

United States Africa Partnership Station Programme and Maritime Security Governance in the Gulf of Guinea: Niger Delta in Perspective

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Abstract

The Africa Partnership Station Programme was implemented by the US in collaboration with the coastal states as a structural response to the growing insecurity in the GoG. In spite of the collective efforts aimed at improving the maritime situation and to foster uninterrupted energy production and access, reports show that there has been a surge in criminal activities in the GoG. This study interrogates the US Africa Partnership Station Programme and maritime security governance in the GoG, using Niger Delta as a reference point. Documentary method of data collection and Qualitative descriptive method of data analysis were adopted. The study applied the key propositions of the Marxist Structuralist theory of the state to apprehend the moribund activities of the APS and increasing maritime criminalities in the coast of the Niger Delta as partly a direct consequence of the impaired institutional capacity of the maritime security and law enforcement agencies occasioned by the logic of sustaining the viability of the rolling global capitalist mode of production.

Keywords: *Gulf of Guinea; Niger Delta; Maritime security governance; Maritime security; Coastal states; Criminal activities*

Introduction

The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) is the most economic and strategically significant region in Africa (Traub-Merz and Yates, 2004; Allison et al., 2020; Popoola and Olajuyigbe, 2023). It is located in the Northeast portion of the sultry Atlantic Ocean, stretching from Guinea Bissau to Angola (Ibe and Sherman, 2002; UNESCO, 2021). GoG has a clear-cut maritime geographical advantage, given that over 80 percent of the World's trade is conducted via maritime chain that traverses four important geographical regions-Atlantic, Arctic, Indian and Pacific (Traub-Merz and Yates, 2004). The interconnected oceans in the region contribute more than a quarter (US\$24 trillion) of the world economy (US\$94 trillion), with projected net benefits of US\$3

trillion by 2030 (Hoegh-Guldberg et al., 2015; OECD, 2016; Bax et al., 2021). Moreover, the coastal states along the GoG region-Nigeria, Gabon, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo, Equatorial Guinea, among others-are awash in stupendous and eclectic organic and non-organic sea-borne resources such as hydro-carbon (with cumulative proven oil reserves of 51.34 billion barrels and gas reserves of 202, 346,000 million cubic feet) (Worldometer, 2016; Egbogah, 2010; Popoola and Olajuyigbe, 2023). The proximity of the GoG to Europe and North America and its contribution to 40% of Europe's and 30% of the United States of America's energy supplies has further enhanced its economic importance in the global energy supply value chain (Anyimadu, 2013; Popoola and Olajuyigbe, 2023; Agyekum, 2024).

Owing to its apparent strategic location in terms of maritime domain and hydro-carbon potentials, the GoG has over the decades preceded as a hub of global energy attraction and appeal, especially to the West and the United States (US) in particular. Specifically, the US vital interest in the GoG is partly marked by unhindered long-term access to energy and security of energy related infrastructures and assets. For instance, between 2005 and 2010, the US sourced 15% of her cumulative energy needs from the GoG, receiving nearly half of the Nigeria's annual oil exports in exchange for payments of an estimated \$38 billion per year (John and Kristen, 2010). Over the years, this vital energy interest has come under attack by disparate security challenges such as piracy, crude oil theft, hostage-taking of oil expatriates etc (Egbogah, 2010; Popoola and Olajuyigbe, 2023). Thus, according to the President of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema:

Today's piracy attack in the Gulf of Guinea should serve as a warning to the United States and Europe that this situation is becoming a great threat to maritime security off the west coast of Africa and global economy. The United States and Europe must recognize that the growing number of attacks by rebel groups and smugglers in the region is strikingly similar to the dangerous environment that exist in the Gulf of Aden and can no longer be ignored (Afro News, 2007, p.27).

Accordingly, the African Partnership Station (APS) programme was launched in 2007 by the US (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013). APS was a microcosm of the wider Africa Command (AFRICOM) that focused on improving maritime security in the GoG through maritime interdiction operations, including strategies on boarding a suspected ship, search and impound illicit cargo, seek out Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) and illegal migration along the coastal regions (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013). These targets were aimed to be achieved in increasing maritime safety and security; developing maritime domain awareness;

maintaining a clear picture of the maritime environment; building maritime professionals; establishing maritime infrastructure; and developing response capabilities, while building regional integration (<https://www.africom.mil/what-we-do/security-cooperation/africa-partnership-station>).

