

An Examination of the Nigerian Government's Influence on Military Deployments in West Africa: Implications for Regional Security and Stability

Lateef Babatunde ASANI and Femi OLUFUNMILADE

Department of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Igbinedion University Okada, Edo State, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author Email: asani.lateef@iuokada.edu.ng; femi@iuokada.edu.ng

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of Nigeria's military deployments on regional security and stability in West Africa, with emphasis on its leadership role within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU). A descriptive survey design was adopted, using a stratified random sampling approach to select 400 respondents from military barracks in Edo State. Data were collected through structured questionnaires on a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), and regression analysis with SPSS version 20. Results show that Nigeria plays a significant leadership role in ECOWAS security initiatives (grand mean = 3.81), strengthens regional security institutions (grand mean = 3.69), and influences bilateral relations and geopolitical dynamics in West Africa (grand mean = 3.47). Respondents highlighted that Nigeria's military engagements enhance peacekeeping credibility, counterterrorism cooperation, and regional trust, though they occasionally generate diplomatic tensions. Key challenges identified include logistical constraints, inadequate equipment, financial limitations, and political instability (grand mean = 3.57). Correlation analysis confirmed strong positive relationships between Nigeria's role and regional security initiatives ($r = 0.923$, $p < 0.05$), military engagements and regional security architecture ($r = 0.830$, $p < 0.05$), deployments and bilateral relations ($r = 0.898$, $p < 0.05$), and operational challenges with regional stability ($r = 0.887$, $p < 0.05$). The findings imply that while Nigeria remains a central actor in West African security governance, its effectiveness is constrained by structural and operational challenges. Addressing these limitations through enhanced funding, improved logistics, and stronger regional cooperation is critical to sustaining Nigeria's contributions to peacekeeping and stability in West Africa.

Keywords: Nigeria; ECOWAS; African Union; Military deployments; Regional security; Peacekeeping; Bilateral relations; West Africa



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INTRODUCTION

The security environment in West Africa has become increasingly fragile, marked by terrorism, insurgency, political instability, and recurrent military coups. Extremist groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State affiliates continue to destabilize the Sahel, undermining governance and creating humanitarian crises (International Crisis Group, 2023; UNDP, 2022). These dynamics have prompted regional organizations, particularly the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to assume a central role in collective security responses. Nigeria, as the largest economy and most populous country in West Africa, has historically played a leadership role in peacekeeping and military interventions. Its contributions to ECOWAS-led missions and influence in shaping regional security policies have been pivotal in addressing crises in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, and Niger (Aning & Edu-Afful, 2022; Adeyemi, 2022; Adebajo, 2021). Nigeria's military strength and diplomatic influence have positioned it as a central actor in regional security governance, though this leadership often comes with significant political, economic, and social costs (Omede & Bakare, 2021; Oshita & Alli, 2020; Garuba & Hassan, 2022).

Recent scholarship highlights Nigeria's evolving role in ECOWAS security architecture, particularly in response to the resurgence of coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Niger (Solaru & Amodu, 2025; Augustine & Ikeagwu, 2025; Adewuyi, 2025). Nigeria's leadership during the 2023 Niger crisis underscored its influence in ECOWAS decision-making, though this dominance has sometimes generated diplomatic tensions with francophone states wary of Nigerian hegemony (Mensah, 2022; Bello & Traoré, 2024; Ateku, 2026). While Nigeria's interventions strengthen peacekeeping structures and counterterrorism cooperation, they also raise questions about legitimacy, resource strain, and whether military deployments address root causes of instability such as poverty, governance deficits, and inequality (Madueke, 2026; Mohammed & Kone, 2024; Ugbo, 2025).

Nigeria's influence extends beyond ECOWAS into broader African Union (AU) frameworks, aligning with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to coordinate sub-regional and continental responses (Obi & Nwankwo, 2022; Oloruntoba, 2022; Ekanade & Popoola, 2026). However, challenges persist, including logistical constraints, inadequate equipment, and funding gaps that undermine operational effectiveness (Akinola, 2021; Ezeani, 2023; Salihu, 2022). Domestic insecurity, particularly insurgency in northeastern Nigeria, further complicates its ability to sustain regional commitments (Adeniran, 2023; Inuwa, Leonard & Hirmer, 2026; Muazu, Ebeni & Ibrahim, 2026).

The literature also emphasizes the geopolitical implications of Nigeria's military diplomacy. Its deployments have shaped bilateral relations with neighboring states, sometimes fostering cooperation and

trust, but at other times generating suspicion and diplomatic friction (Agunyai, Ebirim & Olomitutu, 2025; Adebola & Kazeem, 2021; Abidoye, 2026). Nigeria's leadership in ECOWAS has reinforced its identity as a regional power, but balancing national sovereignty with regional cooperation remains a delicate challenge (Ateku, 2026; Bamigboye, 2026; Egobueze & Odili, 2025).

Nigeria's role in West African security governance reflects both opportunities and constraints. While its military deployments have significantly shaped regional stability, they also expose structural weaknesses in ECOWAS and AU frameworks, as well as Nigeria's own domestic vulnerabilities. Scholars argue for a more integrated approach that combines military action with political, economic, and social strategies to achieve sustainable peace (Bah & Chidozie, 2023; Chukwuemeka & Diallo, 2023; Chukwuka & Ikenga, 2025; Jibrin, 2025; Ogbozor, 2026).

