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Nigerian Navy’s Responses to Criminality in the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Domain

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Research Article

ABSTRACT

Given the growing threats and incidents of criminality in the coastal communities and waters off the Gulf of Guinea, the Nigerian Navy is increasingly being looked upon to intervene and restore order. This study investigates the link between resource prosperity, rising criminality, and Nigerian Navy crime response capability in the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain. The study is qualitative research based on secondary data collection method and analytical framework. The security practice strand of maritime security theory was adopted to argue that notwithstanding the rising incidents of criminality and dwindling fortune of the subregion’s blue economy, the Nigerian Navy remains undeterred in its onslaught against maritime illegalities. To further consolidate on its successes in the war against criminality in subregion’s waters, the study recommends among others that the Nigerian Navy sustains the use of intelligence and technology, embrace bilateral and multilateral partnership in sea operations with Navies of proximate and distant states in the Gulf of Guinea waters, subscribe to the rules and regulations of international maritime regulatory bodies, and project its hegemonic powers on the coast and in the waters off the Gulf of Guinea.

Keywords: Nigerian Navy, criminality, maritime domain, Gulf of Guinea, hegemony.

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INTRODUCTION

The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) is currently one of the most visible and viable maritime environments in the world. Covering a stretch of about 6000 km along the Atlantic coast of West and Central Africa, scholars differ on the actual number of states that constitute the Gulf of Guinea. While some scholars prefer that the twenty littoral and island states from Senegal South-east ward through Nigeria down to Angola be delineated the GoG subregion, others insist that the environment should be limited to the eight core GoG commission states. Notwithstanding which of the delineations subsists, findings have revealed that the entire environment, beginning from 1960, had its fair share of prosperity as well as concerns. Long before decolonization, the GoG was a major supplier of numerous critical metals and key agro-produce needed in the manufacturing industries of Europe and America (Answers Africa 2014).

It was, however, the discovery of crude oil and natural gas in commercial quantities that brought fame and prosperity to the GoG subregion. As observed by Delano (2009), the subregion by the mid 1970s could account for roughly 54 billion barrels, well above 5 percent of the world proven reserve of which 90 percent belongs to Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon in the order of their productive strength. Along with crude oil is also the discovery of natural gas in an even more striking quantity. Thus, availability of hydrocarbon products and other critical metals on an economic scale marked the turning point for the GoG economy.

Resource endowment was further boosted by the waters of the Gulf which enhanced domestic, regional as well as international movement of passengers and cargoes.

In addition, the GoG maritime lanes with its busy harbours and seaports and devoid of narrow chokepoints along its sea lanes also facilitate import and export trading between the subregion and the rest of the world. Following the growing prosperity of the subregion, the US and European officials and in due course, the Chinese and Asians decided to muscle into this backwater of no consequence, injecting massive capital and creating infrastructure investments all over the subregion. Olukoju (2012) informed that from the West alone, an aggregate investment of between \$40 and \$60 billion was anticipated by the end of 2020. The expectations that these unfolding dynamics will stimulate sub-regional development were, however, met with disappointing outcomes. Thus, the security dilemma of the GoG, in particular, its maritime domain results from the eroding capacity of domestic authorities for resource, ocean and sovereign governance. Basically, it was the seeming sea blindness of the subregion's political authorities that painfully turned the entire stretch of the GoG maritime domain to ungoverned spaces.

A gloomy picture of what happens in the GoG waters was presented by Onuoha (2009) when he informs that they have become transit routes for transnational crime like narcotics, arms and human trafficking and also plagued with illegal maritime activities (IMAs) such as sea piracy, maritime kidnapping, illegal unreported and

unregulated (IUU) fishing, cargo pilfering and pollution with toxic wastes. Making an empirical report on the deteriorating security situation in the GoG maritime domain, International Crisis Group (2012) noted that for decades, maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea have become the trend off the coast of most GoG littoral states. It went ahead to inform that as far back as 1979, armed thieves had attacked a Danish Cargo Ship 3 nautical miles (5.5km) from Lagos, killing the Ship's master, wounding all its fourteen crew members and stealing the Cargo.

While Agu (2012) reports that the GoG waters emerged the world's most dangerous maritime domain by 2011, Ukeje and Mvomo (2013) informs that pirates and sea robbers have regularly come out from the sea to attack bank buildings, presidential villas, Gendarmerie units and community markets in Limbe, Malabo, Bioko Island, Badagary, Ikorodu, Ogulagha, Sekelewu and Ekoko Titi among other coastal communities and later return into the sea after successful operations. They have also attacked trawlers, cargo and passenger ships inside the sea killing several hundreds of people, injuring several thousands, taking numerous hostages and plundering ships and cargoes. Agu (2012) identifies maritime piracy and armed attack at sea as the most serious concerns to a region that serves as a shipping route for large quantities of crude oil, natural gas, cocoa and metals to the global market.

Given the escalating incidents of maritime criminality in the largely ungoverned spaces off the Gulf of Guinea, it became imperative that proximate domestic

authorities collaborate to upscale the maritime security architecture of the subregion. Regrettably, the maritime security dilemma of the Gulf of Guinea was compounded by the relative low capacity of the navies of member states. The sea blindness posturing often ascribed to domestic authorities of the subregion results from the fact that most of their navies could not effectively police beyond their territorial waters. In addition, the Nigerian Navy, prides as the hegemon of the subregion's naval forces, could only demonstrate limited capacity to sustain a protective presence over the troubled maritime domain. Thus, weak maritime domain policing exposed the vulnerable GoG sea stretch to brutal criminal exploitation that saw it deteriorate to one of the world's most dangerous maritime environments since 2011 (Agu 2012).

While poor resource and ocean governance by the subregion's domestic authorities promoted the emergence of deprived and aggrieved citizens who with impunity, criminalised the entire Gulf of Guinea maritime domain, the once promising blue economy of the subregion suffers recession. It was, however, the need to secure the maritime space and reinvent the blue economy of the subregion that informed the Nigerian Navy's projection of its hegemonic sea power over and across the subregion's maritime environment. Significantly, structural inadequacies in the face of escalating maritime incidents demands that existing security platforms are strengthened even as new sets of strategies are developed to combat criminality and return order to the GoG maritime domain.

To thoroughly investigate this problem will require answers to the following questions; why have the stakes in the maritime domain of the GoG become very high in recent years? What are the emerging security threats and incidents in the maritime domain of the GoG? How can the policing, diplomatic and coastguard functions of the Nigerian Navy enhance maritime security in the GoG maritime domain?

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Nigerian Navy

Navies are one of the policy instruments of the state and the maritime service of a nation's defence force. They represent a critical factor in the equation of any maritime state. Specifically, they allow states the use of sea for their own advantage while at the same time, attempting to prevent the use of sea by others to its disadvantage (Adekeye 2007). In the categorization of navies, Morris (1987) had divided navies of the world into nine ranks comprising of major global force projection (complete); major global force projection (partial); medium global force projection; medium regional force projection; adjacent force projection; offshore territorial defence; inshore territorial defence; constabulary and token navies. According to Morris, the US Navy was the only complete major force projection navy, USSR was a partial force projection while Britain and France were placed at the third rank of medium global force projection navies. Historically, the Nigerian Navy (NN) owes its origin to the Nigerian Marine. There was a Southern Nigeria Marine formed in 1893 and its

Northern Nigeria equivalent formed in 1900. The two marines were merged into one in 1914 and assigned the responsibility of administration of the ports and harbours, dredging of channels, buoyage and lighting. It also operated ferry services, touring launches and other small crafts that plied the various creeks and other inland waterways.