As part of the efforts to improve on the maritime security in the Niger Delta, the former US Coast Guard Cutter Chase (UCGCC) vessel was refurbished and re-commissioned as NNS Thunder use of the Nigerian Navy in February 2012 (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013). “The calculation by the US is that because Nigeria has the largest and most capable navy in the region, it can play a pivotal role in advancing security and stability in the region” Ukeje and Wullson, 2013, p.30). The US spent an estimated \$35million on training regional coast guards and navies, upgrading radar and other facilities, as well as refurbishing and donating refurbished equipments. The cumulative costs of US and its Europeans allies such as Britain, France etc on the global response to piracy and maritime security in the Niger Delta under APS programme were put at \$1.27 billion between 2007 and 2017 (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013). In spite of the US maritime security commitments, the Niger Delta coast remained largely unsecured in terms of criminal activities. Baldauf (2010, p.11) rightly noted that:

Piracy and armed robbery are now turning the Gulf of Guinea into a region of increasing international concern...A growing number of US, British and French ships patrol the Niger Delta waters and carry out joint exercise with the Navies of Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon yet security concerns on the region have remained unabated.

The International Maritime Bureau (2017) report showed that criminal activities, including armed robbery and piracy in the Nigeria’s Niger Delta waters were on increase, with a total of attacks on ships rising from 31 in 2013 to 33 in 2017. On 1 January 2024, Nigerian pirates attacked the Hana 1, a small chemical tanker sailing through the waters of Equatorial Guinea, and kidnapped nine crew members (Williams, 2024).

Scholars like Gary and Terry (2008), Collier and Hoeffler (2005), Ikelegbe (2005), Basedau and Lay (2009), Popoola and Olajuyigbe (2023), Agyekum (2024), Onuoha (2012) among others, point to the dialectics of resource governance and weak state capacity as constraints on policy efforts and programmes, as well as incubators of internal conflicts and criminalities in the entire GoG. Piedade (2016) and others hinge their argument on the excessive politicization and securitization of maritime security in the GoG as impediments on the maritime security efforts of the US. But, the negative impact of the institutional impediment of the maritime security and law enforcement agencies occasioned by the logic of sustaining the viability of the rolling capitalist mode of production on the programme objectives of the

APS was given less attention in extant literature. The paper exploits this gap to interrogate the US APS programme and security administration in the GoG, focusing substantially on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

African Partnership Station Programme and Maritime Security in the Niger Delta: Conceptual Clarification and literature review

Security in its objective and primary sense connotes “a cherished value associated with the physical safety of individuals, groups or nation-states, together with a similar safety of their other most cherished values” (Nnoli, 2006, p.16). It denotes freedom from threats, anxiety or danger. Security can be measured by the absence of threat, anxiety or danger. Maritime security refers to the freedom or protection of the maritime domain and ancillary technologies and environment from transnational organised crimes and risks such as accidents, hazards, piracy, terrorism, smuggling and trafficking, hostage-taking of seafarers, illegal fishing etc that pose a major threat to maritime security. Maritime security has recently become an uppermost feature in the international security discourses triggered by the upsurge of global maritime threats between 2008 and 2011 (Agyekum, 2024). The anxiety about maritime insecurity in the GoG in particular is reflected in the speech delivered by the Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Kitak Lim, in July 2021 at the inauguration of the GoG-MCF/SHADE. According to him:

The security situation in the Gulf of Guinea remains at the top of IMO’s and my personal priorities. International shipping is suffering. Piracy and armed robbery continue to damage the economy and trade. This situation has continued for several years, and these illegal acts must be stopped. Now is the time to make real progress (cited in Agyekum, 2024, p. 121).

Drawing on the experience of Ghana, Agyekum (2024) faults the differed maritime security governance infrastructure deployed by global shipping and Ghanaian state agents and the attendant tensions between the two parties as a cog in the wheel of the efforts in stanching maritime insecurity in the GoG. Anyimadu (2013) posits that while the regional bodies of ECOWAS and ECCAS have highlighted the detrimental effect of maritime insecurity, West African governments still suffer from what he termed ‘sea-blindness’ and have not prioritized the national action necessary to combat this insecurity. Piedade (2016) contends that the obvious politicization and securitization of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea emanated from the proliferation of incidents of violence at sea off the coast of Western and Central Africa between the years of 2006 and 2010. Western and Central Africa are major concern for international maritime trade, with a serious impact on international oil and natural resource business, as well as on the interregional economy. He contends that lack of regional capability

to tackle reported cases of piracy in the Eastern Coast of Africa informed the United Nations and US process of securitization of piracy, implementing several resolutions and permitting the operation of international naval assets within the Somali territorial waters to counter the threats posed to open sea lines of communication and human security at sea. He observes that though a number of policies and programmes, including APS are currently in operation to secure the Gulf of Guinea, lack of emergency measures or breaking the established rules have underscored the politicization of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea by the interested actors.