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the Nigerian government's influence on military deployments in West Africa and its implications for regional security and stability.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Assess the role of Nigeria in shaping regional security initiatives within ECOWAS;
2. Evaluate the implications of Nigeria's military engagements on regional security architecture, including the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU);
3. Investigate the impact of Nigeria's military deployments on bilateral relations with neighboring countries and the broader geopolitical dynamics within West Africa.
4. Investigate the challenges associated with Nigeria's participation in regional military operations

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

What role does Nigeria play in shaping regional security initiatives within ECOWAS?

What are the implications of Nigeria's military engagements on regional security architecture, particularly within ECOWAS and the African Union (AU)?

What impact do Nigeria's military deployments have on bilateral relations with neighboring countries and the

broader geopolitical dynamics in West Africa?

What challenges are associated with Nigeria's participation in regional military operations?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested in this study:

1.Ho₁: Nigeria's role does not significantly influence regional security initiatives within ECOWAS.

2.Ho₂: Nigeria's military engagements have no significant effect on regional security architecture, including ECOWAS and the African Union (AU).

3.Ho₃: Nigeria's military deployments have no significant impact on bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and the broader geopolitical dynamics in West Africa.

4.Ho₄: The challenges associated with Nigeria's participation in regional military operations have no significant effect on regional security and stability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigerian Government's Influence on Military Deployments in West Africa

Nigeria is widely recognized as a major security actor in West Africa due to its demographic size, military capacity, and political weight within regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Historically, the Nigerian government has shaped and driven military engagement strategies in the sub-region, often acting as the dominant contributor of troops, funding, and political leadership for collective security efforts (Babatunde & Olufunmilade, 2026; Yusuf & Ahmed, 2024; Jibrin, 2025).

As the most populous nation and largest economy in West Africa, Nigeria has leveraged these advantages to influence regional security policy and the strategic direction of military deployments. Its leadership within ECOWAS has been particularly visible during crises when the bloc considered force as part of its response, such as in the aftermath of the 2023 coup in Niger Republic. Nigeria played a key role in ECOWAS deliberations on potential military intervention to restore constitutional order, highlighting how it can shape both policy decisions and the readiness of regional forces (Solaru & Amodu, 2025; Wali, Bakare & Ogundare, 2025; Augustine & Ikeagwu, 2025).

Scholarly analyses show that Nigeria's influence extends beyond formal policy forums into security architecture and deployment structures. Nigeria's military input has historically influenced ECOWAS peacekeeping

missions, including troop composition and operational planning, because it often provides significant human and material resources for joint missions (Ekanade & Popoola, 2026; Chukwuka & Ikenga, 2025). This operational influence reinforces Nigeria's position not just as a participant, but as a de facto leader in shaping how, when, and where regional military forces are mobilized. Nigeria's government also exerts influence through preventive diplomacy and security coordination frameworks. Regional policy literature highlights how ECOWAS military engagements, including diplomatic outreach paired with force readiness, are routinely shaped by Nigerian diplomatic and strategic priorities, particularly in negotiations with coup leaders or during heightened political crises in neighbouring states (Uvere & Onyendi, 2025; Ogbozor, 2026; Abidoye, 2026).

Nigeria's influence, however, is not uncontested. The dynamics surrounding coup crises indicate that while it can propose or support military options, other ECOWAS member states must agree to joint actions, meaning Nigerian influence is mediated through collective decision-making. In the 2023 Niger crisis, ECOWAS deliberations on deploying a regional standby force illustrated how Nigeria's leadership had to work within broader regional consensus, revealing limitations in unilateral influence (Solaru & Amodu, 2025; Ateku, 2026; Bamigboye, 2026).

Nigeria's military engagements also have implications for how regional security is perceived abroad. Expert commentary notes that its military actions, such as providing air support to neighboring countries during coup attempts, sometimes precede collective action by ECOWAS, suggesting that Nigeria's strategic choices can shape the pace and nature of regional responses to security threats (Madueke, 2026; Inuwa, Leonard & Hirmer, 2026; Muazu, Ebeni & Ibrahim, 2026; Gwana, Abdul & Ibrahim, 2026; Egobueze & Odili, 2025; Onu, Ani, Yemisi & Mahlaule, 2025; Ezeanya & Azubuike, 2026; Gahamanyi & Tchouassi, 2025).

Role of Nigeria in Shaping Regional Security Initiatives within ECOWAS

Nigeria has played a central and sustained role in shaping regional security frameworks within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), leveraging its demographic size, economic strength, military capabilities, diplomatic influence, and historical leadership in the sub-region. Its strategic engagement spans conflict management, peacekeeping, policy leadership, mediation, and collective security architecture, reinforcing ECOWAS's mandate to promote stability and democratic governance in West Africa (Saidu, Sulaimon & Saraki, 2026; Abidoye, 2026).

Since ECOWAS's establishment in 1975, Nigeria has been a key architect of its security and conflict resolution agenda. Beyond its role in founding the regional body,

Nigeria historically took the lead in ECOWAS peacekeeping efforts during the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone through the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), significantly shaping early regional security mechanisms (Ajah & Magadze, 2026; Adewuyi, 2025). Under Nigeria's diplomatic leadership, ECOWAS evolved from an economic bloc to a security actor with responsibility for conflict prevention, crisis diplomacy, and democratic consolidation. Nigeria's position as the most populous nation and largest economy in the region grants it leverage in policy direction and collective security decision-making (Onuiri, 2026; Mohammed-Yinusa, Bakare, Ogundare & Young, 2026).

