2013.

2.1   The Origin, Causes and Nature of Malian Crisis

Understandably, the remote causes and origin of current crisis in Mali predates the military coup led by Capt. Amadou Sanogo that toppled the democratically elected government of President Amadou Toumani Toure in 2012. Historically, shortly after attainment of independence from France peacefully in 1959, Mali descended into dictatorship under President Modibo Keita who installed a one-party socialist government that silenced all forms of opposition and cowed them to submission (Arieff, 2012: 6). However, in 1968, Moussa Traore ended Keita's dictatorship through military coup and ruled for more than two decades. The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s heralded demand for increasing multiparty democracy by disaffected Malians who wanted an end to official corruption among government officials, poor living standard and general alienation. Reacting to this, the military again, led by Amadou Toumani Toure (popularly called ATT) staged a coup that overthrew President Traore regime in 1991 and organized election that was won by a leading opposition figure, Alpha Oumar Konare as president. The election of Konare and his compliance with two-term limit stipulated by the country's constitution soared Mali's growing democratic reputation and rule of law when he (Konare) stepped down in 2002 (Zeric, 2001).

In its first democratic transition between civilian leaders, ATT won the 2002 elections and was later re-elected in 2007. In the absence of clear ideological preferences or platforms among political parties, ATT pursued what Arieff (2012) would describe as "broad and flexible ruling coalition" which ATT himself called "consensus politics". But despite this, corruption and clientele patronage among political elites remains defiant while endemic poverty is on the increase daily among the civil populace. Although, poverty was widespread among ordinary citizens but the most affected group in the country were the Tuaregs, a considerable but minority members of the semi-nomadic community who are mostly Muslims inhabiting vast part of northern Mali. They can also be found in Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria, and Libya. They have particularly complained of neglect, alienation and discrimination by the Malian authorities, which have been dominated by southern ethnic groups since independence.

Writing on the plight of the Tuaregs in the country, Rogers (2012: 2) remarked by saying that prior to that year's events, Mali had deep-seated problems of poverty, maladministration and corruption, coupled with the relative under-development of the north of the country, a region inhabited substantially (even though not solely) by ethnic Tuaregs. Capturing neglect and marginalization of the Tuareg nomads that stoked suspicion and hatred between the south and particularly, authorities in Bamako and the north, Onuoha and Thorson (2013) posit that

> Feeling that the state had neglected and marginalised them, especially in times of drought, nomadic Tuareg fighters launched rebellions in the 1890s, the 1910s, 1962, 1990, and 2006. Unresolved grievances from these rebellions have kept conflict alive. For example, the government's harsh response to the 1962 rebellion, which included killing herds and poisoning wells, left bitter memories among Tuareg communities. Peace accords and decentralisation initiatives in the 1990s and 2000s, meanwhile,

were never effectively implemented. Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu, and
the surrounding desert areas remained poor and vulnerable.

This neglect led to the formation of several separatist armed groups like the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) which laid claim and gained greater control over what they perceive to be their historic homeland in the north, which they call the *Azawad* in the 1990s. Others include the Islamist fighters called Ansar al Deen or Ansar al Dine (which means "Defenders of the Faith"), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJIWA or MUJAO, after its French acronym) and the 2003 Algerian-born Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which rebranded itself Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in 2007, began kidnapping Western tourists and aid workers in the Saharan-Sahel region (Onuoha and Thurston, 2013: 2).

However, from 2006 to 2009, the Algerian government facilitated truce between government and the rebels. But the non-implementation of several understandings such as greater regional autonomy for the Azawad, the integration of Tuareg combatants into the Malian army and more state aid for the impoverished north, led to the escalation of the violent conflict between the rebels and government forces. Also, the prospective control over potential oil and gas resources discovered in northern Mali may have equally fuelled the crisis.

According to the finding of a report by the Secretary-General of the UN on the situation in Mali, on November 29, 2012 (Onuoha and Thurston, 2013: 2), an estimated 3,000 core combatants of the armed groups were present in northern Mali. The said report also revealed that insurgents were actively recruiting and had relatively sophisticated equipment obtained from both Libyan and Malian stocks. In the testimony of Corinne Dufka before the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee (see Onuoha and Thurston, 2013), it was reported that these groups have imposed harsh behavioural and dress codes on local residents in places under their control and have ruthlessly carried out amputations and executions in an extremely conservative interpretation of Sharia (Islamic) Law. Equally too, they have targeted historic and cultural sites, including UNESCO World Heritage-designated ancient mosques and tombs, as well as recruitment of child soldiers and involvement in other human right abuses.