Maritime security is important for exploiting maritime resources, securing livelihoods and development. It should, however, be framed within national and regional policies that transcend beyond immediate needs and reactive engagement. Thus, according to Royal Institute of International Affairs (2012) report, such an integrated strategy includes environmental protection, management of fish stocks, tourism and the transport needs of landlocked countries. Neglect could result in acute security challenges in the future (food insecurity due to overfishing or environmental degradation of the seas). The report contends that much of the problem of oil theft in the Gulf of Guinea may have root causes in Nigeria, given the country's high level of youth unemployment and associated social phenomenon in other GoG countries. Ukonga (2012) examined the consequences of the unresolved security issues in the Gulf of Guinea, which include, increased costs of maritime transportation in the region through higher insurance premiums; decreasing revenues for ports of the region as fewer ships call at them; serious oil theft, with some countries losing up to a third of production to offshore theft; poaching and overfishing etc.

Basedau and Lay (2009) point to the dialectics of resource governance as the incubator of internal conflicts and criminalities in the GoG. They infer that the growing interest in the GoG derives from its endowment of lucrative vast deposit of good quality oil and gas resources aside from other marine resources the region has to offer. Onuoha (2012) infers that several interrelated factors underlie the outbreak and persistence of piracy in GoG. It derives primarily from bad governance. Despite their vast oil endowments, most of the GG states parade worst indices of human development such as high unemployment and poverty generated by bad governance. With declining opportunities for legitimate livelihood amidst affluence, some youths in the region are easily recruited for violent conflicts or take to criminality (piracy) for survival. Ikelegbe (2005) avers that internal conflicts and criminalities in the oil-rich region of Niger Delta are as a result of many factors, some of which are: the struggle for the control of oil and gas resources between the national government and the oil producing communities; greed for economic gains and profit from the oil and gas-related conflict situations by the

community leaders, warlords and traders in the Niger Delta region; high level of economic and financial crimes involved in the struggle for the control of oil and gas resources by the oil producing communities; government's militarization of the region; and inadequacy of the democratic institutions in Nigeria and lack of accountability and transparency in the management of revenues accruing from the exploitation of natural resources in the Niger Delta.

Whereas the above perspectives and others on the maritime security in the GoG and Niger Delta in particular are arguably valid and credible in providing insight on their various contextual applications, they have failed to shed adequate light on the negative impact of the institutional impediment of the maritime security and law enforcement agencies occasioned by the logic of sustaining the viability of the rolling capitalist mode of production on the programme objectives of the APS was given less attention in extant literature. The paper exploits this gap to interrogate the US APS programme and security administration in the GoG, focusing substantially on the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Theoretical Analysis

This study is grounded in the Marxist Structuralist theory of the state. The theory is germane in the paper because of its effectiveness and merit, among other means, for the study and understanding of the behavioral patterns of states in the GoG, including Nigeria, and why insecurity characterized by organized criminalities such as piracy, drug trafficking, illegal bunkering, artisanal refinery, poaching, hostage-taking of oil expatriates, illegal fishing etc have remained intractable despite the efforts of the US sponsored APS programme in the region. Marxist Structuralist theory was an approach that was birthed in opposition to the humanistic Marxism, which dominated many western universities in 1970s (Adibe, 2014). The theory was first associated with the works of the French philosopher, Louis Althusser, who argues that Marxism is a science that examines objective structures, and that humanistic, historicist and phenomenological Marxism, which was based on Marx's early works, was caught in a pre-scientific ideology (Althusser, 1971).

Other proponents of Structural Marxism are the sociologist, Nicos Poulantzas and the anthropologist, Maurice Godelier. Towards the middle of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, Marxist theorists began to develop structural Marxist account of the state, law and crime. Structural Marxism disputes the instrumentalist view that the state can be viewed as the direct servant of the capitalist or ruling class. Whereas the instrumentalist view argues that the institutions of the state are under the direct control of those members of the capitalist class in positions of the state power, the structuralist perspective takes the position that the institutions

of the state must function in such a way as to ensure the rolling viability of international capitalism (Poulantzas and Miliband, 1972). Put in another way, the Marxists believe that institution of the state must function as to reproduce capitalist society as a whole.

