Abstract
This paper was designed to analyze the leadership role played by Nigeria in defense and security of West Africa from 1989 to the present. The paper argued favorably that Nigeria has exhibited high caliber of big brother role in West African states by pinpointing to figures and facts concerning the trends of its good intents. The paper identifies areas where Nigeria has done commendably well such as in mediation, economic integration, democratic consolidation, rendering trans-border technical assistance and trans-border criminal activities to mention but a few. Paradoxically, the paper also comments on the pitfalls as well as the challenges confronted by the Nigeria’s government toward exhibiting its big brother role in defense of West African sub-region. Three factors were identified as militating variables to Nigeria’s leadership role in the West African region which among others include the internal factors such as the perception of the neighboring states as well as the recurrent intervention of the western societies in West Africa in particular and in Africa in general. It has been argued that despite Nigeria’s internal security challenges, the country play a significant role in maintaining peace, security and ensuring political stability in Africa, therefore these are efforts that need to be strengthened effectively carried out by Nigeria as the giant of Africa.

Keywords: Africa, Defence, Peace, Politics and Security

Introduction
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 (Yoroms, 2010 p, 77).

Nigeria, the big brother of Africa and the human and financial strength of ECOMOG had always been called upon to intervene in Africa’s conflicts since she was called upon in Sao Tome and Guinea Bissau to intervene in their political crisis when the governments of the countries were toppled in a coup d’ etat. In 1967 under the Gen. Yakubu Gowon regime, Nigeria was faced with political instability and social upheaval. The secession tendency of the Eastern Region from the Nigerian federal structure resulted in devastating civil war between the federal government and the Biafrans. It was the crash in Cameroon of the aircraft carrying arms and ammunition to the Ojukwu government in Enugu late in 1966 that first aroused...
the interest of the Federal leaders in the internal affairs of their neighbours. After making investigations about the aircraft and its content, the Nigerian government also contracted other neighbouring countries, namely Dahomey (Benin Republic), Niger, Chad and Togo advising them not to support any attempt at the dismemberment of the country.

In the realm of external relations after the 1970s therefore, the experiences of the civil war were not lost. As a result of the security problems exposed by the war, Nigeria has since 1970 come to regard Africa as the “centerpiece” of her foreign policy and the spirit of good neighborliness was imbibed (Aluko, 1989). However, this paper is designed to analyze Nigeria leadership role in defense and security of West Africa state from 1989 to the present . The paper is divided into four part including the introductory session as part one, part two is the clarification of concepts while part three take a look at the leadership role played by Nigerian government in west Africa, its prospect and challenges and part four is the conclusion and recommendation.

Conceptual Clarification

The Nigerian Defence Policy

In Nigeria, the issue of an existing, concise, and codified defence policy is a highly debatable and controversial one. The furors over an articulate military policy stems on one hand, from a perspective, which contends that the armed forces of Nigeria lacked a well- documented (Alli 1994: 2-3) defence policy and firm posture in responding to threats of territorial violations from her neighbours. In her own analysis, Vogt (1986: 473) posited that there is a lack of clarity and understanding of the political factors that should dictate the nature of the defence policy. Consequently, this has led to the pursuit of diverse and often contradictory policies by the various arms of the defence establishment.

On the other side of the coin, however, is the military perspective, which expounds that the acts of the Nigerian Armed Forces, and the Sections of the Nigerian Constitution (1979) on Foreign Policy and Responsibility of Government, contain certain provisions, which are translated as Nigeria’s defence policy. The main objectives of which are enunciated as: · the defence of our sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. · The creation of the necessary political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which will facilitate the defence of independence and territorial integrity of all African countries, while at the same time fostering national self-reliance and rapid economic development. The promotion of equality and self-reliance in Africa and the rest of the developing world, the defence and promotion of world peace.

In order to consolidate the nation’s defence policy, military authorities came out in 2006 with a document entitled the “National Defence Policy”. This document based on the analysis of Nigeria’s strategic environment presents the government with a short-term policy framework for defence. The defence policy also analyses the risks and challenges (national interests and threats) facing the Nigerian military and the scenarios for the deployment of forces. It specifies the defence policy objectives (same as those enumerated in the preceding paragraphs) as well as the management and organization of the armed forces. Furthermore, it highlighted the various aspects of resource support such as defence infrastructure, research and development, defence budget and reform signposts in the armed forces among others. In addition, the policy enumerated the import of civil-military and media relations in peace and in times of war. This particular aspect according to the Defence Policy (2006) is an overarching goal, which not only emphasize the consolidation of civil control over the military, but which is also one of the characteristics of a truly democratic society.