Therefore, the coup that removed President Amadou Toumani from power in March 2012 was occasioned by government failure to meet the demands and expectations of the military in terms of funding and equipment to confront the rebel groups' activities in northern Mali. According to media report, "the coup was precipitated by the Tuareg rebellion in January 2012, in which Tuareg rebels in Mali's north launched a war of independence against the Malian government in Azawad" (Al Jazeera, 2012 and Boyle, 2012). The rebel offensive which was led by the MNLA was basically motivated by the insurgents who participated and returned from the Libyan crisis heavily armed. The MNLA became difficult to contain by poorly equipped Malian army especially when several other armed groups including the Ansar al Dine and other AQIM affiliates joined them. Embarrassed by their inability to suppress the Tuareg rebellion, a faction within the Malian military revolted against President ATT's government and forcefully removed him from power on March 21, 2012. Following

ATT's removal, the coupists immediately suspended the constitution and established the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State (CNRDR) headed by the leader of the coup, Capt. Amadou Sanogo (BBC News Africa, 2012; News24, 2011, and Nossiter, 2012).

Apparently, emboldened by lack of equipment and poor training of the Malian army vis-à-vis the sophisticated weaponry at their disposal and high level of morale on their part from Libya crisis, the Islamist groups took over the control of key cities of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal and proclaimed independence. According to Rogers (2012: 2),

> Part of the reason for the rebels being able to gain and hold territory, including the historic city of Timbuktu, was the presence among their number of several thousand young men who had been mercenaries for the Gaddafi regime in Libya and had returned to Mali after Gaddafi's downfall with both military experience and weapons. One of the main reasons that so many Tuareg rebels fought in Libya is that doing so afforded them better pay and living conditions while the Gaddafi regime remained in power.

Therefore, considering the security implications and danger that rebels' control of northern Mali signifies to the entire Sahel region in relation to terrorist upsurge in the region in recent time, French government declared war on the MNLA and its proxies to regain the territories lost to them and return the territorial integrity of Mali. Precisely, on January 11, 2013, at the request of Mali's government, France deployed some 550 soldiers in the country under 'Operation Serval' to dislodge the rebels (*The Punch*, 2013, p. 2). The intervention of France is understandable on three grounds. One, looking at it from the perspective of France being a former colonial master of Mali and a gendarmerie for virtually all its Francophone West African states, it has moral obligation to intervene. Two, there is an existing military pact between France and all its former colonies in the sub-region that justified its interest in Mali crisis. Three, many French citizens and French economic interest are threatened with terrorist-ridden Sahel as many French citizens have been kidnapped by terrorists operating in the region.

While justifying French military operations and assistance in Mali, the question then is: what were the driving motivations behind Nigeria's troop deployment when the Boko Haram insurgency was (and is still) undermining national security in the northern part of the country? And to what extent were there justified? In providing some answers to these questions it is important to interrogate the crisis in Mali and justification for Nigeria's military assistance.

2.2   The Malian Crisis and Nigeria's Military Assistance

In explaining Nigeria's interest and/or motivation for military deployment in Mali, no single point can provide exhaustive explanation sufficient enough. Several reasons informed the decision of the Nigerian federal government. While this paper does not intend to provide exhaustive analysis of these reasons as widely debated, it seeks to appraise some of the cogent ones bearing in mind their merits and otherwise. Literature is replete on the motivations that impelled former President Goodluck Jonathan's administration decision on

Mali. The observations of Yoroms (2010) and Ate (2011) (quoted in Alli, 2012: 7), are worth quoting at length here.