Nigeria has championed collective security cooperation in ECOWAS, advocating frameworks for conflict prevention and democratic governance. At key ECOWAS summits and Mediation and Security Council meetings hosted in Abuja, Nigerian diplomats and officials have highlighted threats such as terrorism, unconstitutional changes of government, and transnational crime, seeking regional consensus and responses to these security challenges (Onuoha, Chris-Sanctus & Onuoha, 2026).

The presence of senior Nigerian representatives, including its Permanent Representative to ECOWAS, underscores the country's proactive diplomacy aimed at ensuring that Nigeria's strategic priorities on security, integration, and peace are reflected in ECOWAS policy and programs (Ateku, 2026). Nigeria's leadership extends to occupying high-level positions within ECOWAS organs. For example, when President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of Nigeria was elected Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, he emphasized regional security, democratic norms, and institutional strengthening as core priorities (Uvere & Onyendi, 2025).

Such leadership positions amplify Nigeria's influence in setting the regional agenda, coordinating responses to crises, and advocating collective strategies against insurgency, coups, and governance breakdowns, thus shaping both policy priorities and operational responses of the regional bloc (Yusuf & Ahmed, 2024; Augustine & Ikeagwu, 2025).

Nigeria has been at the forefront of operational security initiatives under ECOWAS. This includes support for counter-terrorism financing and resource mobilization. For instance, during ECOWAS sessions held in Abuja, the bloc approved funds to support member states—including Nigeria—in strengthening counter-terrorism capacities, highlighting the collaborative nature of security responses within the organization (Wali, Bakare & Ogundare, 2025; Chukwuka & Ikenga, 2025).

Nigeria's military experiences, particularly in combating Boko Haram and other extremist groups, underscore its active role in regional security planning and intelligence sharing, often driving discussions on how ECOWAS can build effective collective security mechanisms (Gwana, Abdul & Ibrahim, 2026; Muazu, Ebeni & Ibrahim, 2026;

Inuwa, Leonard & Hirmer, 2026). Despite Nigeria's leadership, ECOWAS faces significant security challenges. These include jihadist violence in the Sahel, illegal arms trafficking, and repeated coups in member states, which have prompted debates over the bloc's capacity to enforce constitutional order and sustain unified security responses (Madueke, 2026; Bamigboye, 2026; Ogbozor, 2026). Moreover, instances where some member states have withdrawn from ECOWAS highlight the complexities of maintaining collective security arrangements, even with Nigeria's influence. These developments underscore the need for stronger institutional coordination and shared commitment to security cooperation to sustain Nigeria's leadership legacy (Egobueze & Odili, 2025; Onu, Ani, Yemisi & Mahlaule, 2025; Ezeanya & Azubuike, 2026; Gahamanyi & Tchouassi, 2025).

Implications of Nigeria's Military Engagements on Regional Security Architecture: The Role of ECOWAS and the African Union

Nigeria's military engagements have profoundly influenced the regional security architecture in West Africa, particularly through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU). As the largest economy and most populous country in the region, Nigeria has consistently assumed leadership in peacekeeping, conflict management, and policy shaping, producing both stabilizing and challenging implications for regional security (Ekanade & Popoola, 2026; Mudoh & Ibn-Mohammed, 2026).

Nigeria's involvement in ECOWAS peacekeeping operations has been pivotal, providing the majority of troops and resources during interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and more recently in crises across the Sahel. These engagements laid the foundation for the ECOWAS Standby Force and strengthened the principle of collective security in West Africa (Ajah & Magadze, 2026; Salman, 2025; Ayuk et al., 2026). By operationalizing ECOWAS's capacity to intervene in crises, Nigeria has transformed the bloc from an economic organization into a credible security actor.

Beyond military operations, Nigeria has championed ECOWAS protocols on democracy and governance, advocating collective responses to unconstitutional changes of government. Interventions in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso illustrate how Nigeria's stance on democratic enforcement has shaped regional security decisions, reinforcing democratic norms while occasionally generating friction among member states concerned about Nigerian dominance (Augustine & Ikeagwu, 2025; Olawunmi, 2026; Ugwu & Aniche, 2025). Nigeria's dominant role has sometimes been perceived as hegemonic, particularly by francophone member states, raising questions about neutrality in peacekeeping operations. Such perceptions have strained ECOWAS unity and complicated decision-making, highlighting the

delicate balance between leadership and sub-regional legitimacy (Ekanade & Popoola, 2026; Mudoh & Ibn-Mohammed, 2026). While Nigeria's leadership enhances operational capacity, it also introduces political frictions within ECOWAS.

Nigeria's engagements also align with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the AU. By coordinating ECOWAS interventions with AU protocols, Nigeria has helped bridge sub-regional and continental peace initiatives, fostering coherent crisis response frameworks across Africa (Achu et al., 2026). This dual role enhances continental security coordination but also risks overlaps in mandates and resource allocation between ECOWAS and the AU (Adunimay & Lifongo, 2026). Persistent threats such as Boko Haram, jihadist insurgency, and recurrent coups in the Sahel continue to test both Nigeria and regional security institutions. Domestic insecurity often diverts Nigeria's military resources, affecting its capacity to contribute effectively to regional operations (Ayuk et al., 2026). These dynamics highlight the interdependence of domestic and regional security and the need for strengthened institutional capacity and shared responsibility among ECOWAS members (Mudoh & Ibn-Mohammed, 2026).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study's research design was a descriptive survey design. The purpose of this strategy is to collect thorough data on Nigerian government's influence on military deployments in West Africa and implications for regional security and stability. By systematically gathering data from a sizable population, the survey design makes it possible to spot trends, patterns, and possible causal links.