National Security

National security is a concept employed by the military in the defence of the nation. This concept is primarily concerned with the preservation of sovereignty and the independence of nation-states. National security is closely related to, often equated with, national interest. According to McGrew (1988: 101), the security of a nation is predicated on two central pillars. On one hand, it entails the maintenance and protection of the socio-economic order in the face of internal and external threat. On the other, it entails the promotion of a preferred international order, which minimize the threat to core values and interests, as well as to the domestic order. The preoccupation with national security in this regard therefore, often and always creates an apprehension over security that tends to generate military activity regardless of the nature of threats.

It is important to stress that the contemporary thinking about national security is an all inclusive concept, which connotes the element of development: economic security, social security, environmental and food
security, the equality of life and technological security. To buttress this point, Nwolise (2006: 352) explained that security is an all-encompassing holistic concept, it implies that the territory must be secured by a network of armed forces: that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves, the people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals, unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation, pollution and socio-economic injustices. For instance, Nigeria’s national security is seen from a grand strategy perspective, which provides that:

National security in Nigeria is an ensemble of two (2) broad elements, that is, state security and human security...the primary objective of national security Shall be to strengthen the federal Republic of Nigeria, to advance her interest and objectives to contain instability, control crime, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development progress and growth, and improve the welfare and well being and quality of life of every citizen. National security entails the preservation of the safety of Nigerians at home and abroad and the protection of the sovereignty of the country’s integrity and its interests.(Nwolise,2006:356)

Nigeria’s leadership Role in West Africa States: Achievements and Challenges.
Undoubtedly, Nigeria as a country has played an unprecedented role in exhibiting the leadership role in Africa. In fact the role it plays in engendering peace and unity cannot be under-estimated. Africa was and still remains centerpiece of Nigeria foreign policy in spite of several criticisms and controversy that erupted as a result of that policy. the country has exhibited high support to west Africa states both in term of regional security policy; peace keeping/peace support operations, mediation, fighting against trans-border criminal activities; terrorism; democratic consolidation; economic integration; strategic training for military personal; to mention but few. However the country also suffered a geometric pitfall and political instability particularly within her own territorial demarcation. This and many other related issues has act as a clog to the wheel of Nigeria developmental agenda as well as undermine the power and the adage that said Nigeria is the giant of Africa. The following are the areas Nigeria leadership role cannot be disputed.

Peace-Keeping/Peace Support Operations
Nigeria is one of the major troop-contributing nations to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations around the world and is globally recognized for its readiness and commitment, which began even months before the nation gained independence, when participating in UN peacekeeping operations in Congo, “Operations des Nations Unies au Congo” (ONUC) in 1960. Since then, Nigeria has deployed troops for Peace Support Operations (PSOs) on bilateral, African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UN level, and has participated in these PSOs around the world including in Lebanon, Chad, Angola, Namibia, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan (Darfur) and of course in Liberia and Sierra Leone and others. Additionally, Nigeria has also participated in Observer Missions. According to Gambari (2010), Peace-keeping or Peace-Support Operations have become a veritable instrument of foreign policy for Nigeria, an accent of the imperative to deter acts that threaten her Security, peace and development.

The most dramatic of all these efforts are however the leadership role Nigeria played in the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) operations in Liberia and subsequently in Sierra Leone. General Babangida, whose regime was confronted with the Liberian conflict, had argued that,

With ECOMOG’s efforts under Nigeria’s leadership, the Liberian conflict was eventually resolved and in August 2, 1997, Charles Taylor was sworn in as President. In many respects, the Sierra Leone conflict was an overflow of the Liberian civil war (George; 2012, p. 400).

President Ahmed Tejjan Kabbah, invited ECOWAS to help restore him to power after the military overthrew his government. The ECOMOG mandate in Liberia was expanded and notwithstanding the difficulties and cost, Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea contributed troops. It should be noted that ECOWAS, as stated by George, actually wanted dialogue and negotiation with Major John Koromah, who led the junta. But with the failure of that approach, sanctions and some embargos were imposed at the June/July ECOWAS meetings in Abidjan, eventually troops were deployed, the military removed, and Kabbah was
re-instated to office in 1998. At that time, General Sani Abacha was the Nigerian military ruler and ECOWAS Chairman (1996-98). Thus, Nigeria’s immense contribution in men, money and material made it possible for ECOWAS to achieve its objectives in the two countries. After ECOMOG’s success in Sierra Leone, the UN established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in October 1999 as a peace-enforcement operation.