> Nigeria's approach to sub-regional security has been largely influenced by the national role conceived for it in international relations by its leaders. This role conception has become the defining paradigm for foreign policy engagement. According to this paradigm, Nigeria is the "natural leader" of Africa with a "manifest destiny" and even with the responsibility to promote and protect the interests of Africa and black people everywhere in all ramifications. They also believe that the country's security is tied to that of other African states because of cultural and historical experiences, and because of transnational security issues which are defined by the way in which the security of a nation is affected by what happens in contiguous countries around its neighbourhood. Nigeria must treat this sub-region as a natural base from which to project its national interests and regional influence. This perspective has propelled Nigeria to the centre stage of African affairs generally and in West African security matters in particular. In the past few decades, member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have had to contend with quite a number of security problems, the type of which were not envisaged when the treaty establishing the organisation was signed in 1975.

Explaining why Nigeria is seen to be a "natural leader" of Africa with a "manifest destiny" particularly in West Africa sub-region, the submission of Fawole (2001: 10) is equally apposite. To him,

> Nigeria's overall sub-regional preponderance is well known. Having a clear demographic superiority (about half the population of the sixteen-member sub-region) and with a bigger economy and a larger standing army definitely puts it at a vantage position to dictate the pace of events… [Therefore], it is beyond dispute that Nigeria has played the leading role in several African affairs.

From the above standpoints, it is convenient to argue that whatever happens to the sub-region is of direct interest much as it is of consequence to Nigeria. Hence, Nwoke (2005: 115) succinctly asserts that "Nigeria's commitment to West African integration goes back to the Balewa's administration of the early 1960s, the heyday of efforts to institutionalize the concept of pan Africanism". Further validating this point, Nweke (2010: viii) wrote that "the Nigerian nation is known as one whose foreign policy is essentially tailored to reflect her commitment to the well-being of all African countries; particularly in the areas of peaceful coexistence, prevention of violent conflicts – at intra-national and international levels – restoration of peace where necessary; and maintenance of peace all over the world".

While this long time African and black man 'natural leader' belief about Nigeria which has not been reciprocated by our neighbours and beneficiaries, can be excused, what is the wisdom in 'chasing a rat when one's house is on fire'? Indeed, Nigeria's house was (and still is) on fire with scores of people dying almost every day, property worth billions of USD destroyed and national unity being threatened by the Boko Haram members who were (and are still) hell-bent on bombing and killing anything on their way yet, it was in the middle of such crisis that Nigeria chose to intervene in Mali. Perhaps, government should have heeded the warning of Professor Bamitale Omole in this respect. According to Omole (2010: 21 – 22),

> A fundamental problem with Nigeria's foreign policy making towards her Francophone neighbours is the penchant of Nigeria's foreign policy makers to revel in the past grandeur of illusion, despite changing economic and political indices to the contrary. First, all the Francophone neighbours do not appreciate Nigeria's brotherly assistance towards them and Nigeria's foreign policy makers should not be deceived by the platitude of gratuitous verbalisation to the contrary by these countries.

Going further, he says:

> After all, one would have thought that the assistance rendered to Niger by the Nigerian government would make her to be sympathetic to Nigeria's positions at the United Nations and the African Union. The politics of solidarisation (sic) by the CEAO countries against Nigeria in ECOWAS does not only diminish Nigeria, it has also impeded the rapid growth of ECOWAS in fulfilling its mandate. When ECOMOG was to be formed, some Francophone member states like Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, and Mali were not only very reluctant in being part of it by refusing to join and when they eventually and reluctantly did, they exploited Nigeria's perceived hegemony to serve their self-serving interests by supporting the rebels in the Liberian crisis…. [Therefore], the time has come for Nigerian leaders to stop deceiving themselves about their relations with the Francophone States. In 2000, President Abdullahi Wade of Senegal stated that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) without Nigeria was preferable and this view is secretly and openly shared by many Francophone elites.

But contrary to this expectation, the country once again mobilized its key national power element, the army, to confront rebels in Mali. Although, looking at the issue from the point of view of the government which hinged its intervention on security grounds, one would be tempted to justify Nigeria's intervention in terms of putting down its boots on the

Malian soil. It was believed by many especially the government elites that confronting the Boko Haram menace at home front amount to mere shadow chasing since large number of sect's cell leaders and members receive combatant training and arms from the AQIM in the Sahel region, with Mali being a flashpoint. On this assumption and perhaps, intelligence available to government, government vindicated its military mission in Mali. In fact, justifying sending 1, 200 Nigerian troops to join French soldiers in Mali on January 16, 2013 (*The Punch*, January 16, 2013, p. 2), President Goodluck Jonathan (see *The Punch*, January 24, 2013, p. 2), was reported saying that

> If you don't solve the problem of Mali, Nigerians will continue to sleep with one eye because the terrorists will like to move from Northern Mali to Niger, Chad and of course Northern Nigeria. Almost 50 per cent of the Boko Haram adherents were trained in Northern Mali. Most of the weapons they use come from Libya to Mali and then to Nigeria.