Furthermore, Structuralist Marxists view the state in a capitalist mode of production as taking a specifically capitalist form, not because particular individuals are in powerful positions, but because the state reproduces the logic of capitalist structure in its economic, legal and political institutions. Hence, Poulantzas argues that the institutions of the state, including its legal institutions, function in long-term interests of capital and capitalism, rather than in the short term interests of members of the capitalist class. Structural Marxists would thus argue that the state and its institutions have a degree of independence from specific elites in the ruling or capitalist class (Offe, 1974). Building on the works of Engels and Lenin, Structural Marxists posit the idea that the state is a mechanism for regulating class conflict, the irreconcilable tension between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. By regulating these antagonisms rather than eliminating them, the state serves to stabilize the capitalist system as a whole and preserve its existence (Offe, 1974). The differentiation between the long-term and short interests of the capitalist class is used to describe the necessity of the state to the capitalist system. Short-term interests of the bourgeoisie include policies that affect capital accumulation in the immediate future such as tax breaks, reduced minimum wages and so on. Structural Marxists maintain that when the state is not benefiting from the bourgeois class' short-term interests, it is acting on behalf of the long-term future interests of capitalism by meeting the demands of workers enough to prevent an uprising that could threaten the system as a whole (Poulantzas and Miliband, 1972; Adibe, 2014).

As in other countries of GoG, Nigeria's economy relies heavily on oil rent, and is thus, currently structured in a manner that guarantees and fosters the long-term survival and dominance of international capitalism. There is a harmony of interest between the Nigerian state and foreign capitals since it is through the dominance of foreign capitals that the country can reproduce itself materially and establish dominance over all the institutions, groups and people within the society. Hence, the nature and character of the Nigerian state is organized to favor the long term interest of capital since it is only through the mechanism of the dominance of foreign capital that the country can reproduce itself in the society. Since Nigerian state is organized to serve the long interest of foreign capitals, the institutions are organized in a manner that encourage the free movement of capitals by operating certain laws that make capital an essential and inevitable part of the economy of the country as the experience of APS has shown. The implementation and enforcement of the APS programme objectives in the

Niger Delta coast by the relevant institutions was highly problematic owing to Nigeria's overdependence on oil rent and the bid to sustain the interests and joint agreements with the MNCs. The immediate repercussion was a trajectory of violation of cardinal principles of the APS programme, especially the maritime environmental laws by the multinationals and concomitant increase in insecurity in the Niger Delta coast characterize by piracy, illegal bunkering, artisanal refinery, poaching, hostage-taking of oil expatriates and many more.

Methodology

Ex post facto research design was adopted in the study. It is a method of teasing out possible antecedents of events that have happened and cannot, therefore, engineered and manipulated by the investigator (Cooper and Schindler, 2001). In ex post facto research design, researchers can only report what has happened or what is happening by trying to hold factors constant by careful attention to the sampling. Independent variables cannot be manipulated as in true experiment, as they have already happened. Hence, the researcher is in the realm of probabilistic causation, inferring causes tentatively rather than being able to demonstrate causality unequivocally. Despite its shortcomings, ex post facto research design considered more useful in this paper because of its ability to yield useful information concerning the nature of phenomenon and for the fact that it can be used in conjunction with qualitative method and aggregate data.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, documentary method of data collection was adopted. Documentary method centers on descriptive analysis of all documents with relevant information pertaining to phenomenon under investigation. According to Mogalakwe (2006, p. 221), "the use of documentary methods refers to analysis of documents that contain information about phenomenon under study". Documentary method of data collection has an inherent flexibility in information generation through use of public or school libraries, government records or reports on events or personal accounts on experiential incidents, retrieval of facts and figures from statistical records on social issues or from the archival sources, books, journals, magazines, newspapers, institutional reports, bulletins, unpublished research studies and internet sources. Qualitative descriptive method of data analysis is adopted due to qualitative nature of the study. Through qualitative descriptive method of analysis, descriptive explanation is given to the data gathered in a research in order to establish a causal relationship between the variables under study. In doing this however, we made use of tables, figures and charts to further illuminate and clarify the issues under discussion.