Nigeria has borne the greatest burden in terms of peacekeeping in West Africa. By 1999, it was estimated that Nigeria had committed over 13 billion US dollars to peacekeeping operations in West Africa (Bamali, 2009, p. 100). After his inauguration in 1999, President Obasanjo wanted to scale down Nigerian’s commitment and burden in sub-regional military engagements. In his speech at the United Nations General Assembly in 1999, Obasanjo noted that for too long, the burden of preserving international peace and security in West Africa has been left almost entirely to a few states in the sub region. Nigeria’s continued burden in Sierra Leone is unacceptably draining Nigeria financially. For our economy to take off, this bleeding has to stop’.

Nigeria spent on the ECOMOG operation about one million US dollars daily (George, 2012, p. 425). However, rather than withdraw all of the 12,000 troops from Sierra Leone under the pressure from the UN, Nigeria decided to leave some 3500 troops to serve under UNOMSIL. Operation Sandstorm and in “Operation Save Freetown” to pacify the Sierra Leonian capital city. However, this scaling down was just a temporary adjustment as the pressure on Nigeria to remain became stronger and because of the president who was to become more active in sub-regional security management. General Abubakar, former military Head of State, noted that Nigeria can claim a fair share of the glory for peace that is enjoyed in Sierra Leone today.

The Côte d’Ivoire crisis was a particularly unpleasant experience for West African leaders because the country was regarded as one of the most stable in the sub-region. The crisis was to present a different kind of security challenge to ECOWAS. The keenly contested elections in October 2000 followed an intense power struggle between Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Quattara over who is truly an Ivorian. Following gun duel in Abidjan and elsewhere in the country in 2002, Obasanjo dispatched Nigerian Alfa fighter planes to foil a military coup d’état only to be maneuvered to withdraw soon thereafter. A rebellion led by disgruntled soldiers under the name of Movement Patriotique du Côte d’Ivoire, soon made the situation worse, breaking the country into two parts. Nigeria was to provide buffer troops to separate the two warring groups, this early intervention helped to dictate the direction of ECOWAS policy on the very complicated crisis.

Mediation
Nigeria has impacted regional security policy through mediation which has been an old instrument of Nigerian diplomacy since independence. In the immediate post-independence-period, the security challenges were essentially inter-state and revolved around border disputes. Nigeria was usually drafted by the OAU to mediate in such disputes in the past, including the ones between Togo and Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda and several others. Nigeria pursued mainly an interventionist personal diplomatic role in conflict mediation and took the lead in security matters in West Africa within the framework of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council.

From General Babangida’s era to the present, Nigerian leaders have played very crucial role in the peace and mediation efforts among nations in regional conflict and political crises. This has been amply demonstrated by Nigeria’s intervention in Liberia, Sierra Leone and currently the Gambia. Nigeria played a critical role with other countries, in the Lomé Peace Accord signed between President Kabbah and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group led by Fodeh Sankoh. President Obasanjo exemplified this personal diplomatic effort and involvement in mediation, peace-making and conflict resolution. His shuttle diplomacy across West Africa led to the resolution of several conflicts and political crises sometimes late at night. In fact it was President Obasanjo’s personal involvement in the last minute of the final negotiations which culminated in the successful negotiation of the Lomé Peace Agreement which was signed in July 1999 (George, 2012, p. 416).

In 2003, he also brokered a settlement between rebel soldiers and President Taylor which facilitated the establishment of the Government of National Unity in Liberia and provision of asylum for Taylor in Nigeria (Sanda, 2004, p. 276). That settlement included an arrangement for Taylor to be granted asylum in Nigeria, thus facilitating the process for the establishment of a government of national unity in Liberia. As AU Chairman in 2004, Obasanjo ensured that the Ivorian crisis received adequate attention from the
ECOWAS and the AU. His efforts led to the Mini - AU - Summit in Otta on November 4, 2004 and another AU Emergency Summit in Abuja. His involvement in the efforts to resolve the Ivorian crisis continued in 2005. President Obasanjo attended several critical meetings on the crisis including the AU and ECOWAS summits, the AU Peace and Security Council meeting in Gabon in January 10, 2005, the ECOWAS Extraordinary summit in September, 2005, while several diplomatic missions were sent to Côte d’Ivoire on November and December, 2005. Other diplomatic missions were dispatched to the AU and the UN to mobilize the international community and present the African position.