Buttressing the president's assertion, the then Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Azubuike Ihejirika said: "We are aware that most of the terrorists in this country were trained in Mali. We are also aware that as of yesterday (January 16, 2013), there was still an influx of some chaps trained in Mali into the country" (*The Punch*, January 23, 2013, p. 2). To Jacques Roussellier, a terrorist expert and instructor at American Military University, while Mauritania is now increasingly being used as AQIM rear base in the region, Northern Mali provides safe haven to trained members of terrorist groups including Mali-based Ansar Eddin and Nigeria's Boko Haram (*The Punch*, January 24, 2013, p. 2). Corroborating experts' opinions on terrorism who agreed with the position of Nigerian government, Segun Olugbile wrote that

> At least four cross-border flows facilitate terrorism in West Africa… From North Africa, terrorism is imported to the sub-Saharan Africa through the trade routes to West Africa. With the al-Qaeda influence among some groups of terrorists in North Africa, and some Nigerian neighbours, importing terrorism into Nigeria will not be difficult. The nation's leaky borders provide an easy access to such venture. At least, drug couriers, smugglers, child traffickers and illegal aliens have for years been coming in and out of the country with little or no challenge. Also, AQIM has secured operational and training bases in the Sahel and immediate surrounding countries such as Libya and Mali. It has also built local and tactical alliances with Tuareg in Niger, Mali as well as in Mauritania… (*The Punch*, Lagos, January 24, 2013, p. 2).

It is also noteworthy that intelligence within government circle had revealed that Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, was reportedly sighted in one of the AQIM training camps in Mali in December 2012. Therefore, when asked if there was a possibility that the leader of

Boko Haram was fighting in Mali, President Jonathan retorted: "It is possible. They have no boundaries. They don't respect international boundaries" (*The Punch*, Lagos, January 24, 2013, p. 2).

From the foregoing, it is quite clear that government's intervention in Mali is predicated on three main grounds. First, it is founded on the conviction of government that in Mali, it must show commitment to its avowed African solidarity foreign policy objective and ECOWAS brotherhood which it (un)wittingly placed on its shoulders by carrying moral obligation to defend threatened territorial integrity of any member state, promote stability and deepen democracy. Hence, it is argued that in deploying over a thousand troops (including some police officers) for combat mission as part of 3,300 African Union/ECOWAS agreed intervention force called African Union Led Mission in Support of Mali (AFISMA) to retake north Mali from Islamist rebels, Nigeria, as a responsible nation, was deemed fulfilling its treaty obligation to the two bodies. The mission was sequel to request put forward by the interim Malian government for assistance in suppressing the rebellion to the United Nation Security Council (UNSC). Acting on this demand, the UNSC on October 12, 2012 adopted Resolution No. 2071, authorising ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) to develop a plan for international military intervention in Mali and report back in 45 days. Swiftly, military experts from Africa led by Nigeria, the UN and Europe held a week-long meeting in Bamako, where preliminary blueprint for the deployment of about 3, 000 to 4, 000 troops to recapture north Mali from al Qaeda-linked rebel groups was drawn up. This was followed by November 11, 2012 ECOWAS Meeting in Abuja where it was unanimously agreed that intervention force to retake north Mali from Islamist rebels was initiated. The ECOWAS resolution was forwarded to the AU Peace and Security Council which endorsed the military plan. Subsequently, this was presented to the UNSC as mandated by Resolution No. 2071. On its part, the UNSC in Resolution No. 2085 which was adopted on December 20, 2012, authorised the deployment of AFISMA (later transformed into United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali, MINUSMA) to Mali for an initial period of one year. Consequently, as a stakeholder in global fight against terror, government justified the role it chose to play in Mali. It can be argued therefore that Nigeria's intervention is largely within the context of this framework.