US Africa Partnership Station and Weak Enforcement Capacity of the Niger Delta Coast Guards/Navies

The GoG possesses large deep sea oil reserves than the Persian Gulf, with the region serving as a major source of high quality oil and natural gas for the United States (John and Kristen, 2010). Table 1 depicted the oil data of selected GoG countries as of 2009.

Table 1: Oil data of selected Gulf of Guinea countries, 2009

Countries	Year of first discovery of oil/gas	Year of first Production	Oil reserves (billion barrels)	Crude oil production in (1000 barrel/day	Revenue reserve/ production
Angola	1955	1956	9.0	1.906,4	12,9
Cameroon	1955	1978	0.2	76.9	7.7
Congo	1951	1957	1.6	267.8	16.4
DRC	1970	1975	0.2	16.4	33.4
Equatorial Guinea	1991	1992	1.1	322.0	9.4
Nigeria	1956	1958	36.2	2207.8	44.9
Gabon	1956	1957	2.0	242.1	22.6
Sao Tome and Principe	2006	2012	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: Ukeje, C. and Wullson, M. (2013:14). *African approaches to maritime security-the Gulf of Guinea*. Abuja: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

As shown in table 1, Nigeria and Angola ranked highest in terms of crude oil reserve and production. Thus, given this apparent reality, the United States (US) has had a growing vital economic interest in the coast of Niger Delta, and the protection of the waters from a volatile security and host of illicit activities of non state actors was of paramount concern to the country and other interested allies (John and Kristen, 2010). As observed by Michael Ansari of Africa Center of the Atlantic Council:

In cooperation with other allies, America must work harder, smarter and better to help responsible West African leaders counter the rampant exploitation of the region's ungoverned waters by a host of illicit actors, including terrorists, illicit traffickers of drugs, humans, arms and other contraband, oil thieves, pirates, poachers, and polluters (Cited in John and Kristen, 2010, p.1).

Accordingly, the US launched a structural response defined by the African Partnership Station (APS) programme in 2007 in alliance with other international partners like France, Britain, Germany etc (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013). The programme thrust of APS was in building Regional Maritime Awareness Capability (RMAC) and capacities in combating illicit and

criminal activities in the GoG (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013). In this regard, the US Departments of State and Defense organized military and non-military training for Nigeria military, coast guards and mariners alongside Ghana, Senegal, Democratic Republic of Congo etc, aimed at building their skills, expertise and professionalism (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013). The Department of State and Defense also cooperatively provided funds to equip the trained foreign military and maritime security forces under section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006 (Serafino & Nina, 2010). For fiscal year 2006 through 2010, the US authorized \$1.3billion in section 1206 funds. Of the amount, West African states, including Nigeria, in conjunction with several North African states received \$53.1million (Serafino & Nina, 2010). Table 2 depicts US funding under APS.

Table 2: US 1206 APS Funding for FY 2007-2010

S/N	COUNTRY	PURPOSE	FUNDING
1	Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gabon, Ghana, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Togo	West Africa Maritime Security Capability Enhancement	\$10.6 million
2	Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe	Gulf of Guinea Maritime Awareness and training of coast guards	\$6.8million
3	Chad, Nigeria	Multi-national Information-Sharing Network Aid	\$6.2million
4	Algeria, Benin Cameroon, Cape Verde, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Gambia etc	MDA and Territorial Water Threat Response Capability Establishment	\$5.8million
5	Mali	Light Infantry CT Equipment	\$5.1million
6	Chad, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal	Civil-Military Operations Training in Support of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Program	\$3.4million
7	Nigeria	Counterterrorism Capacity Building For Military Forces and Equipment (Light infantry vehicles, comms)	\$2.3million
8	Chad	Tactical Airlift Capacity Training	\$1.7million
9	Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Senegal	Partner Nation Intelligence Capability Aid	\$1.1million

Source: Serafino, O. & Nina, M. (2010). *Security assistance reform: Section 1206 background and issues for congress*. New York: Congressional Research Service

To further enhance maritime security in the Niger Delta coast, the US established a Naval Attaché in Abuja, derived from the calculation that “Nigeria has the largest and most capable navy in the region and can play a pivotal role in advancing security and stability in the region” (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013, p.30). At national level, Nigerian government in January 2012 transformed its Joint Task Force “Operation Restore Hope”, which initially was established to combat militancy in the Niger Delta, into an expanded maritime security framework known as “Operation Pulo Shield” (Ukeje and Wullson, 2013).