Population of the Study

The total population of active military personnel as at 2025 is 230,000 (two hundred and thirty thousand) as provided by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (The Military Balance) and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The target population for this study which focuses on Ugbowo campus was calculated from the total population of 230,000 military personnel in Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling approach will be adopted to ensure representation across all Faculties of the University of Benin, Ugbowo campus, Benin City, Nigeria. Taro Yamane formula will be used to calculate the sample size. Below is the formula:

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$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n = signifies the sample size

N = signifies the population under study

e = signifies the margin error (it could be 0.10, 0.05 or 0.01)

The sample size for a population of 365 University of Benin Administrative Staff was calculated using a desired level of precision of 5%. First, the desired level of precision was converted from a percentage to a decimal:

$$e = \frac{5}{100} = 0.05$$

Then the value of e was inputted into the formula

$$n = \frac{230,000}{1 + 230,000(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{230,000}{1 + 230,000(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{230,000}{1 + 575}$$

$$n = \frac{230,000}{576}$$

$$n = 399.0$$

$$\approx n = 400$$

Research Instrument

The research instruments that was used in gathering data was the questionnaire, which was administered military personnel Isihor, Uselu and Ekenwan Barracks in Edo State. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A was on personal data while Section B was on opinion survey. The structured questionnaire were coded with nominal values assigned to each possible response that is expected from the respondents. A five point likert scale coded as follows was used;

Strongly Agree (SA) - 5 points

Agree (A) - 4 points

Neutral (N) – 3 points

Disagree (D) - 2 points

Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1 point

Method of Data Analysis

The collected research questionnaires were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 application program. The data was analyzed using descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis. Descriptive analysis were used to analyze the results from the survey and presented them in tables and charts and later their implication were explained by converting all numerical data into pictorial form. Frequencies and percentage were applied to discuss the general demographics of the respondents.

Meanwhile, Pearson product moment correlation analysis were used to test the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable.

Ethical Considerations

This study properly complied with ethical guidelines. It ensured all participants give their informed consent after being fully informed about the goals, methods, and withdrawal rights of the study. Particularly for participants replies, confidentiality and anonymity were upheld to prevent the disclosure of personal data. The military barracks in Edo State and the appropriate ethical review body were contacted for approval of this project. By ethical standards for educational research, the data that were gathered were properly kept safe, maintained and used only for this study.

RESULT

Questionnaire Administration and Response Rate

In all, 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered and a total of 308, which represented 77% of the total number of questionnaires returned while 305 which represents a total of 76.3% were found usable for the analysis.

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents involved in the study. The analysis includes respondents' gender, age, educational qualification, marital status, and years of experience. The table shows that out of the 305 respondents, 245 respondents (80.3%) were male, while 60 respondents (19.7%) were female. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were male. The age distribution reveals that the majority of respondents were within the age bracket of 26–35 years, representing 159 respondents (52.1%). This was followed by respondents aged 18–25 years with 74 respondents (24.3%), while 57 respondents (18.7%) fell within the 36–45 years category. Only 15 respondents (4.9%) were aged 46 years and above. The educational qualification of respondents shows that 143 respondents (46.9%) possessed Secondary School certificates, making it the highest category. This was followed by 81 respondents (26.6%) with Diploma/NCE qualifications and 57 respondents (18.7%) holding Bachelor's Degrees. In addition, 18 respondents (5.9%) possessed Master's Degrees, while only 6 respondents (2.0%) had Doctorate qualifications. The table further indicates that 187 respondents (61.3%) were single, while 103 respondents (33.8%) were married. In addition, 15 respondents (4.9%) belonged to other marital categories. Regarding years of experience, the majority of respondents, comprising 186 respondents (61.0%), had between 6–10 years of experience. This was followed by 98 respondents

(32.1%) with less than 5 years of experience, while only 21 respondents (6.9%) had 11 years and above experience.

Answers to the Research Questions

This aspect is based on the responses gotten from the study. Analysis of the data was done using simple mean and standard deviation statistics and calculations. The decision rule was based on the mean value ($\bar{x}$) of 2.50. That is, any item with mean value ($\bar{x}$) less than 2.50 will be regarded as disagreed (rejected), while any item with mean value ($\bar{x}$) equal or greater than 2.50 will be agreed (accepted).

Table 2 presents respondents' opinions on the role Nigeria plays in shaping regional security initiatives within Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The analysis was based on a five-point Likert scale, and the grand mean of 3.81 indicates that respondents generally agreed that Nigeria plays a significant and positive role in promoting regional security and stability in West Africa. The findings showed that 136 respondents (44.6%) strongly agreed, while 121 respondents (39.7%) agreed. Only 3 respondents (0.98%) disagreed, and none strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.91 and standard deviation of 1.16 suggest a high level of agreement and relatively moderate variation in responses. This implies that most respondents perceive Nigeria as a leading actor in regional peace and security efforts. The result revealed that 133 respondents (43.6%) strongly agreed and 121 respondents (39.7%) agreed, while only a few respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean value of 3.84 with a standard deviation of 1.14 indicates that respondents generally believe Nigeria's military involvement has positively impacted ECOWAS peacekeeping missions. The majority of respondents, consisting of 117 respondents (38.4%) who strongly agreed and 142 respondents (46.6%) who agreed, affirmed Nigeria's significant influence in regional security decisions. The item recorded the highest mean score of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 1.14, indicating strong consensus among respondents that Nigeria is highly influential in ECOWAS security policies and decision-making processes. The findings indicated that 155 respondents (50.8%) strongly agreed and 101 respondents (33.1%) agreed with the statement. The mean score of 3.79 and standard deviation of 1.34 suggest that respondents generally acknowledge Nigeria's financial contributions toward regional security, although the slightly higher standard deviation indicates more variation in opinions compared to other items. The results showed that 135 respondents (44.3%) strongly agreed and 139 respondents (45.6%) agreed. The mean score of 3.54 and standard deviation of 1.12 indicate that

Table 1: Descriptive Data of the Respondents.