Secondly, it is believed by the Nigerian government that by assisting Mali militarily it was as well serving the strategic national security interests of the country. The country's leadership firmly believe that in view of trans-border crossing and chains of global terrorism, terrorist activities in the Sahel and particularly in Mali, could have adverse spill-over effect on Nigerian national security if left unchecked. In addition to this, in his view, Nweke (2010) believed that such intervention like the one the country undertook in Mali could be justified on the basis of its national strategic interests and particularly those of its citizens. He believed that since millions of Nigerian nationals are resident of countries in the sub-region, including Mali, with many into trading and businesses, government's assistance to ECOWAS sister state should be commendable.

The third point is probably hinged on military tactic and strategy of never showing determined enemy weakness or stress. It is believed that even though the Nigerian army has been over-stretched due to its involvement in maintaining internal security in the country

arising from Boko Haram insurgency, failure to deploy soldiers to Mali in fulfilment of the two reasons earlier mentioned, will send a 'wrong signal' of fatigue on the part of the Nigerian armed forces capability to deal with any form of threats including the sect's activities against the Nigerian state and this will embolden them the more. So, to show courage and determination that Nigerian security forces are up to the task of securing the territorial integrity of the nation, it becomes attractive option to send troops to Mali. Perhaps, in the calculation of the nation's security strategists and government, abandoning Mali in such time of security need like that posed by the Tuareg rebels, will amount to admitting that the Nigerian security apparatus especially the military has been weakened and this could bolster their morale to carry on with bombing campaign and other terrorist activities.

Certainly, it is our argument that whatever motivation and justification accorded the military 'intervention' in Mali by the Federal Government of Nigeria remain a misplaced priority and insignificant for 'charity begins at home', government arguments and positions notwithstanding. Rather than going into Mali when the country's own security was at major risk, the wise policy option would have been to deploy such troops along the country's porous borders to checkmate illegal entry of bandits and weapons. In such circumstance, the country should have mobilized and deployed the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) into Mali to assist the intelligence gathering and sharing with both government and security agencies at home and if deemed appropriate, the Malian authorities. This is a predominate security practice most countries in the world including the United States, Britain, France, Israel and others follow. Example of Israelis Defence Forces (IDF) in similar situation with its hostile Arab neighbours as revealed by Yousef (2009), should have teach the country an important lesson.

In fact, with regard to obligation to Africa and particularly ECOWAS sub-region as excuse given by government, it is in an open secret that most Francophone members of the sub-regional pay lip service to it. This explains why many of them fail in their obligation to it by paying their dues as at when due. Today, it is indisputable fact that the effective performance of sub-regional body ECOWAS was largely as a result of single-handed financial obligations of a 'reputable prince' called Nigeria that shoulder funding of the body following concerted and deliberate failure and reluctance of Francophone members to pay their voluntary contribution (Fawole, 2004, cited in Omole, 2010: 12). As Nwoke (2005: 133) put it, "several countries (especially of Francophone bloc) have substantial sums outstanding in their contributions, a sad state of affairs which certainly undermines the region's integrative efforts". This is more so that the beneficiary of the country's goodwill is among the ungrateful Francophone West-African sister nations (Omole, 2010). Again, the argument that intervention in Mali will help mitigate the spate of bombings by Boko Haram does not appear strong. More importantly, key leaders of the sect still remain 'invisible' to the government and its forces notwithstanding the rumour of the death of Mallam Abubakar Shekau. Conceivably, identifying this mistake, government itself, contrary to president's earlier position of having the troops stayed in Mali till crisis ends and democracy restored (see *The Punch*, January 23, 2013), ordered immediate withdrawal of some soldiers from Mali to participate in internal security maintenance in the North-East having declared the state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states thus, bringing government to the

reality it was keen on shying away from initially (*Daily Trust*, 2013). It was however reported that Nigeria's troop withdrawal was as a result of the country's failure to secure the command of the peacekeeping forces, MINUSMA, which it lost to Rwanda (*This Day* Newspaper, 2013). Yet again, this shows the ungratefulness that African countries have for the benevolent Federal Government of Nigeria. This further accentuates the point that it is high time Nigeria began to re-assess and prioritize its foreign policy to reflect reciprocity instead of floundering with African policy claim.