In spite the US efforts under APS, criminal activities in the coast of Niger Delta and wider GoG have largely remained unchecked. Notably, capacity development in interdiction operations require that the Coast Guards enforce extant international and regional maritime laws relating to protection of environment-man, fauna and flora- and fending the coast of Niger Delta and GoG in extension against the criminal activities of non-state actors. Contrarily, the Niger Delta Coast Guards/ Navies were visibly hamstrunged in the maritime interdiction operations in the Niger Delta coast occasioned by the Nigeria’s crude oil interest in the region and joint venture with the shipping companies. Thus, the less restrained activities of the international shipping companies such as degradation of the maritime ecosystem, vegetation and coastal habitats, water pollutions resulting from spills during exploitation and lifting, transportation, loading and off loading of oil resources and discharge from bilges and engine maintenance had invariably alienated the indigenes of Niger Delta from their traditional sources of earning good living (fishing and agriculture) (Bellefontaine, 2010). This has altogether underscored the prevalence of aggressive behaviors against shipping companies and intractability of organized criminal activities in the Niger Delta coast despite national and international interventions such as APS. Table 3 shows selected locations of actual and attempted attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, 2013-2017.

Table 3: Selected locations of actual and attempted attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, 2013-2017

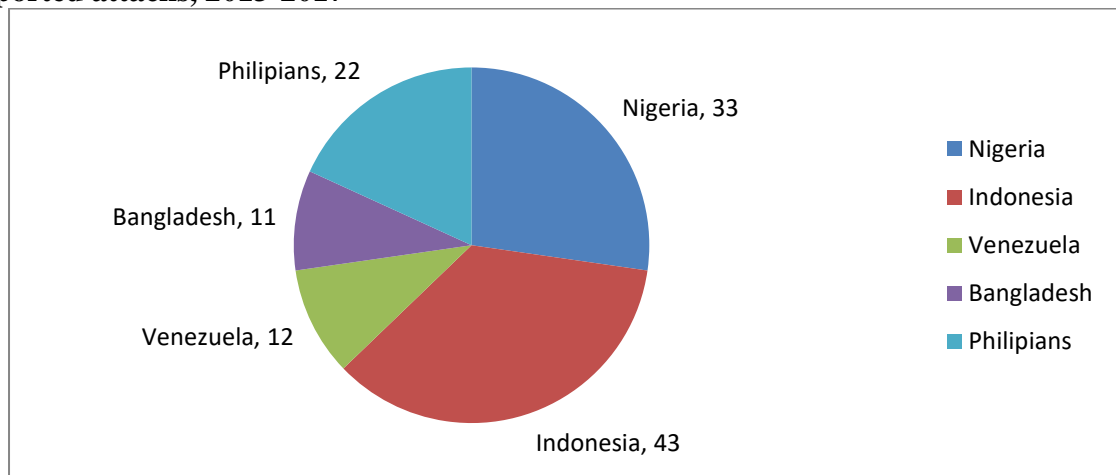
Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Angola	-	1	-	2	-
Equatorial Guinea	1	-	3	3	2
Benin	-	-	-	1	-

Democratic Republic of Congo	-	1	3	2	-
Ivory Coast	4	3	1	1	1
Ghana	1	4	2	3	1
Guinea	1	-	3	3	2
Senegal	-	-	-	-	1
Cameroon	-	1	1	-	-
Republic of Congo	-	1	3	2	-
Liberia	-	1	2	-	-
Nigeria	31	18	14	36	33
Sierra Leone	2	1	-	-	4
Togo	7	2	-	1	-

Source: International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Annual Report (2017). *Piracy and armed robbery against ships*. London: ICC International Maritime Bureau

As could be seen in table 3, 31 instances of piracy attacks on ships were recorded in 2013, 6 years after the launch of the APS. The attacks were reduced to 18 and 14 in 2014 and 2015 respectively. The attacks increased to 36 and reduced to 33 in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Chart 1 depicts five locations that recorded 67% piracy attacks on ships from a total of 180 reported attacks from January to December, 2013 to 2017

Chart 1: Five World locations that recorded 67% piracy attacks on ships from a total of 180 reported attacks, 2013-2017



Source: International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Annual Report (2017). *Piracy and armed robbery against ships*. London: ICC International Maritime Bureau

As chart 1 shows, among the five World locations that recorded 67% attacks from the total of 180 global reported pirate attacks from 2013 to 2017, Indonesia took the lead with a total of 43 attacks, Nigeria came second with 33 attacks, Philippines 22, Venezuela 12 and Bangladesh 11 attacks. Baldauf (2010, p.11) had noted that:

Piracy and armed robbery are now turning the Gulf of Guinea into a region of increasing international concern...A growing number of US, British and French

ships patrol the Niger Delta waters and carry out joint exercise with the Navies of Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon yet security concerns on the region have remained unabated.