With this, the Nigerian Ports Authority, the Inland Waterways Department and the Nigerian Naval Force effectively came under the administration of the Nigerian Marine. In due course, the Nigerian Naval Force was adequately prepared to train the personnel and set up appropriate infrastructure necessary for the planned Navy. According to Awala (2016) the first basic training establishment for the future Navy – the HMNS Quorra was started on 1 November 1957 with 60 junior ratings who underwent a 6 – months basic seamanship course. In 1959, Her Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth II permitted the newly transformed Nigerian Naval Force to use the title “Royal Nigerian Navy”. The title was changed to “Nigerian Navy” in 1963 after Nigeria became a republic. Since then, the constitutional task of the Navy has been expanded severally. The Navy Act of 1964 for instance, tasked the Navy with the “naval defence of Nigeria”. In addition, it assigned to the Navy other coast guard roles including training officers and men in naval duties. However, the naval leadership realised that these tasks were essentially routine functions of any navy and began to mount pressure on the political leadership to re-define the constitutional role of the navy.

Eventually, this pressure yielded the desired result as the Armed Forces Degree

105 (now known as the Armed Forces Act) was incorporated as part of the 1999 constitution. This witnessed further expansion of the military and constabulary roles of the Nigerian Navy, particularly, in the oil and gas sectors of the Nigerian Maritime economy. The Nigerian Navy is a branch of the Nigerian Armed Forces. With a total of 25,000 personnel as at 2021, it is the third largest navy in Africa ranking behind only Algeria and Egypt and with the largest naval base in West Africa located in Lagos, clearly the subregional hegemon. Sharing in the structural attributes of the navy as an institution, the Nigerian Navy was categorised in the sixth rank, that is, offshore territorial defence navies. The other navies in the Gulf of Guinea sub-region were placed lower than the Nigeria Navy as inshore, constabulary and token navies. Hence, Adekeye (2011) informs that the NN is the only navy among the Gulf of Guinea navies categorised as offshore territorial and coastal sea navy. In consideration of its status, the NN has the potential of adequately safeguarding Nigeria's maritime environment from multiple challenges and is also empowered by diplomatic conventions, protocols and agreements to modestly project its force in the waters off proximate Gulf of Guinea states.

Maritime Criminality

These are sets of illegalities and impunities perpetrated by criminals operating in the maritime domain and coastal communities of littoral and island states. The Gulf of Guinea sub-region has over the years continued to experience

escalating criminality in its maritime environment. According to Tangwan (2009), maritime criminality in the Gulf of Guinea can basically be categorised into two types. The first is illegal maritime activities (IMAs) characterised by illicit economic crime such as maritime piracy, armed robbery at sea, fish, and shrimp poaching among others while the second category is transnational organised crime (TNOCs) comprising narcotics trafficking, arms trafficking, and human trafficking among others.

Gulf of Guinea Maritime Domain

Geographically a gulf is a large body of ocean water that protrudes into a continental land mass, hence, on a global scale, there is the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Alaska, the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of Aden among numerous others (Agwu 2009). Scholars have attempted numerous delineations of the Gulf of Guinea. However, in his delineation; Adekeye (2009) adopted the International Hydrographic Organization's notion that the region's oceanic border is the rhumb line that runs from Cape Palmas in Liberia to Cape Lopez in Gabon. This definition limits our conception of the Gulf of Guinea environment in this paper to the ten littoral and Island West and Central African states of Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin Republic, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Island of Sao Tome and Principe. Additionally, he informs that the Gulf of Guinea's tremendous potential is creating investment opportunities as well as incubating a

criminal network in its maritime domain. By maritime domain it means all areas and things of, on, under, relating to, adjacent to or bordering on a sea, ocean or other navigable waterways including all maritime related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, vessels and other conveyances (Adekeye 2009). In international law of the sea, there are four major delineations in the maritime domain of any state. These are:

- i. Territorial waters – 12 nautical miles from the coast.
- ii. Coastal waters – 24 nautical miles from the coast.
- iii. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) – 200 nautical miles from the coast.
- iv. Continental Shelf - Beyond 200 nautical miles from the coast.

The stretch from the continental shelf is regarded as international waters beyond which no state can lay any legitimate claim to. It will also be of benefit to add that in recent years, most maritime security scholars are factoring coastal communities as a vital component of the maritime domain of littoral and Island States. This results from the understanding that most legitimate and illegal activities in the sea are conceived and planned on the proximate coastal communities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Security Practice strand of Maritime Security theory is adjudged to be very appropriate for this study. In maritime security discourse, frequent emphasis is

made about piracy and armed attacks, fish and shrimp poaching, cargo pilfering, environmental crime, narcotics trafficking among other threats that prevail in the maritime domain (Klein 2011). Significantly, also, emerging notions have come to view maritime security as absence of maritime threat; or the establishment of good or stable order at sea. It is also increasingly being linked to economic or blue growth.

However, beyond the semiotics and the securitization frameworks which in addition to the security practice framework are adopted in explaining the complex relationship in the maritime security matrix, the security practice framework provides clearer insight to understanding what actors do as well as actions that are undertaken in the name of maritime security. In other words, the central concern here is with the kind of activities conducted when actors say that they are doing maritime security. Security practice theory takes up clues from securitization analysis in that it is interested in the implementation of the measures that securitization processes imply. Here, practice is the central unit of analysis.

Proponents of the Theory

Some scholars as well as entities and institutions are known to have made significant contributions towards propounding the maritime security theory. In no particular order of significance, these scholars include Thucydides, Palmerstone, Karl Deutsch, Ole Weaver, Du Plessis, Admiral Gorshkov, Charles Dokubo and Freeborn Onuoha. Institutions such as the

International Maritime Bureau (IMB), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations Conventions on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as well as national groups like the Romans, the Vikings and the Burgess.

Basic Thrusts of the Theory

The security practice theory moves away from consideration of language and asks about what actors actually do in the name of maritime security. Thus, Bueger (2014) informs that the theory is embedded in an understanding of security politics as the central unit of analysis. While establishing its core interest on the question of tools and technologies used in maritime security, the theory was able to assemble together a spectrum of practices which are conventionally part of maritime security. Such practices include those that are geared at Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA); Activities at sea; Law enforcement activities; Coordination activities and finally Naval diplomacy, capacity building and naval warfare. In addition, the theory sees provision of maritime security as a major inter-agency challenge even on a national level. Finally, the theory demonstrates that maritime security is a transnational task. According to proponents, both the 2008 UNSC's Report and the maritime strategies of the US, NATO, EU and UK stress the importance of international cooperation and coordination responses. They as well emphasise the importance of multilateralism and joint coordinated responses.