In this regard, the caution of Ebenezer Okpokpo is very instructive here. According to him, "Africa alone should no longer be the one and only reason for the existence of a foreign policy in Nigeria. None of the important international diplomatic actors, such as the USA, France and Great Britain, build their foreign policy on only one pillar" (Okpokpo, 2000: 31). Again, this become very necessary in view of the way Nigeria is being treated by some of these African countries that the country has severally sacrificed for. As bluntly put it by Ajaebili (2011: 277),

> Although Nigeria played the role of a big brother, despite its sustained assistance, it has not been accorded the appropriate recognition for its leadership role in the continent. Instead, Nigeria has been the butt of derision by several African states. For instance, some Francophone African countries brazenly disdain Nigeria…

What is the need laying claim to leadership or 'big brother' of the continent wherein the said leader and/or big brother cannot successfully influence outcomes of several events in Africa? For example, during the election of the AU Chairperson, incumbent Mr Jean Ping of Gabon supported by Nigeria lost out to South African candidate, Ms Nkosazana-Dlamini Zuma of South Africa. According to Lamido (2012), "recent events at the African continental fora where candidates backed by Nigeria have lost elections indicate that we are far from achieving our objective of playing leading roles in African affairs". In this respect, the warning of Niccolo Machiavelli in his popular book, *The Prince*, is very instructive regarding the manner Nigerian government and leaders had gone about pursuing African-centred foreign policy at the detriment of domestic national interests. Writing on generosity and parsimony, Machiavelli (1961: 50 – 51) wrote:

> I know everyone will agree that it would be most laudable if a prince possess all the qualities deemed to be good… But because of conditions in the world, princes cannot have those qualities or observe them completely… If you want to sustain a reputation for generosity, therefore, you have to be ostentatiously lavish; and a prince acting in that fashion will soon squander all his resources, only to be forced in the end, if he wants to maintain his reputation, to lay excessive burdens on the people, to impose extortionate taxes, and to do everything else he can to raise money. This will make his subjects hate him, and since he will have impoverished himself, he will be generally despised. As a result, because of this

generosity of his, having injured many and rewarded few, he will be vulnerable… When he realizes this and tries to retrace his path he will immediately be reputed miser… So because a prince cannot practise the virtue of generosity…he should be prudent and not mind being called a miser… If all men were good, this precept would not be good.

Obviously, Nigeria has been a 'reputable prince' known for generosity towards African neighbours and the rest of the world even at the inconveniences of its citizenry and national interests, ostentatiously lavishing its resources with arrogant ego in sustaining the status quo with visible burdens on the people. More upsetting is the fact that this 'reputable prince' has been generous to those who scorn and disparage 'him'. Hence, true to Machiavelli's prediction, this has undoubtedly rendered the country susceptible to citizens' hatred.

3.0   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is the contention of this paper that while Nigeria's firm commitment to its Africa-centre piece foreign and sub-regional good neighbourliness policies must be sustained and encouraged, these must not be done at the detriment of its national domestic interests. In any case, it is doubtful if sub- regional solidarity would have been emphasized without Nigeria. Therefore, it is incumbent on government that national interest in terms of security and protection of its territorial integrity as well as citizens and their property must come first in its policy foreign engagement. It must also be stressed that rather than playing 'Father Christmas' roles especially to neighbours that believe are better off without Nigeria, the country should as a matter of foreign policy priority, focus on the welfare of its citizens and their happiness instead of sacrificing them for others all in the name of (in)famous natural leadership label. Suggestively, the country's foreign policy must be at all-time citizen-centred as hyped by former President Yar'Adua's Citizens' Diplomacy thrust. This is so because, the adaptable trends of most countries in the 21st century world are such that the entire foreign policy gamut revolves round their citizens with the primary objective of providing them adequate security and protection as well as promoting their well-being and Nigeria cannot afford to be an exemption to this. It is on these notes that we argue that Nigeria's military assistance to Mali at a time when the nation's domestic national security was being threatened by Boko Haram insurgency was with all intents and purposes misplaced.