The Guinea Bissau crisis became a major challenge for ECOWAS and represented one of the burdens of the sub-region considering the involvement of South American drug barons that have turned the very poor country into a haven for drug trans-shipment to Europe and elsewhere. The weakness of the state and the autocratic rule of President Kumba Yala, who became President in 2000 and the nation’s restive military, against the background of an active drug trafficking business were recipes for a political disaster, which exploded into the open in 2003. Again President Obasanjo was a member of a team, led by then ECOWAS Chairman and President of Ghana, Kuffour, and included President Abdullahi Wade of Senegal.

In 2005, Togo became one of the major security scares in West Africa as a result of a political succession crisis following the death of President Gyassimgbe Eyadema after 38 years in office. Faure Gyassimgbe was appointed by the military in February to succeed his father against the opposition by other politicians. Violence erupted after Faure polled over 60 per cent of the votes in a subsequent election. Obasanjo was to deploy Nigeria’s now well established and effective diplomatic muscle to douse the tension with personal visits and consultation. He invited Faure Gyassimgbe and the main opposition leader Emmanuel Akitani to Abuja where a peace accord was agreed upon in 2006.

Nigeria also provided much needed support and contributed to the ECOWAS efforts to resolve the political crisis in the Republic of Guinea, encouraging the tripartite efforts of the Republic of Guinea, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire. Nigerian mediation was again deployed to Guinea when President Conteuh, who had ruled Guinea since 1984, faced mutiny and riotous demonstrations in 2007 with Obasanjo sending General Babangida to mediate. Again when Captain Moussa Dadis Camara seized power just a few hours after the death of Conteuh at the end of 2008, thus aborting a constitutional process and throwing the country into a huge political crisis which degenerated by 2009 into an attack on demonstrators, President Yar’Adua sent General Babangida to mediate the crisis (The Nation, December 25 :2009:40).

In March 1st and 2nd, 2009, President Joao Bernado Nino Viera of Guinea Bissau was assassinated together with the Chief of Defence Staff, General Tagne Na Weie by renegade soldiers. President Yar’Adua, then ECOWAS Chairman, dispatched on March 3, an ECOWAS Ministerial delegation with representatives of Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, and Senegal to Guinea Bissau (Kawu, 2009). Following the crisis generated by the decision of President Abdullahi Wade to contest for a Third Term in the 2012 presidential election in Senegal, former President Obasanjo was drafted by both the AU and ECOWAS to mediate between Wade and the different opposition because there was a great fear that just like Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal a country that was generally considered relatively politically stable, with no history of political violence like in some other African countries, could explode into violence. Obasanjo’s mediation was useful in helping douse the tension which was building up as the country moved towards the presidential elections.

President Goodluck Jonathan, who also became ECOWAS Chairman, has also tried to follow the well beaten path of playing the big brother’s role in sub-regional affairs generally and in its security policy in particular. Nigeria’s voice was loud and clear in support of democratic rule. Its intervention in the crisis which engulfed Côte d’Ivoire following the Presidential elections of 2011, with Nigerian troops as part of the UN observer team, gained wide acceptance. The Abuja ECOWAS Summit on Côte d’Ivoire confirmed the constitutionality of the UN approved election results and the victory of Ouattara in the presidential elections. Generally, Nigeria’s leadership has been very crucial in the conflict management and security policy of ECOWAS. Senegal and Guinea tried to intervene in Guinea Bissau but ended up complicating an already complex situation. Non-participation of Nigeria in the operation led to its premature termination. Obviously, Nigerian military and its financial and logistical muscle in sub-regional peacekeeping are indispensable. This is why there is such a great demand for Nigerian troops because of their effective performance (Adedeji, 2007, p. 200).

The ouster of President Ali Toumani Touré by the military in Mali in 2012 also created another political crisis in West Africa to which Nigerian mediation and leadership have been sought by ECOWAS and AU. Nigeria has responded in its usual manner, condemning the coup and promising support for ECOWAS’ position on the crisis, while at the same time seeking a multilateral approach. Under President Jonathan,
Nigeria has led ECOWAS to put an end to the threatened mayhem in Côte d’Ivoire when Laurent Gbagbo refused to hand over power after the 2010 Presidential elections. Jonathan is also a Co-Mediator in the Mali crisis.

Mediation is a major instrument of Nigeria’s diplomacy in sub-regional security policy. The country’s capacity for effective mediation is widely recognized and cultivated and has remained a key factor in the diplomatic arsenal of ECOWAS. It must be noted that though all Nigerian Heads of State have contributed one way or the other to mediation, General Abubakar and President Obasanjo stood out. Obasanjo has consistently deployed his well acknowledged political and diplomatic wisdom, together with what George (2012, p. 416) called his moral authority, perseverance, patience and gentle persuasion, firmness and flexibility at the right times when each attribute was needed.