Also, speaking at a 2010 conference hosted by U.S. AFRICOM on the issue of Africa's maritime security, Erastus Winch, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission stated that, "The situation is alarming and requires action not tomorrow, but today." (Cited in John and Kristen, 2010, p.10). In 2012, the Gulf of Guinea surpassed Gulf of Aden (infamous for high-seas hijackings) as the region with the highest number of reported piracy attacks in the world (Maíra, 2013).

Weak Maritime Logistics/Assets and Border Surveillance Problems in the Niger Delta Coast.

Due to relatively vast maritime domain of West Africa and Niger Delta in terms of geographical space and economic activities, the security and surveillance of these vast territorial waters for early detection of possible threats, has, for long, been so problematic. Though under APS, the Nigeria's coast guards were trained on relevant and necessary domestic missions such as fisheries management, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations, on the flip side, the weak maritime logistics/assets scenario orchestrated by technological deficit in the country served as an impediment to the programme objectives of the APS. Table 4 depicts Nigeria's maritime assets, 2010.

Table 4: Nigeria's maritime assets, 2010

TYPE OF SHIP	QUANTITY	NOTES
MEKO 360 Class Frigate, "Aradu"	1	Listed as having serviceability in doubt
Vosper Mk 9 Corvette, "Enymiri	1	Listed as having serviceability in doubt
Italian "Lerici" Class Coastal Minesweeper, "Ohue" and "Marabai	2	Non-operational in 1996 and no sign of activity since
French Combattante Fast Missile Craft "Siri," "Ayam," and "Ekun	3	Listed as having serviceability in doubt
Balsam Ocean Patrol Craft (ex bouy tenders)	4	Listed as having serviceability in doubt
Inshore Patrol Craft, "Yola"	1	-
German Lurssen Coastal Patrol Craft	1	-
Defender Patrol Boat	12	-
Landing Ship Tank, "Ambe"	1	-
Survey Vessel	1	-
Tug Boat	3	-

Training Ship, “Ruwan Yaro”	1	Listed as having serviceability in doubt
Warship, “Ologbo,” “Nwamba,” “Obula”	3	-
Presidential Yacht and Training Ship, “Amariya”	1	-

Source: John, R and Kristen, E. S. (2010, p.32), *Advancing US, African, and global interests: Security and stability in the West African maritime domain*. United States: Atlantic Council

As could be seen in table 4, most of the Nigeria’s maritime assets as of 2010 were listed as having operational and serviceability problem. In this regard, the Secretary General of Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA), M. T. Addico asserted that:

Too often the patrol assets that West African nations, including Nigeria, do possess are port bound due to lack of maintenance, trained personnel, or both. The inability to patrol inhibits the ability to deter illicit activity, respond to emergencies, and enforce the rule of law on the sea (cited in John and Kristen, 2010, p.33),

Besides, Central and West African navies and coast guards were reputed to have limited patrol capacity. The variety of equipment suppliers as seen in table 4 posed additional challenges of interoperability and sustainability of fleet vessels, the majority of which were over 25 years old (Anayo, 2014). The immediate consequences of weak maritime logistics/assets and border surveillance in the Niger Delta Coast were the rising spate of security threats, kidnappings, violence and fatalities against shipping crews and oil expatriates. As Bryan (2014, p.2) rightly noted:

While the Gulf of Guinea provides an ideal shipping and fishing venue, the ease with which robbers can disappear along the coastline after an attack exposes another, less favorable aspect about the region-limitations of surveillance, intelligence, and community policing in the coastal areas...In the Niger Delta, for instance, the government’s amnesty program for ex-militants in 2009 caused an immediate abatement in attacks on shipping. The resurgence in 2013 has been attributed partly to challenges in sustaining gainful employment opportunities to growing numbers of youth in the area.