4.0   REFERENCES

Adediran, T. (1983). *Introduction to International Relations*, Macmillan: Lagos

Adetula, V. A. O. (2005). "Nigeria and the African Union (AU)" in Ogwu, J. U. (ed.); *New Horizons for Nigeria in the World Affairs*, NIIA: Lagos

Ajaebili, C. N. (2011). "The Option of Economic Diplomacy in Nigeria's Foreign Policy" in *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 1, No. 17, Special Issue* (November)

Akinboye, S. (1999). "Nigeria's Foreign Policy", in R. Anifowose and F. C. Enemuo (eds.); *Elements of Politics*, Sam Iroanusi Publications: Lagos

Akindele, R. A. (2000). "The 1999 Constitution and Foreign Policy" in R. A. Akindele and E. A. Bassey (eds.); *Selected Readings on Nigeria's Foreign Policy and International Relations: NIIA Enlightenment Course Series, Vol. 1, No. 1*

Akinterinwa, B. A. (2005). "Nigeria and Permanent Membership of the United Nations Security Council: Dynamics and Definienda", Akinterinwa, B. A. (ed.); *Nigeria and the United Nations Security Council*, Vantage Publishers Limited: Ibadan

Akinterinwa, B. A. (2013). "The Diaspora and Nigeria's Africa Policy" in *Nigerian Journal of International Studies, Vol. 38, Nos. 1 & 2*

Akpan, N.E. (2002). "Obasanjo's Foreign Policy in the Fourth Republic", in *Uyo Journal of Humanities, Vol. 7,* (December)

Al Jazeera (2012). "Explainer: Tuareg-led rebellion in North Mali, April 3. Available at http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/03/201232211614369240.html. Accessed on November 6, 2012

Alli, W.O. (2012). *The Role of Nigeria in Regional Security Policy*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: Abuja

Amao, O. B. & Okeke-Uzodike, U. (2015). "Nigeria, Afrocentrism, and Conflict Resolution: After Five Decades – How Far, How Well?" in *African Studies Quarterly*, *Vol. 15, Issue 4* (September)

Arieff, A. (2012). "Crisis in Mali" in *CRS Report for Congress* (January 14)

BBC News Africa (2012). "Mali crisis: Who's Who?" BBC News, June 29. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17582909. Accessed on November 7, 2012

Boyle, A. S. (2012). *Mali: A Timeline & Factsheet* (as at November). Available on *www.*americansecurityproject.org/.../Ref%200099%20-%20Mali%20-%20time. Accessed on 29/07/2013

Clark, T. (1991). *A Right Honourable Gentleman: The Life and Times of Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa*, Zaria, Kaduna: Hudahuda Publishing Company

Daily Trust (2013). *Nigeria: Troops from Mali Land in Maiduguri*, August 1. Available on http://allafrica.com/stories/201308010498.html. Accessed on 07/08/2013

Fawole, W. A. (2003). *Nigeria's External Relations and Foreign Policy Under Military Rule (1966-1999),* Ile Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited

Fawole, W. A. (2001). *Military Power and Third Party Conflict Mediation in West Africa: The Liberian and Sierra Leone Case Studies*, Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited

Fawole, W. A. (2004). *Understanding Nigeria's Foreign Policy under Civilian Rule since 1999*, Ibadan: College Press Publishers Limited

FGN (1999). *1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (with Amendments 2011), Lagos: Government Press

Frankel, J. (1973). *Contemporary International Theory and then Behaviour of States*, London: Oxford University Press

Gambari, I. A. (2008). "From Balewa to Obasanjo: Theory and Practice of Nigeria's Foreign Policy" in A. Adebajo and Mustapha, R. A. (eds.); *Gulliver's Troubles: Nigeria's Foreign Policy After the Cold War,* South Africa University of Kwazulu-Natal

Goldstein, J. S. and Jon C. Pevehouse (2009). *International Relations, Eight Edition*, New York: Pearson/Longman Publishers

Lamido, S. (2012), "Challenges of Foreign Policy Making and Implementation in Nigeria: An Insider's Perspective". Being a paper presented at a Lecture organized by Society for International Relations Awareness (SIRA) in collaboration with Friedrich Elbert Stiftung (FES) Nigeria at Protea Hotel, Asokoro, Abuja, October 31