Critique of the Theory

There is no doubt that elaborate work has been done on maritime security theory. Yet, scholars frown at what they perceive as a broad and incongruent mix of diverse policy proposals that trails the effort. For instance, the persisting calls for more coordination, information sharing, regulation, law enforcement and capacity building have come under severe attack. Critics have continued to ask what and who should be coordinated or regulated and who should build what kind of capacity. Thus, Kraska and Pedrozo (2013) allude that no international consensus over the definition of maritime security has emerged. In addition, the inherent definitional polemics of maritime security constitutes a huge set back. This is because mere assumption that absence of large volume of threats that prevail in the maritime domain would mean maritime security is untenable as well as unscientific. Finally, this approach to defining maritime security does not prioritise issues, it does not provide clues on how these issues are interlinked, it also does not outline how these threats can be addressed (Vrey 2013).

Application of Theory to the Study

The major concern of security practice theory is with the kind of activities conducted when actors say that they are doing maritime security. The Navy is the foremost statutory agency of state that maintains order in the maritime domain and inland waters. To do this effectively demands that states navies must be adequately prepared to fit into a spectrum of practices which are conventionally part of

maritime security. Among the navies of Gulf of Guinea states, the Nigerian Navy, globally placed in the sixth rank as offshore territorial defence navy is the subregion's hegemony. Since other navies in the subregion were placed lower as inshore, constabulary and token navies, to that extent, only the Nigerian navy has the potential of coordinating the spectrum of practices in the subregion's maritime domain. This responsibility it has continued to bore both unilaterally and more significantly, through a series of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy anchored on joint maritime security operations. These joint maritime security operations are legalised through treaties, protocols and agreements among other empowering legal frameworks. Most of the littoral and Island states of the subregion have also domesticated the instruments. Thus, the growing progress in recent years being recorded against criminality in the Gulf of Guinea's maritime environment owes largely to Nigerian navy's harmonisation of its technologies, skills, assets legal frameworks and operational strategies with those of proximate states of the subregion and their deployment across the entire stretch of the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain.

METHODOLOGY

In the light of the growing strategic relevance of the Gulf of Guinea and its accompanying antithetical paradoxes, the study aims to identify strategies that will enhance, in particular, the maritime policing and coastguard functions of the Nigerian

Navy against emerging security threats in the subregion's maritime domain. Accordingly, the qualitative research method was adopted to investigate the GoG's maritime domain including subregion's endowments, security threats and incidents within the domain and the naval maritime strategy against these threats. There was extensive review of relevant works on the Strait of Malacca, the gulfs of Aden, Mexico and Persia among others to determine the security situation and also understudy the counter-criminality measures that have relatively proved effective. This follows from the understanding that even though these gulfs are environmentally located apart, they share certain security challenges similar to those of the GoG. The study adopted the secondary source of data collection to obtain and treat information from libraries, special reports, archives, newspaper editorials, peer review journals, special TV programmes on the Nigerian Navy, the NIMASA and from the internet.

DISCOURSE

Rising Stakes and Growing Relevance of the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Domain

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the Gulf of Guinea was not considered a sub-region of much significance to the industrialised nations and the multinational corporations. The sub-region was viewed as desolate and its portion of the Atlantic waters was considered lonely and void. The discovery in recent years of crude oil, natural gas and numerous critical metals in the subregion and the desperate desire for

these resources by the industrialised nations have changed the trajectory. Today, the Gulf of Guinea has become a strategic sub region of no mean economic importance to the world. In addition, the Gulf of Guinea subregion harbours massive scale of forest reserves, diverse stock of economic crops, a variety of fishery stock and sea food that continues to be of interest to manufacturing firms in the industrialised countries. Increasing interests of the industrialised powers and their Multinational Corporations in the Gulf of Guinea, therefore strongly correlates with some of the subregion's critical resources, including:

Crude Oil

Forest and Sousa (2006) have informed that the Gulf of Guinea is a sub-region of Africa that is today emerging as an energy player on the globe for access to diminishing global resources, particularly hydrocarbons. According to them, eight Gulf of Guinea states are currently producing and exporting crude oil and more are emerging. For Dietrich (2004), the sub-region contains over 50 billion barrels proven reserves and produces 5.4 million barrels of oil per day. He further reveals that the US currently obtains 15 percent of its oil imports from the Gulf of Guinea and that this could increase to 25 percent over the next 5 years. Accordingly, he informs that the sub-region has the fastest rate of discovery of new reserves. Also, the EIA (2008) has informed that two Gulf of Guinea states; Nigeria and Angola are among the top ten countries that supply 88 percent of crude oil consumed in the United States. In

addition, it is seen that whereas all the regions of the world have experienced an increase in proven reserves buoyed by improved technology, the most significant discoveries are taking place in Africa as more offshore oil blocks in the deep waters off the Gulf of Guinea come on stream.

Natural Gas

The strategic significance of the Gulf of Guinea does not, however, rest on oil alone. Africa now accounts for 8 percent of world's total gas reserves with estimates well over 100 trillion standard Cubic Feet beneath the Gulf of Guinea (Ondo Mane, 2005). It is also an important exporter of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and ranks only below Algeria in the entire Africa. The Oil and Gas Journal (2004), reports that besides oil, the natural gas potential of the Gulf of Guinea could be another reason for the growing interest of the world's major energy consumers. For instance, while the US faces a potential shortage of this resource since reserves have steadily decreased in the past years, China faces the same problem resulting from the exponential increase in its population. The US and her allies as well as China and other emerging economies certainly recognized the potential of the Gulf of Guinea to meet and fill part of their excess demand for energy. Thus, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing assistance in the design and implementation of a regional regulatory framework aimed at controlling the exploration of natural gas as well as generation of electricity in Ghana and Nigeria. In the same vein, the US Export-Import Bank has financed an offshore and

onshore natural gas pipeline, the West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP) which is 1000 km long and is intended to transport natural gas from Nigeria to Benin, Togo and Ghana. Beside these, there are also other numerous US, EU and Chinese investments in the Gulf of Guinea, primarily aimed at securing their individual access to the sub-regions hydrocarbons in addition to stabilising the region.

Critical Metals

Beside crude oil and natural gas, the Gulf of Guinea has in abundance, strategic minerals that are either not available domestically or in sufficient quantities to meet the military and civilian demands of industrialised countries. According to Jordan and Kilmarx (2003) the US, for instance, imports 21 of the 24 critical metals currently used around the world and the Gulf of Guinea remains a foremost supplier. The Gulf of Guinea, particularly its maritime domain is home to large mineral deposits of manganese nodule, copper, tin, uranium, gold, bauxite, nickel, colton, cobalt, coal, platinum group metals (PGMs), and iron ore among others (katunguzi, 2016). The sub-region is the world's second largest producer of a metal called columbine tantalite; a key component used in the production of cellular phones, satellite communication hardware and computer microchips. The US government identified columbine tantalite commonly referred to as colton as a strategic and critical mineral in the Critical Minerals Stockpiling Act of 1946 (Barbera, 2006). Answers Africa Report (2014) for instance, informs that countries of the Gulf of Guinea

lead the world in reserves, production and supply of critical mineral resources.