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	245	80.3
Female	60	19.7
Age		
18 – 25	74	24.3
26– 35	159	52.1
36-45	57	18.7
46 and above	15	4.9
Educational Qualification		
Secondary School	143	46.9
Diploma/NCE	81	26.6
Bachelor's Degree	57	18.7
Master's Degree	18	5.9
Doctorate	6	2.0
Marital Status		
Single	187	61.3
Married	103	33.8
Others	15	4.9
Years of Experience		
Less than 5 years	98	32.1
6-10	186	61.0
11 and above	21	6.9

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026

Table 2: Role does Nigeria play in shaping regional security initiatives within ECOWAS?.

Items	SA N (%)	A N (%)	NS N (%)	D N (%)	SD N (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	STD
Nigeria has played a leading role in promoting peace and security within ECOWAS.	136(44.6)	121(39.7)	45(14.8)	3(0.98)	0(0.00)	3.91	1.16
Nigeria's military contributions have strengthened ECOWAS peacekeeping operations.	133(43.6)	121(39.7)	42(13.8)	7(2.30)	2(0.66)	3.84	1.14
Nigeria significantly influences security-related decision-making in ECOWAS.	117(38.4)	142(46.6)	26(8.52)	11(3.61)	9(2.95)	3.95	1.14
Nigeria's financial support has enhanced ECOWAS security initiatives.	155(50.8)	101(33.1)	41(13.4)	5(0.66)	3(0.98)	3.79	1.34
Nigeria demonstrates commitment to regional stability in West Africa.	135(44.3)	139(45.6)	23(7.54)	3(0.98)	5(0.66)	3.54	1.12
Grand mean						3.81	

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026

Table 3: Implications of Nigeria's military engagements on regional security architecture, particularly within ECOWAS and the African Union.

Item	SA N (%)	A N (%)	NS N (%)	D N (%)	SD N (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	STD
Nigeria's military engagements have strengthened ECOWAS security institutions.	149(48.9)	101(33.1)	45(14.6)	7(2.30)	3(0.98)	3.89	0.92
Nigeria's interventions contribute to the operational effectiveness of the African Union's peace and security framework.	153(50.2)	119(39.0)	23(7.54)	9(2.95)	1(0.33)	3.80	1.01
Nigeria's military leadership influences regional security policies in Africa.	93(30.5)	179(58.7)	30(9.34)	3(0.98)	0	3.59	1.18
Nigeria's military engagements promote regional cooperation against terrorism and insurgency.	150(49.2)	98(32.1)	45(14.8)	10(3.28)	2(0.66)	3.63	1.15
Nigeria's military operations have enhanced the credibility of ECOWAS peacekeeping missions.	166(54.4)	98(32.1)	30(9.84)	8(2.62)	3(0.98)	3.56	1.16

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026

respondents generally perceive Nigeria as committed to maintaining regional stability, though the lower mean compared to other items suggests slightly less intensity of agreement.

Table 3 presents respondents' views on the implications of Nigeria's military engagements on the regional security architecture within Economic Community of West African States and the African Union

Table 4: Impact do Nigeria's military deployments have on bilateral relations with neighboring countries and the broader geopolitical dynamics in West Africa.

Item	SA N (%)	A N (%)	NS N (%)	D N (%)	SD N (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	STD
Nigeria's military deployments improve diplomatic relations with neighboring countries.	127(41.6)	116(38.0)	42(13.8)	18(5.90)	2(0.66)	3.43	1.17
Neighboring countries generally support Nigeria's military engagements in the region.	124(40.7)	118(38.7)	38(12.5)	21(6.87)	4(1.31)	3.40	1.23
Nigeria's military operations promote trust and cooperation among West African states.	125(41.0)	119(39.0)	43(14.1)	12(3.93)	6(1.97)	3.44	1.23
Nigeria's military interventions sometimes create tensions with neighboring countries	126(41.3)	122(40.0)	38(12.5)	16(5.25)	3(0.98)	3.53	1.18
Cross-border military collaboration has strengthened bilateral relations between Nigeria and its neighbors.	101(33.1)	152(49.8)	37(12.1)	13(4.26)	2(0.66)	3.56	1.23
Grand mean						3.47	