The Fight Against Cross Border Criminal Activities

Trans-border crimes and the involvement of aliens in criminal activities in Nigeria are reflections and repercussions of the spillover of the years of civil wars, drought and economic decline in the sub-region (Alli, 2011, p. 146). As noted by Yoroms (2007, p. 282) Nigeria is itself a major centre of Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) as a source, a transit and a destination for human and drug trafficking. Hence the critical roles of the country in fighting the scourge of TOC and why the country is among those that have ratified the Transnational Organized Crime Convention. There was the ECOSAP in which Nigeria is an assisting countries in the Sahel to help the police combat the Smuggling of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), drug smuggling and human trafficking against the unguarded and lawless character of those areas. Widespread availability and accessibility of SALW has been identified as a factor that intensifies the devastation and lethality of conflicts in the sub-region. Arm trafficking is a major security problem with many criminal gangs, ethnic militias, revolutionary, rebel and terrorist groups all in possession of huge arsenals. Hence Nigeria is said to be the biggest source of SALW in West Africa followed by the Mano River Union states of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Guinea Bissau.

In Nigeria’s Northern borders with Niger and Chad, armed bandits enter Nigeria at will to terrorize innocent citizens in towns and villages on the Nigerian side of the border. To check these cross-border acts of banditry, the governments of the affected countries were compelled to establish a Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to patrol areas prone to those attacks (Agwai, 2007, p. 142).

Over the past decade, the Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the National Agency for the prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) have all been involved in trans-border operations that extend all over West Africa. Nigeria also plays a prominent role in regional security policy through the regular meetings of the heads of the different security agencies of ECOWAS member states, including that of all Chiefs of Defence Staff, Chiefs of Police, Chiefs of Immigration, and Chiefs of Customs. These regular meetings have brought member states much closer together and they have been able to harmonize policies on a variety of issues including intelligence sharing and elaborate on operational cooperation in combating cross-border crimes towards achieving sub-regional peace and security. At its 29th Meeting of the Committee of Defence Chiefs, held on October 4, 2011, in Abuja, the body tried to design measures to check flows of weapons from the Libyan crisis into Niger, Mali and other parts of West Africa. It also deliberated on the right response to the growing general insecurity in the region.

Counter-Terrorism

Until recently, terrorism appeared to be a distant concern for Nigeria. However, it has become the new frontier in security challenges, facing Nigeria and other West African states and is increasingly dominating security discourses in the sub-region as terrorist groups, particularly the Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) continue to spread its influence in the poorly governed parts of the Sahara. In Nigeria, home-grown terrorist group such as the Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lida’awati wal Jihad, popularly known as Boko Haram are active. As a result, the US and its allies have become more involved in the anti-terrorism efforts as West Africa becomes a new frontline in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). This has led to the creation of the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), focusing on just four countries (Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Niger) in 2002, later transformed in 2005 into the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) covering several other countries including Nigeria.

Western powers, believing that Nigeria has a crucial role to play, have continued to put pressure on it to put in more efforts and provide leadership in combating terrorism in West Africa. Nigeria is now mobilizing ECOWAS states to check terrorism and cross-border banditry and other crimes and is
deploying its military presence accordingly. For example in 2011, Libya opened a special office for its military cooperation with Mali in Bamako (Lohmann, 2011: 7), while, after the kidnapping of its citizens in Northern Niger in September 2010, France stationed some troops from its special forces in Mopti, Mali as well as in Niger and Burkina Faso (Lohmann, 2011, p. 12).

In line with measures being taken by other stakeholders, and as a measure of Nigeria's security interest in the sub-region, it maintains military attaches in Benin, Chad, Ghana, Liberia, and Mali. Just of recent, Nigeria in collaboration with Niger, Chad and Mali has signed an alliance pact in order to eliminate the deadly scourge of Boko Haram. And also Africa Union (AU) has mandated themselves in dealing with the Boko Haram issues.

Consolidation of Democracy
The major conflicts which have occurred in West Africa in the last two decades or so in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Côte d’Ivoire and Mali, were caused by the rule of impunity, marginalization, abuse of human rights, widespread corruption and a host of other antidemocratic behaviour of the political leaderships all tending towards personalized autocratic rule which became a trigger for violence and ethnic favoritism that alienated and threatened certain groups in the process (Adebajo, 2004, p. 40).