Oceanic and Agro Resources

Gulf of Guinea's maritime domain is additionally endowed with one of the world's largest concentrations of highly cherished fishery (crustaceans and molluscs) which are exploited by various categories of fishing groups in the fishing industry. According to Me-Chinho (2009) with an appreciable 185 species from 67 families, the total value of the known fishery resources of the sub-region is put at between \$1.8 and \$3.0 billion, while the known shrimp stock is valued at between \$150 and \$240 million per annum. A USAID (2008) Report informs that the fishery sector of Gulf of Guinea's economy accounts for more than eight million jobs and the total value of seafood exports are estimated to be more than a billion dollars per annum. Dredging of sea sand, an important resource which provides utility for diverse forms of construction work, has created opportunities for hundreds of companies and jobs for thousands of people in the sub-region.

In terms of Agro-plantation produce (cash crops) and forest reserves, Neethling, (2010) informs that the Gulf of Guinea states are home to some of the most valuable economic crops highly needed to keep the manufacturing industries of the industrialised nations going. He listed cocoa, coffee, cashew-nut, cassava, palm produce, rubber, timber and other economic crops as major sources of foreign exchange for states of the subregion. With regard to global cocoa production and exportation, Jeffery

and Warner (1995) observe that Cote d'Ivoire together with Ghana, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe and Cameroon lead the rest of the world. According to the FAO (2012) Report, of the 28 percent Africa's share of global cashew nuts, the Gulf of Guinea contributes about 20 percent. The sub-region also harbours 12 percent of global coffee production while Nigeria and proximate Gulf of Guinea states account for over 20 percent of global palm produce.

Other Natural Endowments

The Gulf of Guinea shares geographical proximity with the Western Hemisphere, the Indo-China and Western Europe and these are homes to the Americans, the Chinese, the Indians, the Germans, the French and the Britons who incidentally are the largest consumers of the numerous natural wealth of the Sub region (Mbekeani & Mthuli, 2011). The sub-region's geographical location also presents an important comparative advantage for international trade especially of crude oil, solid minerals, fisheries and other agricultural resources. Also, despite its relative proximity to the world's major energy consumers of North America and Western Europe, the Gulf of Guinea benefits from the absence of narrow shipping maritime lanes known as chokepoints. Ondo Mane (2005) has informed that a substantial proportion of the world's crude oil shipment is undertaken through the maritime transit chokepoints and that the narrowness of chokepoints make them susceptible to blockades, pirate attacks and shipping

accidents. Luckily, the sub-region's maritime lanes are free from these risks.

Capitalist Incorporation and Maritime Criminality in the Gulf of Guinea

The process of incorporation of the Gulf of Guinea economies into the world capitalist system which came strong during the early years of colonialism became more intense from the immediate years preceding decolonization. This incorporation came on the heels of the discovery of large reserves of hydrocarbons product and critical metals in most parts of the subregion. Rising energy demand in the US and EU precipitated by rapid industrialization as well as population induced demand in China and India elevated on a global scale, the geostrategic relevance of the Gulf of Guinea, hitherto backwater of no consequence. Added to the relevance by the sale of hydrocarbon products was that the subregion supplies close to 21 of the 24 critical metals currently used in the Military-industrial complex of the industrialised countries of the world (Jordan & Kilmarx, 2003). Thus, resource availability and accessibility provoked the vested interest of the capitalist and industrialised world at incorporating the GoG into the world capitalist system.

This process which assigned to the subregion the role of primary producers in the international division of labour lacked equity, discouraged industrialization, disarticulated the socio-economic structures and stifled the evolution of full capitalism in the Gulf of Guinea (Ake 1981). The outcome was that despite the billions of dollars in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI),

in oil and gas infrastructure and in other critical areas injected by the US and the EU in the Gulf of Guinea economy (Olukoju, 2012), the subregion remains underdeveloped. On its part, China unfolded its mutually beneficial interests in the Gulf of Guinea during the November 2006 China – Africa summit when it promised to double its aid to Africa and, in particular, the Gulf of Guinea States. In addition, Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa the (BRICS) states have all demonstrated different measures of commitments in terms of financial and infrastructural investments in the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain.

Given the growing interests of the industrialised powers, the massive infrastructural investments and capital inflow generated by these in the GoG states and the subsequent incorporation of the subregion into the global capitalist system, it was expected that the subregion has at last, discovered the path to sustainable development. Ironically, this expectation was dashed by the general inadequacy of the maritime policies of the states in the subregion, particularly, their inability to meet the vital development needs of their peoples. According to Pham (2009) this has allowed criminal networks to diversify their illicit activities and gradually extend away from the Nigerian coast out to the high seas. International Crisis Group (2012) buttressed this fact when it reported that criminal groups have taken advantage of troubled socio-political situations in the subregion to appear along the coasts and waters off the Camerons, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Benin Republic and Cape Verde among others. Some of the criminal tendencies

which have continued to threaten the security and development of the subregion's maritime domain are:

Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea

The international Maritime Organization (IMO) conceives piracy as any illegal act of violence or detention, or any act of deprivation committed for private ends by the crews or passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft and directed by the high as against another ship or against person or property on board another ship. Sea robbery on the same note, is the commission of these acts in ports or territorial waters (DU Plessi 1999). Unfortunately, while the International Maritime Bureau notes the alarming rise of piratical activities in GoG waters beginning from the late 1990's, Malaquais (2012) informs that by 2011, the region had emerged the epicentre of piratical activities in the world.

Poaching

Poaching is the act of fishing in a nation's waters without permission or licence. The Food and Agriculture Organization states that one quarter of all fish stocks worldwide are being increasingly over exploited largely due to poaching. For many littoral and Island states, fishing represents a substantial part of their feeding and economy, hence poaching is inimical to their livelihood and development. Regrettably, since the GoG states lacked the wherewithal to establish absolute governance of their maritime domain, much of the fishery values of the subregion are

lost in the EEZ. A Maritime Resource Assessment Group (20005) report informs that illegal activities of fishing vessels from Asia, Europe and South America in GoG waters continues to deny the subregion full benefit of its fishery and shrimp stock.

Maritime Pollution

This is the discharge or dumping of hazardous waste in the maritime environment. The 2005 Abuja Declaration reiterated issues highlighted by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) which indicates that on account of pollution, fishery resources have experienced stock depletion, distorted ecological balance and environmental degradation. The dumping of toxic waste in Koko, Nigeria's Niger Delta region in 1988; in Probo Koala, Cote d'Ivoire in 2006 and the aversion of the one almost dumped in the Republic of Sierra Leone in 1980 represents some of the saddest experiences of residents of the coastal communities of the Gulf of Guinea.

Cargo Pilfering

According to Raidt and Smith (2010), security at Gulf of Guinea's port facilities varies but in general is not strong. While port facilities in Angola, the DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritania, Nigeria and Sierra Leone lack approved port facility security plans PFSPs – a component of ISPS code compliance, seven Gulf of Guinea states have ports currently under a Port Security advisory for failing to maintain effective anti-terrorism and security measures. This state of affairs, apart from

precluding countries from obtaining maritime related insurance and limiting their ability to participate in foreign trade, also create room for cargo pilfering at the sub-region's sea ports and harbours. A Vanguard Newspaper (2010) report for instance, informs that the continued pilfering of goods, particularly consumables and auto parts from vessels that berthed at sub-region's seaports has become a source of worry to both ship owners and importers as vessels now charge more to sail to the sub-region.