Lerche, C. O., and Abdul A. Said eds. (1979), *Concept of International Politics in Global Perspective 3rd Edition*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

Machiavelli, N. (1961). *The Prince*, London: Penguin Books Limited

Mimiko, N.O. (2010). "Swimming Against the Tide: Development Challenges for the Long-Disadvantaged in a Fundamentally Skewed Global System", I*naugural Lecture Series 233*, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria

Morgenthau, H. J. and Kenneth W. Thompson (1985). *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 6th Edition*, USA: Knopf

Mustapha, A. R. (2008). "Challenges for Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era", in Adebajo and A.R. Mustapha (eds.); *Gulliver's Troubles: Nigeria's Foreign Policy After the Cold War*, South Africa: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press

News24, (2011). "Mali Fears as Tuaregs Return From Libya" News24, October 16. Available at http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Mali-fears-as-Tuaregs-return-from-Libya-20111016. Accessed November 7, 2012

Northedge, F. S. (1968). *The Foreign Policies of the Powers*, London: Faber

Nossiter, A. (2012). "Soldiers Overthrow Mali Government in Setback for Democracy in Africa," in The New York Times, March 22. Available on http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/world/africa/mali-coup-france-calls-for-elections.html. Accessed on 26/07/2013

Nwanolue, B. O. G. and V. Chidubem Iwuoha (2012). "A Reflection on Nigeria's Past: Africa as the Centrepiece of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Revisited" in *Developing Country Studies, Vol. 2, No.4*

Nweke R. C. (2010). *The Role of Nigeria in Restoring Peace in West Africa*: Being unpublished Dissertation presented to The Faculty of Arts for the degree of Master in Contemporary Diplomacy, University of Malta

Nwoke, C. N. (2005). "Nigeria and ECOWAS" in U. Joy Ogwu (ed.); *New Horizons for Nigeria in World Affairs*, Lagos: The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs

Ogwu, U. J. (2005). "Introduction: An Overview", in U. J. Ogwu (ed.); *New Horizons for Nigeria in World Affairs*, Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs

Ogwu, J. (1986). *Nigerian Foreign Policy: Alternative Futures*, Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affair

Omole, B. (2010). *Nigeria, France and the Francophone States: The Joy and Anguish of a Regional Power*. Being an Inaugural Lecture Series 226, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Nigeria

Osuntokun, J. (2005). "Historical Background Survey of Nigeria's Foreign Policy" in U. J. Ogwu (ed.); *New Horizons for Nigeria in World Affairs*, Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs

Okpokpo, E. (2000). "The Challenges Facing Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Next Millennium" in *African Studies Quarterly, Volume 3, Issue 3*

Onuoha F. C. and Alex Thurston (2013). *Franco-African Military Intervention in the Mali Crisis and Evolving Security Concerns*. Al Jazeera Centre for Studies Report, February 19

Rogers, P. (2012). "Mali: The Risk of Intervention" in *Monthly Global Security Briefing*: Oxford Research Group, June

Roskin, M. G. (1994). *National Interest: From Abstraction to Strategy*: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, May 20

Saliu H. A. (2005). "Reforming the UN: Issues, Problems and the Nigerian Aspiration", in Akinterinwa, B.A. (ed.); *Nigeria and the United Nations Security Council*, Ibadan: Vantage Publishers Limited

The Punch, Lagos, February 8, 2013

The Punch, Lagos, January 24, 2013

The Punch, Lagos, January 23, 2013

The Punch, Lagos, January 16, 2013

This Day, Lagos, July 19, 2013

Usman, S. A. (2013). *Conflict Management Mechanism in Nigeria's Foreign Policy in Sao Tome and Principe*. Being unpublished M.Sc. degree Thesis to the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Usman, S. A. (2018). *Appraisal of Citizen Diplomacy in Nigeria-South Africa Relations*. Being unpublished PhD degree Thesis to the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Waltz, K. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*, USA: Addison-Wesley

Yousef, M. H. (2009). *Son of Hamas*, United States of America: Tyndale House Publishers Inc.

Zeric, K. S. (2001). "Mali's Decade of Democracy" in *Journal of Democracy Vol. 12, No. 3* (July)