Nigeria recognized that the key to sub-regional peace was the full flowering of democracy in West Africa. The link between democracy and security has been well established. To achieve this goal of a democratic West Africa, the nation, still struggling with its own democracy project lend a hand to other ECOWAS states, providing electoral assistance and other requirements of democratic consolidation to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, Niger and others. This may explain why Nigeria under the military dictatorship of Abacha, could invest so much in restoring democratic rule to Sierra Leone. Nigeria has been responding to the crises of democracy in West Africa the way it does, because Nigerian leaders saw the noble role the country was playing in ending conflict and war in the sub-region as a way of reasserting its influence and showing its indispensability which it hoped might persuade the international community to end Nigeria’s isolation.

According to Osaghae (2010, p. 59), the strategy worked fairly well in order to show the international community, initially reluctant to get involved in the complex West African conflicts that, no matter how bad the situation was in Nigeria, its role in West Africa and Africa could not be ignored. In 1998, Nigerian troops removed the Major John Koroma led junta to return the democratically elected regime of Ahmed Tejjan Kabbah to power in Sierra Leone. It was Nigeria which proposed the motion on the ECOWAS Protocol on Unconstitutional Change of Government which was adopted in 2000 and eventually led to the resolution by ECOWAS to reject any unconstitutional change of government, which became a key part of the Protocol on Good Governance and more elaborately developed in the ECPF of 2008. In 2001, Nigeria donated one million dollars and a contingent of police officers to help restore order in Sierra Leone, while another five hundred thousand dollars was donated in support of the January/ May 2002 general elections after the Lomé Accord of July 7, 1999, as part of the efforts to support Charles Taylor’s asylum. President Umar Yar’Adua became ECOWAS Chairman in 2008. Nigeria again became a member of the AU PSC, a position that was to afford the country more visible role in AU security policy. It has been suggested that the almost permanent presence of Nigeria in the PSC and other such security related regional and sub-regional security bodies, reflected a certain hierarchy among African states (Sturman and Hayatou, 2010, p. 67).

The economic crisis and near bankruptcy of Guinea Bissau in May 2004 also attracted Obasanjo’s attention as he embarked on shuttle diplomacy to help the country avert total economic collapse, providing $500,000 in October as special assistance for the preparations for elections and a further $1 million to help pay the salaries of government workers. Another sum of $8.5 million was given to the government for 2006/2007. In general, Nigeria has continued to provide short term assistance to countries in distress and as a measure to strengthen democratic rule, reduce conflict thereby promoting security, peace and development.

Strategic Training for Military Personnel
Probably one of the most enduring symbols of Nigeria’s leadership and Commitment to sub-regional cooperation on security matters is the provision of strategic security training for members of the armed forces of member states of ECOWAS at Nigeria’s elite military academies, including the Armed Forces Command and Staff School (AFCSS), Jaji and the National Defence College (NDC), Abuja. Over the years, Nigeria has admitted a number of officers from virtually all ECOWAS states into its military
academies on the basis of bilateral agreements. Many of these officers now occupy command-positions in their countries. Over the years, Nigeria has trained a total of 83 high level manpower for the military of members of ECOWAS as follows: Benin(12), Burkina Faso(8), Côte d’Ivoire(2), Ghana(16), Guinea(2), Mali(8), Niger(11), Senegal(6) and Togo(6). At the meeting of the Defence and Security Commission in Abidjan, 14 – 18 August, 2002, ECOWAS resolved that the Nigeria’s National Defence College in Abuja should be one of the three centers for harmonized training of ECOMOG Standby Force unit.

The NDC is charged with strategic training, while the operational training was conducted by the Kofi-Annan International Peacekeeping Centre in Accra, Ghana and while tactical training was carried out at Bamako, Mali. Through the Nigerian Army Training Assistance (NATAG) Nigeria has been able to extend training to some ECOWAS states, i.e. Gambia, Liberia, and others, by sending Nigerian officers to these countries to offer military training to their troops. Through this programme Nigeria has been providing military training assistance to Sierra Leone since 1984 (George, 2012, p. 399).

In 1991, at the request of the government of Sierra Leone, military assistance was again provided for Sierra Leone, while Sierra Leone signed a status of the Forces Agreement with Nigeria in 1997. All these measures facilitated Nigeria’s and ECOWAS effective intervention in the Sierra Leonian conflict which followed the coup that ousted Tejjan Kabbah. In addition, as we already noted above, through its TAC programme, Nigeria has also been deploying experts on a wide range of subjects to several ECOWAS states. Nigerian Generals have also been appointed as Commanding Officers and other high positions in the armed forces of some West African states. General Maxwell Kobe was appointed Chief of the Sierra Leonian Army by President Kabbah in 1998. In 2007, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf also appointed Major General Suraj A. Abdurahman as Commander in Charge of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) to replace another Nigerian, Lt. General Luka Yusuf.