Smuggling

According to the UNCLOS, smuggling is the act of taking or bringing people or goods secretly and illegally into or out of a country (UNCLOS III; 1982). This act has grave consequences for the security and economy of the sub-region as it precipitates loss of revenue to the government and encourages trafficking in illegal drugs, arms, ammunition and humans. It also aids the closure of industries by stifling the patronage of domestic products.

Pipeline Vandalism and Sabotage

The Gulf of Guinea oil and gas industry has seen an increase in pipeline vandalism and sabotage due to the growing public awareness of the monetary value of oil and gas products and the remote location of the majority of the facilities connected to them. This is especially concerning for Nigeria, the dominant oil and gas producer in the subregion. The destruction of pipelines and flow stations has been

incentivized by the unscrupulous pursuit of financial gain through compensations resulting from oil spills and product syphoning.

National and Trans-national Organized Crime

Organised criminality operates at both natural and trans-natural levels in the GoG maritime domain. Poor maritime governance significantly facilitates oil theft, narcotics, arms and human trafficking as well as a variety of smuggling. While Gulpin (2007) lamented that oil theft cost the subregion huge financial loss every year, ACSS (2005) report reveals how criminal gangs dealing on weaponry strive to evade national law enforcement personnel in the increasingly sophisticated Small Arms and Light weapons (SALWs) trafficking. In addition Pape (2005) informs that the GoG maritime domain has become a major narcotics trafficking hub.

Maritime Kidnapping and Extortion

kidnapping, abduction and hostage taking for ransom as well as extortion are rampant in the Gulf of Guinea oil bearing communities, particularly, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Mostly involved in the business of kidnapping and extortion are militant youth gangs and criminal syndicates hiding under the state of lawlessness that has pervaded the region since 1998 (Saliu & Luqman, 2009). The activities of the Niger Delta militant youth gang is currently being exported to other Gulf of Guinea states as was evidenced in the recent incident in

which twenty-one Cameroonian soldiers were killed in a deal that went sour over the purchase of arms from the soldiers (Eze, 2010). As modality for coercing the payment of raw cash, youth gangs and crime syndicates are involved in abduction of mostly expatriate and at some instances, top indigenous personnel working with multinational companies. Amid torture, intimidation and brutalization, victims of abduction are usually released after hard negotiations, usually brokered through telephone conversation and exchange of SMS and the payment of ransom demanded by the syndicates that carried out the abduction exercise.

By and large, the massive illegalities being perpetrated by youth gangs and crime syndicates in the coastal communities and waters off the Gulf of Guinea if unchecked, carries with the dire consequences of undermining the subregion's development. From what we have seen so far, the maritime domain of the Gulf of Guinea is the economic mainstay of the sub-region. Bulk of the sub-regions' hydrocarbon reserves and critical metals are deeply buried underneath its waters. The stretch of its sea sand is inestimable while its stock of sea food is diverse in species, large in quantities and rich in qualities. Besides being a natural resource hub, the waters off the Gulf of Guinea provides access for cargo and passenger shipping activities, thereby enhancing international trade between the sub-region and other parts of the world. The importance of the proximate coastal communities is that apart from harbouring a fair share of these economic resources, they also provide habitable settlement for the

humans and some of the machines that may need to impact on these natural resources for exportation after all, humans do not live inside the waters.

It is, therefore, logical to infer that any tendency that may work to disrupt free flow of socio-economic and commercial activities in the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain will not be in the interest of the sub-region. It is here that authorities of the sub-region's constituent states are expected to deploy their navies as policy instruments of defence forces to confront criminality in their waters. Even though every of the sub-region's state has its legitimate maritime domain up to 200(nm) EEZ to secure and explore, only Nigeria has the naval force to accomplish this mandate. While most of the sub-region member states have very small navies with few and obsolete assets, the other few have no naval forces at all. Nigeria's huge resources, big economy, large market and strong defence capability (including its naval force) makes it the hegemon of the sub-region. As such, its security interests including maritime security would naturally stretch beyond its borders. With legitimate windows such as bilateral and multilateral joint naval patrol of constituent states waters, the Nigerian Navy, with modest support of the global powers, international organisation and donor agencies can, beyond its own maritime domain, also effectively provide leadership aimed at effectively policing and securing the subregion's maritime domain.

Nigerian Navy: Roles, Assets and Capabilities

Roles

The roles of the Nigerian Navy were derived from the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, Nigeria's Defense Policy and the Armed Forces Act Cap A20 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004. The roles assigned to the Nigerian Navy by these documents could be classified into three prominent aspects (Adekeye, 2011). These are the *military*, the *policing* and the *diplomatic* roles. While the military role involves force projection and balance of power functions, the policing role is concerned with the maintenance of law and order within the internal waters, territorial waters, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone and the coastal communities. In addition to these, the diplomatic role of the Nigerian Navy revolves around ceremonial prestige, negotiation from the position of strength and manipulation functions.

However, beyond these roles, the sub-regional hegemonic status of the Nigerian Navy and the dynamics of maritime crime in the sub-region's waters have created a navy that is today, much more involved with coastguard functions in the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain. Efforts of the Nigerian Navy in maintaining good order at sea; organising search and rescue (SAR) operations at sea or in the riverine areas; enforcement of customs, immigration, fishery and pollution laws and regulations; prevention of drug trafficking and dumping of toxic wastes in waters and sea ports of Nigeria and proximate states and provision of relief for people as well as their evacuation from disaster areas among others constitute some of the most visible

contributions of the Nigerian Navy to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Assets and Capabilities

To professionally organise these tasks require that the Nigerian Navy possesses certain capabilities and the necessary assets. According to Adekeye (2011) the Nigerian Navy capabilities include maritime combat, sea lift, offshore patrols, inshore patrols, hydrographic survey, aerial surveillance and anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Guinea. To sustain these capabilities, maritime scholars like Ian Ralby, Jide Martins and Robert Kibech among others inform that the Nigerian Navy also maintains a variety of ships in its fleet including frigates, corvettes, offshore patrol vessels, cat class ships, defender class boats, fast attack crafts, landing ships, support vessels and training ships. Official Nigerian Navy figure indicates approximately 133 ships of various types in the Navy's stock. Prominent in this stock also includes amphibious ship. The Nigerian Navy has also added to its inventory the air arm which already boasts of 5 Augusta Westland AW 109 helicopters with additional 4 expected to join in the near future (Adekeye, 2011). These assets were further boosted by the recently introduced GoG/MCF/SHADE Model –which collectively underscores the importance of international cooperation and intelligence-sharing to maintain security and stability in the Gulf of Guinea.

In addition to updating its fleet composition and equipment, strong innovations are taking place in the area of maritime security and surveillance.