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2026

(AU). The grand mean score of 3.69 indicates that respondents generally agreed that Nigeria's military engagements have positively influenced regional security structures and peacekeeping efforts across Africa. The findings revealed that 149 respondents (48.9%) strongly agreed and 101 respondents (33.1%) agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, only a small proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.89 and standard deviation of 0.92 indicate strong agreement among respondents with relatively low variation in opinions. This suggests that respondents believe Nigeria's military activities have significantly reinforced the institutional capacity of ECOWAS in addressing regional security challenges. The result showed that 153 respondents (50.2%) strongly agreed and 119 respondents (39.0%) agreed. Only a few respondents expressed disagreement. The mean score of 3.80 and standard deviation of 1.01 indicate that respondents generally perceive Nigeria's military interventions as contributing positively to the effectiveness of AU peacekeeping and security operations across the continent. The majority of respondents, comprising 93 respondents (30.5%) who strongly agreed and 179 respondents (58.7%) who agreed, affirmed Nigeria's influence on regional security policymaking. The mean score of 3.59 and standard deviation of 1.18 suggest a moderate to high level of agreement, although the relatively higher standard deviation indicates more variation in respondents' opinions. This finding implies that Nigeria is viewed as an important actor in shaping security policies within Africa. The results showed that 150 respondents (49.2%) strongly agreed and 98 respondents (32.1%) agreed, while only a minority disagreed. The mean score of 3.63 and standard deviation of 1.15 indicate that respondents generally

believe Nigeria's military operations encourage collaborative regional responses to terrorism, insurgency, and other transnational security threats. The findings indicated that 166 respondents (54.4%) strongly agreed and 98 respondents (32.1%) agreed, demonstrating a high level of support for the statement. The mean score of 3.56 and standard deviation of 1.16 suggest that respondents perceive Nigeria's participation in military operations as improving the legitimacy and reputation of ECOWAS peacekeeping activities in the region.

Table 4 presents respondents' opinions on the impact of Nigeria's military deployments on bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and the broader geopolitical dynamics in West Africa. The grand mean score of 3.47 indicates that respondents generally agreed that Nigeria's military deployments have significant effects on diplomatic relations, regional cooperation, and geopolitical interactions within the sub-region.

The findings revealed that 127 respondents (41.6%) strongly agreed and 116 respondents (38.0%) agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 42 respondents (13.8%) remained neutral, while a small proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.43 and standard deviation of 1.17 suggest that respondents generally perceive Nigeria's military deployments as contributing positively to diplomatic relations within the region. The results showed that 124 respondents (40.7%) strongly agreed and 118 respondents (38.7%) agreed. However, some respondents expressed disagreement, as reflected by 21 respondents (6.87%) who disagreed and 4 respondents (1.31%) who strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.40 and standard deviation of 1.23 indicate moderate agreement among respondents, suggesting that while many neighbouring states support Nigeria's military engagements, there are differing opinions

Table 5: Challenges are associated with Nigeria's participation in regional military operations

Item	SA N (%)	A N (%)	NS N (%)	D N (%)	SD N (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	STD
Nigeria faces logistical difficulties in sustaining regional military operations.	123 (40.3)	112(36.7)	40(13.1)	19(6.23)	11(3.61)	3.57	1.17
Inadequate military equipment affects Nigeria's effectiveness in regional missions.	142(46.6)	113(37.0)	36(11.8)	11(3.61)	3(0.98)	3.48	1.16
Financial constraints reduce Nigeria's ability to sustain regional military operations.	126(41.3)	131(43.0)	43(14.1)	5(1.64)	0(0.00)	3.58	1.17
Political instability within West African states complicates regional military interventions.	111(36.4)	129(42.3)	49(16.1)	14(4.59)	2(0.66)	3.62	1.19
Lack of adequate funding from regional organizations affects mission effectiveness.	144(47.2)	121(39.7)	31(10.2)	6(1.97)	3(0.98)	3.61	1.14
Grand Mean							3.57

regarding the extent of such support. The findings indicated that 125 respondents (41.0%) strongly agreed and 119 respondents (39.0%) agreed with the statement. The mean score of 3.44 and standard deviation of 1.23 demonstrate that respondents generally believe Nigeria's military activities foster regional trust and cooperation, although some variation in opinions exists. The results showed that 126 respondents (41.3%) strongly agreed and 122 respondents (40.0%) agreed with the statement. The mean score of 3.53 and standard deviation of 1.18 indicate that respondents acknowledge that, despite the benefits of Nigeria's interventions, such actions can occasionally generate political or diplomatic tensions with neighbouring states. This finding suggests that military interventions may produce both cooperative and conflict-related outcomes within regional relations. The majority of respondents, consisting of 101 respondents (33.1%) who strongly agreed and 152 respondents (49.8%) who agreed, supported the statement. The mean score of 3.56 and standard deviation of 1.23 indicate a relatively high level of agreement that collaborative military operations have enhanced bilateral ties and regional partnerships between Nigeria and neighbouring countries.

Table 5 presents respondents' opinions on the challenges associated with Nigeria's participation in regional military operations within West Africa. The grand mean score of 3.57 indicates that respondents generally agreed that Nigeria faces several operational, financial, political, and logistical challenges in carrying out regional military engagements. The findings revealed that 123 respondents (40.3%) strongly agreed and 112 respondents (36.7%) agreed with the statement. However, 40 respondents (13.1%) were neutral, while a smaller proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.57 and standard deviation of 1.17 indicate that respondents generally perceive logistical challenges such as transportation, supply management,

communication systems, and troop support as major obstacles affecting the sustainability of Nigeria's regional military operations. The results showed that 142 respondents (46.6%) strongly agreed and 113 respondents (37.0%) agreed. Only a few respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.48 and standard deviation of 1.16 suggest that respondents believe insufficient or outdated military equipment negatively affects Nigeria's operational effectiveness during peacekeeping and regional security missions. The findings indicated that 126 respondents (41.3%) strongly agreed and 131 respondents (43.0%) agreed with the statement, while none strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.58 and standard deviation of 1.17 demonstrate that respondents strongly perceive inadequate financial resources as a major challenge limiting Nigeria's ability to maintain long-term military operations within the region. The results showed that 111 respondents (36.4%) strongly agreed and 129 respondents (42.3%) agreed with the statement. The mean score of 3.62 and standard deviation of 1.19 represent one of the highest levels of agreement in the table, suggesting that respondents view political crises, internal conflicts, and unstable governments in some West African countries as factors that complicate military intervention efforts and peacekeeping operations. The findings revealed that 144 respondents (47.2%) strongly agreed and 121 respondents (39.7%) agreed. Only a few respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.61 and standard deviation of 1.14 indicate that respondents generally believe insufficient financial support from regional bodies such as Economic Community of West African States negatively affects the effectiveness and sustainability of military missions in West Africa.