**Economic Integration**

It has been observed that though ECOWAS was formed as an economic integration organization, it had to devote much attention to security issues because of the many security challenges that were obstructing economic development. This is why peace and security matters have come to dominate the activities of the community in the past two decades. Nigeria believed, as pointed out by Danjuma (2003) that West African instability is a function of poverty and underdevelopment and that in solving what appears purely as a political and economic problems, the physical challenges also have to be addressed. Accordingly, when Nigeria carries out political and military gestures to individual states or groups of states in West Africa, it is also addressing the problems of the sub-region. Nigeria focused on achieving the fast-tracking of integration efforts, promotion of free flowing of trade, achieving a common currency for the sub-region and promotion and expansion of infrastructural development – road, railway, telecommunication, power, gas pipeline and ultimately increased agricultural and industrial production.

Already ECOWAS is one of the only regional economic communities in Africa and one of the few in the world that has achieved free movement of people, creating practically a borderless West Africa. As the richest country in the sub-region with huge revenues from export of petroleum, Nigeria has had to play a more crucial role in sustaining the speed of regional integration and in providing targeted economic assistance to other countries in the sub-region. Under General Yakubu Gowon, particularly after the civil war, Nigeria tried to buy regional influence through generous donations to other West African states from revenues derived from a fortuitous oil boom (Adeabajo, 2008, p. 8).

Though the oil boom diplomacy ended under Shagari, Nigeria still continued to buy influence, selling oil at concessionary rates to neighbours, and providing humanitarian assistance and technical aid through its Technical Aid Corps (TAC). Over the years many ECOWAS members (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Niger and Senegal) have benefitted from the TAC programme, which deploy Nigerian experts across West Africa as requested by governments. The ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, which was introduced in 1990 as a measure for the progressive elimination of all customs duties within ten years by 2000, was behind schedule. Nigeria with six other ECOWAS states – Benin, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have signed an agreement to establish a Free Trade Zone where all illegal barriers, such as illegal check points would be removed on ECOWAS international highways. This should allow for free movement without a payment of any customs duty after an approval for originating industrial products from within the sub-region has been obtained. Under Obasanjo, a four-nation Co-Prospereity Alliance with Benin, Togo and Ghana was inaugurated but it soon became practically dormant.
When Umar Yar’Adua became President in 2007, he made efforts to revive it. According to Ambassador Abbass (2011) Yar Adua, who became ECOWAS Chairman almost immediately he came into office, showed a great interest in ECOWAS. He attended all the ECOWAS summits and tried to revive the Co-Prosperity Alliance as a key element in building the regional integration agenda from another angle, considering the growing wave of piracy and other trans-border crimes. But the efforts did not yield the desired benefits.

**Challenges to Nigeria’s Leadership in West Africa Region**

Nigeria faces challenges at three levels in its leadership role in security policy in West Africa. These are at the domestic level, at the sub-regional level and from extra-regional powers bent on expanding their influence. At the domestic level, the country is increasingly being confronted by several domestic security challenges which impact negatively on its effectiveness in international affairs. Considering the critical self-assigned role of the nation as “Giant of Africa” and leader of the black race and the responsibilities that come along in the field of security policy of the continent and the sub-region and even because of national need, to protect the physical integrity of the Nigerian state there ought to be an alignment between objectives and policies.

As argued by Adebajo (2010) Nigeria’s foreign policy adventures face strong domestic opposition because of the failure of both military and civilian regimes to apply the principle of Responsibility to Protect domestically. The internal situation in Nigeria calls for greater attention, as the country continues to suffer all manner of security challenges, ranging from wide-spread robbery to kidnapping, ethno-religious conflict, and now terrorism. A country’s capabilities inform its role in international politics. Its ability to achieve its foreign policy objectives flows from how it assembles its variable capabilities. In a situation, where it’s foreign vision and assumed roles impact negatively on its domestic affairs, its foreign objectives must be re-examined and refocused (Soremekun, 1997, p. 12).