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is increasingly being emphasised with massive installation of coastal radar stations while the Nigerian Navy Special Forces and anti piracy operations are strengthened with special boat service and joint operations and exercises. With regard to international partnership and cooperation, the Nigerian Navy is collaborating with foreign navies, hosting and participating in regional and international initiatives aimed at containing criminality and enthrone stable order in the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain. Equipped with these assets and capabilities, the Nigerian Navy is breaking new grounds in its responses to criminality in the Gulf of Guinea Maritime domain.

Milestones against Criminality in the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Domain

Following the emergence of the Gulf of Guinea waters as the hotspot of global maritime crime from 2010 (Oladipo, 2017), the Nigerian Navy began to redefine, in particular, its policing and coastguard functions within the region's maritime domain. This became more compelling considering its status as the hegemonic naval power of the subregion. Thus, if the Nigerian Navy must contain the escalating criminality and restore maritime order needed for the subregion's blue economy to thrive, it must expand and grow its maritime assets and capabilities respectively. The radical turn around witnessed by the Nigerian Navy in the last two decades testifies to its newly acquired strength. As a hugely transformed offshore territorial defence navy, the Nigerian Navy is today,

brutally engaging and decimating the various shades of criminality in the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain. This has in recent years, resulted in the foiling of several piracy incidents, disruption of numerous oil theft operations, prevention of several kidnapping incidents, and interception of arms and narcotics trafficking among others. Also, notable naval operations have been conducted while some are currently ongoing in the waters off the Gulf of Guinea. These naval operations have led to the arrest of hundreds of criminals and seizure of vessels conveying illegal products.

In policing the Gulf of Guinea waters, the Nigerian Navy has either unilaterally or on occasions collaborated with other maritime agencies like the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) to restore order at sea. For instance, the foremost NN-NIMASA joint patrol of early 2011 delivered a remarkable outcome. The crime countermeasure mounted by the Nigerian Navy that year resulted in substantial reduction in maritime attacks and related criminalities around the Lagos harbour. Ironically, the gains in Nigeria led to increased attacks on the coast of neighbouring Benin Republic. This is because, after reporting no attacks in 2009 and only one in 2010, Benin experienced a surge of more than 20 incidents in 2011 (UNSC, 2012). As a result, the tonnage at Cotonou Port fell by more than 15 percent, causing a loss of \$81 million in customs revenue (UNSC, 2012). This development compelled the then President Boni Yayi to request assistance from Nigeria. Towards the end of 2011, precisely in September, the

NN-NIMASA vessels began joint patrolling of Benin waters with Beninese security forces. In effect, the number of actual and attempted attacks on ships around Cotonou Port dropped from 20 in 2011 to only 2 in 2012 and zero in 2013. Consequently, shipping and maritime activities surged (Osinowo, 2015).

Since its new found strength, the Nigerian Navy has foiled and rescued hundreds of vessels, passengers and cargoes that had come under pirate attack. Some of the successful rescue operations recorded include the foiling of a piracy attack on MV Eleni, a Greek owned tanker off Bonny Island in January 2018 (Dryad Global, 2018); the interception and eventual rescue of MVOS 750, a cargo ship hijacked by pirates off Lagos in March, 2019 as well as the liberation of MT Apecus crew members and cargo in May 2019. The MT Apecus, a petroleum product tanker, was attacked by pirates in April 2019 off the Coast of Bonny Island in the Gulf of Guinea. The incident resulted in the abduction of several crew members (IMB, 2019). Similarly, in December 2018, the MV Pomeranian, a merchant vessel, was attacked by pirates off Ghana's maritime domain in the Gulf of Guinea. The Nigerian Navy responded swiftly to the distress call, deploying one of its patrol boats to the location. The naval forces successfully intervened, preventing the pirates from boarding the vessel and ensuring the safety of the crew (Nigerian Navy Journal 2019). Also, at the peak of piratical and armed robbery attacks along the Oron-Calabar-Gabon water channel between 2010 and 2013 writes Una (2013), the Nigerian Navy did not relent. According

to him, men of the underworld usually waylaid the water vessels by lurking inside wrecked ships or hiding their speed boats in the crevices of high sea weeds and creeks along the water channel at night and sometimes in the early morning. So bad did the security situation degenerate that by 2012, most vessel captains, crewmen and passengers were reluctant to put out to sea. Even fishermen and other partakers in the maritime economy were not spared. It was not until men of the Nigerian Navy began to police the waterways and chasing the criminals at times into the waters off Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea that the channel became secure for crewmen, their passengers and their cargoes.

Oil theft, the illegal extraction, diversion or syphoning of crude oil, refined petroleum products or gas from pipelines, storage facilities or transport vessels remains a major drain on Nigeria's blue economy. It can occur at various stages of the oil supply chain including production, transportation and distribution. Oil theft can be facilitated through such forms as pipeline tapping, bunkering, diversion and refinery thefts. In Nigeria's GoG, in particular, oil theft fuels organised crime and corruption among other vices. Often executed as a criminal conspiracy between the local criminals and their foreign counterparts, oil theft weakens Nigeria's economic base. In line with its constitutional responsibility of securing the nation's maritime economy, the Nigerian Navy with its increasing assets and growing capabilities is responding swiftly to oil theft. For instance, in October 2018, the Nigerian Navy intercepted a vessel carrying 2000 MT stolen crude oil off Bonny Island (Odit,

2022). Also in February 2020, the Navy disrupted an oil theft operation and recovered 3,000 MT stolen crude oil off the Niger Delta Coast (Odit, 2022). Four months later, the Nigerian Navy once more intercepted a vessel carrying 1500MT of stolen crude oil off Lagos (Odit, 2022).

In a similar vein, a NAN report in Business Day of July 30, 2024 informs that the Nigerian Navy has intensified crackdown on oil theft in the nation's waters. In a meeting with maritime stakeholders, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla says that the Nigerian Navy apprehended more than 35 ships involved in oil theft in the nation's waters. According to him, the Navy had rejigged its operations and established Operation Delta Sanity in January and sustained its maritime security operations through surveillance, response capability and law enforcement in addition to collaboration with all maritime stakeholders. Still on the Nigerian Navy onslaught against oil theft in the GoG, a Vanguard report of May 21, 2024 informs that the Nigerian Navy has arrested 2 suspects with 3500 litres of petrol en route Cameroon. According to reports, the naval gunboats on routine patrol were vectored to intercept and arrest the two suspected smugglers. Also, the Nigerian Navy is increasingly building capacity against incidents of kidnapping and arms smuggling in the GoG maritime domain. With increasing sophistication in assets and capabilities, the Nigerian Navy is making robust responses to maritime criminality in the GoG. With increasing capability of the Nigerian Navy, particularly since 2018, several vessels on arms

smuggling missions have been intercepted. For instance, in April 2019, the Nigerian Navy intercepted a vessel carrying 14,000 rounds of ammunition off Lagos waters. Slightly over a year later, the Nigerian Navy seized a vessel carrying 1500 AK 47 rifles off the waters of Takoradi, Ghana.