Test for hypothesis

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): Nigeria's role does not

Table 6: Correlations on the relationship between Nigerian government and military deployments in West Africa.

		Nigeria's role	Nigeria's military engagements	Nigeria's military deployments	challenges associated with Nigeria's participation
Nigeria's role	Pearson Correlation	1	0.923**	0.898**	0.877**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	304	304	304	304
	Pearson Correlation	0.923**	1	0.830**	0.867**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
Nigeria's military engagements	N	304	304	304	304
	Pearson Correlation	0.898**	.830**	1	0.887**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	304	304	304	304
	Pearson Correlation	0.877**	0.867**	0.887**	1
Nigeria's military deployments	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	304	304	304	304
	Pearson Correlation	0.877**	0.867**	0.887**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	304	304	304	304

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

significantly influence regional security initiatives within ECOWAS.

The correlation between Nigeria's role and regional security initiatives produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.923$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This means that Nigeria's role significantly influences regional security initiatives within Economic Community of West African States.

Hypothesis Two (Ho₂): Nigeria's military engagements have no significant effect on regional security architecture, including ECOWAS and the African Union (AU).

The analysis revealed a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.830$ between Nigeria's military engagements and regional security architecture, with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that Nigeria's military engagements have a significant effect on the regional security architecture within ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) (Table 6).

Hypothesis Three (Ho₃): Nigeria's military deployments have no significant impact on bilateral relations with neighboring countries and the broader geopolitical dynamics in West Africa.

The correlation analysis between Nigeria's military deployments and bilateral/geopolitical relations yielded a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.898$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. Since the significance value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that Nigeria's

military deployments have a significant impact on bilateral relations and geopolitical dynamics in West Africa.

Hypothesis Four: The challenges associated with Nigeria's participation in regional military operations have no significant effect on regional security and stability.

The relationship between the challenges associated with Nigeria's participation and regional security/stability produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.887$ with a significance value of $p = 0.000$. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the challenges associated with Nigeria's participation in regional military operations significantly affect regional security and stability.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into Nigeria's influence on military deployments and regional security dynamics in West Africa. The results generally demonstrate that respondents perceive Nigeria as a dominant regional actor whose military engagements, peacekeeping roles, and diplomatic interventions significantly shape security architecture within Economic Community of West African States and the African Union (AU).

Nigeria's Role in Shaping Regional Security Initiatives within ECOWAS

The findings from Table 2 revealed a strong agreement among respondents that Nigeria plays a leading role in promoting peace and security within ECOWAS. Respondents also agreed that Nigeria significantly influences security decision-making processes, contributes financially to regional security initiatives, and

remains committed to regional stability. These findings align with the works of scholars such as Aning and Edu-Afful (2021), who argued that Nigeria continues to serve as the central pillar of ECOWAS security operations due to its military strength, financial contributions, and diplomatic leadership. Similarly, Adeyemi (2022) observed that Nigeria's foreign policy objectives and regional leadership ambitions have positioned the country as the primary driver of peacekeeping and conflict resolution initiatives in West Africa. The finding that Nigeria strongly influences ECOWAS security policies also agrees with Okeke and Eze (2023), who noted that Nigeria's dominance within ECOWAS often shapes the organization's responses to political crises, insurgency, and unconstitutional changes of government in member states. Furthermore, the result supports the argument of Yusuf and Ahmed (2024) that Nigeria remains indispensable to regional peace and security efforts despite growing domestic security challenges. However, the slightly lower mean score regarding Nigeria's commitment to regional stability suggests that some respondents may perceive inconsistencies in Nigeria's ability to sustain its leadership role. This observation is consistent with the work of Salihu (2022), who argued that Nigeria's domestic economic pressures, insecurity, and political instability sometimes weaken its capacity to effectively sustain long-term regional commitments.

Nigeria's Military Engagements and Regional Security Architecture

The findings from Table 3 showed that respondents generally agreed that Nigeria's military engagements positively influence regional security structures within ECOWAS and the African Union. Respondents specifically acknowledged Nigeria's contributions to strengthening ECOWAS security institutions, improving the effectiveness of AU peacekeeping operations, shaping regional security policies, and promoting collaborative responses to terrorism and insurgency. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Adebajo (2021), who emphasized that Nigeria remains one of Africa's most influential contributors to regional peacekeeping and military stabilization efforts. The findings also support the argument of Obi and Nwankwo (2022), who found that Nigeria's military interventions in regional conflicts have enhanced institutional cooperation between ECOWAS and the African Union in addressing terrorism and transnational security threats. The respondents' perception that Nigeria's military operations improve the credibility of ECOWAS peacekeeping missions also agrees with the findings of Bah and Chidozie (2023), who argued that Nigeria's active military participation has historically strengthened the legitimacy and operational reputation of ECOWAS interventions in countries such as Mali, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia. Furthermore, the findings align with recent

literature emphasizing Nigeria's role in counterterrorism collaboration within the Lake Chad Basin and West Africa. For example, Ibrahim and Adamu (2024) noted that Nigeria's military cooperation with neighboring states has contributed significantly to regional responses against insurgent groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP. Nevertheless, the moderate variation in opinions regarding Nigeria's influence on regional security policymaking reflects recent debates in the literature concerning the declining effectiveness of Nigeria's regional dominance due to increasing competition from other African powers and internal governance challenges. This position was emphasized by Ekanem (2023), who argued that although Nigeria remains influential, its regional leadership is increasingly constrained by domestic insecurity and economic limitations.