**Perception of Neighbours**

At the sub-regional level, the main challenge which Nigeria faces in terms of its leadership role is the suspicion of other members of ECOWAS about its real intentions. There is the desire of other members to protect their national pride and the influence of extra-sub-regional powers on some of the members to act in a certain way. Again and again some states question the legitimacy of Nigeria in sub-regional matters. Even some of the countries that have benefitted from Nigeria’s sacrifices are not prepared to back Nigeria in critical situations. According to Ogunsanwo (2010: 45), Sierra Leone that has gained a lot from Nigeria was the country that blocked ECOWAS from taking a united stand in favour of Nigeria’s candidacy for a United Nations Security Council’s (UNSC) permanent seat.

However, Nigeria really has no choice but to continue to invest its resources in the ECOWAS integration project generally and in the West African security policy in particular because they are tied together. In addition it is in the interest of the nation to continue to do so as Nigeria’s contribution to peace and security in the sub-region has become the pillar of sub-regional security. As acknowledged by President Alassane Quattara, Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State of ECOWAS, “Nigerian forces are now the stiff backbone and vanguard of ECOWAS security.” He however urged other member states of ECOWAS to also make necessary contributions: “We must move to broaden this responsibility so that each of our countries makes its fair share of contribution to an effective fighting force” (2012).

**Nigeria and Extra-African Security Interests in West Africa**

General Danjuma (2003) had suggested that the commitment of the developed nations to African states will continue to dwindle, thus freeing the developing states to take decisions concerning their security. It was also argued that external powers have no compelling strategic reasons to display much of an interest in West Africa in the post-cold war era to warrant their intervention (Oche, 2003, p. 183). However, in recent years, events in the area, including the domestic security problems of many West African states, threats posed by transnational organised crime groups to Western interests and the need for the Western powers to protect their economic interests in the Sahel/Sahara region and in the Gulf of Guinea, the expanding environment for the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the many oil and gas discoveries, the established solid mineral wealth of the region and of course the market they represent, have attracted greater attention from the Western powers.

The U.S., the EU, especially France, have great interests in the security situation and security policy of West African states. French interests have deep roots in the colonial and neo-colonial relationship with...
several West African states. There is extensive French military, economic and political presence across the sub-region in a manner that actually pose an obstacle to Nigeria's effective leadership role in the sub-regional security policy. The U.S., the UK, and the EU as a whole, have great stakes in the economy of the sub-region and are also concerned about the growing influence of terrorist groups, that have increasingly targeted citizens of western countries particularly France. Others include the emerging powers China and India whose interests revolve around natural resources and markets. They remain focused on gaining access to the mineral resources of the sub-region and on investment possibilities.

Growing American concern and influence over the security policy of the sub-region is easily visible in the frequent visit of top U.S. officials, including the Secretary of State to the sub-region, thus stepping up U.S. visibility in the area. Already, beginning in January 16, 2012, the Secretary of State visited Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Togo and Cape Verde. This carefully selected visit shows the security dimension of the U.S. interests in the area and the kind of challenges Nigeria’s leadership will be facing in security policy in the sub-region. Since the introduction of the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) in 2002, and the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) in 2005, NATO powers have been expanding their influence and role in the making of security policy and in their implementation in the sub-region. Already, several African states such as Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia have been drawn into Operation Enduring Freedom Trans-Sahara, which AfriCom coordinates since 2008. The obvious dependency of Nigeria on U.S., UK and other extra-African powers in resolving its own internal security challenges cannot but be a major handicap if not an obstacle, to the effectiveness of its leadership role in security policy in the sub-region. The situation has become very embarrassing because senior Nigerian officials cannot resist appealing to any visiting foreign dignitary for assistance in managing national security at every opportunity that offers itself. A country with such a pathetic national self-assurance cannot expect to command or even enjoy the undiluted support on such a matter as security from other member states of ECOWAS.

Conclusion and Recommendations
It is an undisputable fact that Nigeria still poses some element of leadership quality in the Africa sub-regional envirion for the simple fact that it still have in place over 50% of the world explorative natural resources, a durable and fertile land for agricultural product, vast disseminating intellectual institutions as well as an attractive population that attract a reasonable market benefit for many countries of the world. Therefore, the country can still claim its past glory if seriousness, commitment, resilience and sense of responsibility is applied. The magnitude of corrupt practice embedded in Nigeria institutional apparatus is beyond ordinary sense and responsibility. Nigerian’s government has lost it all and that, wholeheartedly has not only ridicule our external integrity but also the role of sub-regional leadership we played. However, in order to right the wrong doing, Nigeria’s government most rebuild our lost image both internally and externally by punishing and prosecuting all those who abused the normal and legitimate rule of law. Zero tolerant most be applied to corruption, abuse of office, tribalism, marginalization as well as general bad attitudes which have being institutionalized in the mind of almost every Nigerians.
Reference