In addition, the Nigerian Navy has on several occasions prevented kidnapping attempts on vessels and on numerous occasions, foiled attempted kidnapping of crew members sailing on the subregion waters. Cargo ships like MV Jomar and MV Ambika had attempts made by pirates to kidnap the entire ship and the 5 crew members respectively but these were foiled by officers of the Nigerian Navy. Official figures, even though conflicting, have shown steady decline in piratical attacks in the GoG waters in the last few years. In 2018 for instance, the Nigerian Navy reported 34 piracy incidents with 12 foiled and 22 vessels rescued. In 2019, it reported 21 similar incidents with 10 foiled and 11 vessels rescued while in 2020, it reported 15 piracy incidents with 8 foiled and 7 vessels rescued. For the International Maritime Bureau IMB, piracy incidents in the Gulf of Guinea continued in this trajectory, recording further decline between 2021 and 2023 (Maritime Insight 2023, December). These drops have been attributed to increased naval patrols in particular, but also Regional Corporation, international support, information sharing, improved legal framework among others.

As the foremost maritime security agency of state, the Nigerian Navy has regularly collaborated with other agencies to patrol and deter criminals in the GoG

maritime domain. For instance, a cooperative military arrangement known as “*Operation Restore Hope*” composed of personnel of the Nigerian Navy, Army, Airforce, Police and the State Security Service was deployed to the Niger Delta in May 2009 to curtail the rising maritime incidents, particularly sea piracy, armed attack at sea, illegal oil bunkering, fish and shrimp poaching among others. Having accomplished the mandate, the operation was directed to proceed to the waters off Sao Tome and Principe to burst a maritime crime syndicate that was organising to take advantage of the rising Nigeria – Sao Tome and Principe commercial relations (Chiluwa, 2011).

Beyond galvanising internal security forces against criminality in the Gulf of Guinea waters and creeks, the Nigeria Navy remains the subregion’s most active participant in international naval operations. Such international naval operations like the US-AFRICOM sponsored Exercise Obangame Express which has held annually since 2011 in the Gulf of Guinea waters, the Operation Prosperity which is a joint effort of Nigeria and Benin with the support of France since 2011, the France sponsored Operation Corymbe which has been ongoing since 1990, the Exercise Grand African Nemo facilitated by France in cooperation with regional partners such as Ghana, Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire, the Operation Atalanta (extended to the Gulf of Guinea in 2021 but originally operational in the Indian Ocean) sponsored by the European Union, the Exercise African Winds, the Exercise Sahara Express; an initiative of the US with NATO support since 2010, the Nigerian

sponsored Exercise Deep Blue Project supported by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and regional partners among others have in various ways and in their various strengths, contributed to the enhancement of maritime security in the GoG.

Most often, their objectives remain basically the same, consisting of improved regional cooperation, maritime domain awareness and improved capacity of GoG states to counter illicit maritime activity. Other operations aim at protection of economic interests in the region, supporting local authorities in combating illegal maritime activities, addressing specific maritime crime like illegal fishing, piracy, drug trafficking and oil theft. While the Joint Task Force – West Africa, a US military initiative aims to improve cooperation with West Africa countries with a focus on counter-piracy, counter-narcotics and improved overall maritime security, the Nigerian sponsored Deep Blue Project is a comprehensive maritime security initiative aimed at protecting Nigeria's waters and the wider Gulf of Guinea from piracy, oil theft and other maritime criminalities (Jamoh, 2020). It includes air and sea patrols and advanced technology like drones.

The Nigerian Navy has played proactive roles in many of the international naval operations in the Gulf of Guinea, leveraging its strategic position as the largest naval force in West and Central Africa and also its proximity to some of the region's most vulnerable waters. With the numerous supportive roles it plays in naval operations, the Nigerian Navy has used these exercises as an opportunity to showcase its growing

capabilities in maritime security, especially its coordination with other Gulf of Guinea nations (Siebels, 2019). In some of the operations, the Nigerian Navy took the lead role by deploying its naval assets and personnel to conduct joint patrols, thereby reducing incidents of piracy in the subregion. In the Deep Blue Project where she is a primary actor, the Nigerian Navy plays a central role of patrolling Nigeria's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZs) and conducting counter-piracy and anti-smuggling operations.

Limitations to Nigerian Navy's Security Efforts in the GoG Maritime Domain

Despite the impressive milestones that have been achieved in recent years, the Nigerian Navy is increasingly challenged by critical limitations even as it strives to securitize the GoG maritime domain. These limitations are traceable to several factors affecting its ability to effectively safeguard the subregion's vast maritime space. They span across numerous issues including asset and maintenance, intelligence, funding, and training questions among others. Some of these limitations are, therefore, discussed under the following rubrics.

Inadequate Naval Assets

In spite of recording impressive growth in assets both in (quantity and in quality) in the last 15 years, the Nigerian Navy still lacks an adequate number of offshore vessels, inshore/coastal patrol vessels, auxiliary vessels and naval air arms to cover the vast waters off the GoG. Maritime Scholars as

well as agencies have severally observed deficient maritime and naval assets of the GoG navies, particularly Nigeria and have raised concerns. Ogwu (2008) for instance, note that while Nigeria has made some advancement in maritime security strategy such as in joint patrol and Regional Corporation, these efforts are undermined by equipment shortages and poor maintenance of existing assets. According to Obasi (2009), this incapacity is particularly concerning in the Gulf of Guinea where the Nigerian Navy is tasked with patrolling the vast territorial waters but lacks sufficient ships, radar systems and air support to cover the region effectively. Beyond these scholars, several organisations, institutions and agencies for instance, the Chatham House, the Institute for Security Studies, the International Crisis Group and the African Centre for Strategic Studies have also expressed worries about the low level of naval assets that man the Gulf of Guinea waters. This limits the Nigerian Navy's capacity to maintain a consistent presence across the region and respond quickly to threats like piracy, illegal fishing and sundry trafficking.

Ageing and Poorly Maintained Equipment

Many of the Nigerian Navy's ships and equipment are either outdated or suffer from maintenance issues or both and this leads to frequent breakdowns, hence, limiting operational readiness. For instance, Rear Admiral Oladele Daji, a former Flag Officer Commanding Western Naval Command highlighted the issues of ageing and poorly maintained equipment as a

significant challenge for the Nigerian Navy when he lamented that they limit operational capacity of the Nigerian Navy to effectively secure the GoG's maritime domain (militarynewsng, 2021). According to him, many of the Navy's ships and platforms had been in service for several decades, leading to frequent breakdowns and high cost of maintenance. He pointed out that without proper funding and investments in modern assets, the Nigerian Navy would continue to struggle with the burden of maintaining an ageing fleet; making it difficult to carry out sustained maritime patrols and security operations in the Gulf of Guinea. He further stressed that without addressing these maintenance issues and acquiring new platforms, the Navy's effectiveness in combating piracy, illegal fishing, marine pollution, oil theft and other maritime criminalities in the subregion would remain compromised.