Nigeria's Military Deployments, Bilateral Relations, and Geopolitical Dynamics

The findings from Table 4 demonstrated that respondents generally believe Nigeria's military deployments positively affect diplomatic relations, regional cooperation, and geopolitical interactions within West Africa. Respondents agreed that Nigeria's military activities promote trust and cooperation among states and strengthen bilateral partnerships through cross-border military collaboration. These findings correspond with the work of Adebola and Kazeem (2021), who argued that Nigeria's military diplomacy has enhanced bilateral relations with neighboring countries through joint security operations, intelligence sharing, and peacekeeping cooperation. Similarly, Oloruntoba (2022) maintained that Nigeria's military deployments serve as instruments of foreign policy that strengthen Nigeria's geopolitical influence within West Africa.

The finding that neighboring countries generally support Nigeria's military engagements also agrees with the position of Chukwuemeka and Diallo (2023), who found that regional states often depend on Nigeria's military capacity in responding to terrorism, coups, and transnational crimes. However, the study equally found that Nigeria's interventions may sometimes create tensions with neighboring countries. This aspect of the findings aligns with the observations of Mensah (2022), who argued that while Nigeria's regional interventions are often viewed as necessary, some neighboring countries perceive them as excessive demonstrations of regional dominance or interference in sovereign affairs. Similarly, Bello and Traoré (2024) observed that military interventions may occasionally generate diplomatic disagreements, especially where political interests among ECOWAS member states diverge.

Thus, the findings suggest that Nigeria's military deployments produce both cooperative and tension-related outcomes within regional diplomacy and geopolitical relations.

Challenges Associated with Nigeria's Participation in Regional Military Operations

The findings from Table 5 indicated that respondents generally agreed that Nigeria faces significant logistical, financial, political, and operational challenges in sustaining regional military operations. Respondents identified inadequate military equipment, insufficient funding, logistical constraints, and political instability within West Africa as major obstacles affecting Nigeria's effectiveness in regional missions. These findings strongly agree with recent literature on the operational difficulties confronting Nigeria's military engagements.

For instance, scholars have argued that inadequate logistics, poor military infrastructure, and limited operational resources continue to hinder Nigeria's effectiveness in regional peacekeeping operations, while economic challenges and fluctuating defense budgets significantly reduce its ability to sustain long-term military commitments within ECOWAS and AU operations (Ekanade & Popoola, 2026; Ajah & Magadze, 2026; Mudoh & Ibn-Mohammed, 2026). The finding regarding inadequate funding from regional organizations also aligns with studies that emphasize ECOWAS's frequent dependence on Nigeria for financial and military support during peacekeeping operations (Ayuk et al., 2026).

Political instability complicates military interventions, as coups, insurgencies, weak governance structures, and fragile political systems within West Africa reduce the effectiveness of regional military interventions. This perspective is supported by research highlighting how the resurgence of coups in Mali and Burkina Faso has undermined ECOWAS's ability to enforce constitutional order and sustain unified responses (Augustine & Ikeagwu, 2025; Olawunmi, 2026).

Furthermore, Nigeria's growing domestic security challenges, including banditry, insurgency, separatist agitations, and economic instability, have overstretched its military capacity and reduced its ability to effectively sustain regional security commitments. These challenges correspond with broader analyses of the West African security architecture, which emphasize the need for stronger institutional coordination and shared responsibility among ECOWAS members (Salman, 2025; Achu et al., 2026; Ugwu & Aniche, 2025; Adunimay & Lifongo, 2026).

Hypotheses Findings

The correlation analysis revealed strong positive and statistically significant relationships among all the variables examined in the study. The rejection of all four null hypotheses confirms that Nigeria's role, military engagements, military deployments, and operational challenges significantly influence regional security and stability within West Africa. The finding supporting

Hypothesis One agrees with the studies of Aning and Edu-Afful (2021) and Adeyemi (2022), which concluded that Nigeria remains the most influential state in shaping ECOWAS security policies and peacekeeping initiatives. The rejection of Hypothesis Two also aligns with Obi and Nwankwo (2022), who found that Nigeria's military engagements significantly strengthen regional security institutions and collective security mechanisms within ECOWAS and the African Union. Similarly, the finding related to Hypothesis Three supports Oloruntoba (2022) and Chukwuemeka and Diallo (2023), who argued that Nigeria's military deployments significantly influence diplomatic relations, regional cooperation, and geopolitical interactions within West Africa. Finally, the rejection of Hypothesis Four agrees with the works of Akinola (2021), Garuba and Hassan (2022), and Adeniran (2023), who emphasized that operational and financial challenges significantly affect the sustainability and effectiveness of Nigeria's regional military commitments.

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