Inadequate Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)

Effective maritime security requires appreciable levels of intelligence and surveillance but the Nigerian Navy lacks the necessary infrastructure for comprehensive MDA. Even with the recent improvements in surveillance capabilities, collaboration and partnership with neighbouring States and international organisations, particularly in information sharing and coordinated responses to maritime threats and also in operation experiences, the Nigerian Navy is still deficient in critical areas of MDA and this has constrained its capacity for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. For instance,

while budget and resource limitations affect the acquisition and maintenance of advanced MDA systems, the available ones are too meagre to cover the vast and complex GoG maritime environment. Thus, poor coordination between different agencies and countries, added to gaps in advanced technology and data integration continues to hinder comprehensive maritime awareness, leaving vast coverage of subregion's ungoverned maritime spaces for criminals to exploit.

Political and Legal Constraints:

Political instability, fragmented governance, jurisdictional issues, legal framework, international relations, corruption and inefficiency are some of the factors that have significantly hindered the delivery of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, yet most of these challenges are beyond the control of the Nigerian Navy. Frequent political instability and changes in government can disrupt continuity and consistency in maritime security policies and strategies leading to delays in decision-making, implementation of security measures and investment in necessary resources. Also, since the Gulf of Guinea spans multiple countries, each with its own political and legal frameworks, fragmented governance can lead to inconsistencies in maritime security measures and hinder effective regional cooperation. For instance, disputes over maritime boundaries and jurisdiction are regular and often difficult to resolve. This in most cases complicates enforcement efforts. Ambiguities in legal frameworks can lead to conflicting

interpretations of laws, making it difficult to address transnational crime effectively.

In addition, Olukoshi (2017) informs that weak or outdated legal frameworks may not adequately address modern maritime threats just as inadequate laws or clumsy legislative processes can limit the ability to prosecute offenders or enforce regulations. It is also strongly observed that corruption can undermine maritime security efforts. Bribery and other forms of corruption may impede law enforcement and judicial processes, thereby allowing criminals to evade justice. Added to this is that strained relations between countries can affect cooperation on maritime security initiatives. There is no gainsaying that disagreements or lack of coordination between nations can hinder joint operations and information sharing.

When we add such other challenges as limited surveillance technology including dearth of advanced maritime tools like radar systems, drones and satellite monitoring which hinders real-time tracking and quick response to maritime threats, and also, the transformative, adaptive and mutation – like maritime domain criminalities that have overwhelmed the Nigerian Navy's capacity to respond effectively, the mounting challenges that threatens its maritime security efforts becomes obvious.

Summary of Findings

From the foregoing, this study has revealed that:

- i. Gulf of Guinea's enormous resources found mostly in its maritime domain inspired interests of the industrial powers and multinational

corporations who have in turn invested heavily in capital and infrastructure in the subregion.

- ii. Structural and systemic decay in the Gulf of Guinea states denied the masses of the subregion (particularly those in the coastal belt) benefitting from the huge Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) accruing to the subregion. This saw the majority of the deprived masses take to maritime criminality of various forms if only to survive the harsh socio-economic conditions in the subregion.
- iii. As one of the policy instruments of the state and its maritime service, the Nigerian Navy realises that the use of the waters off the Gulf of Guinea by maritime criminals is to the detriment of the Nigerian state, hence, the concerted efforts aimed at effectively policing the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain and deterring criminals.
- iv. Even though some progress has been made, there is an even greater need that the Nigerian Navy enhance its fleet balance, acquire effective crime countermeasures and policing capabilities. This is because Nigeria must not only retain but also must improve her deep blue and subregional maritime capabilities since the subregion is still contending with severe maritime security challenges.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show that despite their enormous resource endowments, systemic contradictions have not enabled the GoG states to equitably distribute wealth among their citizens. The inadequacies arising therefrom have created a growing pool of marginalized youths who are increasingly taking to crime in the subregion's maritime domain. The deprecating impact of these criminalities on the economy of member states necessitates that the Nigerian Navy as the subregion's naval hegemony takes the lead to deploy its maritime power against illegalities across the subregion's waters. Findings reveal that even though the Nigerian Navy's maritime crime counter measures and policing efforts in the proximate GoG waters have so far met with modest successes, there is still room for improvement.

Recommendations

- i. For sustainable security of the Gulf of Guinea maritime domain, the Nigerian Navy should continue to improve its maritime crime counter-measure and policing capabilities. In other words, the detection and recording systems which comprised radars, night vision equipment, photographic and video cameras used for surveillance and recording must be mounted on suitable platforms profiled for one-the-spot deployment and operation. Such platforms include coastal observation

posts, patrol, maritime patrol Aircrafts (MPAs) and helicopters.

- ii. The (C⁴I) model of policing the maritime environment should be embraced by the Nigerian Navy. The emphasis of the (C⁴I) model is on effective coordination of the technological skills in command, control, communication, computer and intelligence to achieve the optimum benefits from maritime policing resources. The Nigerian Navy will find this rewarding and could leverage it to deliver maritime policing breakthroughs that have been experienced in the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Mexico and the Strait of Mallacai. This model works on the principle that the main objective of policing a maritime environment is to deter economic saboteurs and should this fail, to detect, intercept, arrest perpetrators and hand them over to the appropriate authorities for prosecution. Thus, it is essential that patrols are not predictable.
- iii. There is a need to focus on indigenous production as the Nigerian Navy moots the idea of modernization and expansion of its operational infrastructure. This is because, from the cat class ships, the defender class boats, and the Augustra helicopters recently acquired to reinvigorate her operational readiness, most of the ships earlier listed were commissioned into the service of the

Nigerian Navy in the early 1980s, hence, they are today, averagely over 40 years old. To save Nigeria the much needed foreign exchange and strengthen her economy demands that the Nigerian Navy, through its Engineering College kick start indigenous production of its fleets and other MDA assets. This will make the Nigerian Navy more sovereign and less dependent on foreign technology for its operations.

- iv. Also, it is important to note that the Nigerian Navy is not the only security agency operating in the GoG maritime domain. While other indigenous agencies like the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), the Nigerian Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), the Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) are co-stakeholders in the GoG waters, the Navies of other proximate littoral and Island States also operate therein. There is, therefore, the need that operations of these agencies and authorities in the GoG waters are properly harmonised to avoid inter-agency frictions that could undermine the huge gains being made in the war against illegalities in the subregion's waters. In the case of the Nigerian Navy's relationship with navies and maritime agencies of other states, it is necessary that legal frameworks are harmonised among GoG member states since different countries have different laws. This will help to bring

perpetrators of crime in any section of the GoG waters to applicable justice.

- v. Finally, even if it looks ambitious, Nigeria as a regional power with a potentially huge blue economy should begin to build its sea power if it must exercise total control over its enormous maritime endowments. The mainstay of her economy is hydrocarbons with most of the industry assets installed in the deep blue Atlantic. Also, her fishery and shrimp stocks are huge and worth trillions of Naira. If large chunks of these national wealth must not be lost to domestic and international criminals, the Nigerian Navy as the first line agency in the security architecture of the nation's maritime security must be restructured and made resilient. Thus, establishing a naval base in the deep sea, up to her Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) will heal the presumed long standing ailment of sea blindness often used ridiculously to mock the nation's weak maritime power. With such a formidable base in place, the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Collaboration Forum and Shared Awareness and De-Confliction (GoG-MCF/SHADE) initiative would have found more solid support for maritime security of the entire Gulf of Guinea Maritime domain.

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