Figure 2 depicts criminal incidence along Niger Delta coast and wider GoG

Figure1: Criminal Incidence along the Gulf of Guinea Coast

Source: Adeniyi, A. O. (2015). Combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. *Africa Security Brief*, No.3 February

As could be seen in figure 2, threats of violence, wounded, dead or missing shipping crews and fatalities were rife along the coast of GoG; with Niger Delta and Benin Ports recording the highest incidence. On 5 February 2017, an Antigua and Barbuda flagged General Cargo MV BBC Caribbean was attacked by armed pirates while underway at position Latitude 04:00.5 North and Latitude 005:29:3 East, around 31nm SW of Bayelsa coast, Nigeria, at approximately 1025 UTC. Armed pirates in three speed boats and one tug reportedly attacked the ship with 11 crews onboard. The pirates boarded the ship, kidnapped eight (8) crew members and escaped (International Maritime Bureau Annual Report, 2017).

Weak Collective/Integrative Maritime Regional Security Structure and Sabotage of Oil Resources

Weak collective and integrative maritime regional security structure was perhaps, a more critical factor in the implementation of APS programme and volatile security situation in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). Though numerous regional meetings and conferences on regional maritime security cooperation were hosted by the African Union (AU), the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GoGC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWA), and Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA), along with their development partners- the United States, European Union, United Kingdom, France- and highly regarded think tanks, however, none of these transformed into a collective and integrated maritime regional security structure capable of tackling the maritime security menace in GoG and the Niger Delta waters

in particular. Tables 5 and 6 depict selected West African regional maritime security resolutions and selected international maritime security conferences in West and Central Africa respectively.

Table 5: Selected West African Regional Maritime Security Resolutions

S/N	MARITIME SECURITY RESOLUTIONS	PLACE	DATE
1	Memorandum on port and state control	Abuja, Nigeria	30/10/1998
2	Declaration for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in Africa	Abuja, Nigeria	25/08/2005
3	Sea power for Africa symposium resolutions	Abuja, Nigeria	05/10/2006
4	Maritime transport declaration	Abuja, Nigeria	19/02/2007
5	ECOWAS Regional Action Plan to address the growing problem of piracy, illicit drug trafficking, organized crimes and drug abuse in West Africa	Abuja, Nigeria	12/12/2008

Source: John, R and Kristen, E. S. (2010, p.72). *Advancing US, african, and global interests: Security and stability in the West African maritime domain*. United States: Atlantic Council

Table 6: Selected International Maritime Security Conferences in West and Central Africa

S/N	CONFERENCE ISSUES	HOST COUNTRIES	MONTH/DATE
1	AFRICOM Maritime Safety and Security Towards Economic Prosperity.	Stuttgart, Germany	October 2010
2	1st West and Central Africa Ports Environment Managers Working Conference	Tema, Ghana	June 2010
3	33rd Annual Council of the Port Management Association of West and Central Africa (PMAWCA)	Banjul, Gambia	May 2010
4	International Conference on Promoting Maritime Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution in the West and Central African	Lagos, Nigeria	April 2010
5	Third Annual African Union Conference of Ministers Responsible for Maritime Transport	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	April 2010
6	Maritime Safety and Security Seminar	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	April 2010
7	Maritime Safety and Security Consultative Workshop: Southern, Central, and Eastern Africa	Johannesburg, South Africa	March 2010
8	West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) Ministerial Conference	Freetown, Sierra Leone	February 15-17, 2010
9	28th Annual Council meeting of Port Management Association of West and Central Africa (PMAWCA)	February 2010	Douala, Cameroon

Source: John, R and Kristen, E. S. (2010, p.72). *Advancing US, African, and global interests: Security and stability in the West African maritime domain*. United States: Atlantic Council

Although the efforts had produced official resolutions comprehensively defining problems, identifying requirements, and pledging commitment to action, however, progress

was both piecemeal and slow. Regional cooperation and coordination were hampered by political mistrust between countries, shortage of resources, and lack of political will to carry out the agreements or to enter into new ones (John and Kristen, 2010).

Conclusion and Recommendation

For decades, the GoG and coast of Niger Delta in particular has been submerged in maritime security challenges. Several national, regional, continental and international maritime security efforts have been made to stem the tide of the volatile security situation in the region, but have altogether proved insufficient. Informed by her clear, compelling and growing vital security and economic interests, including reliable long-term access to energy, the United States launched a structural security response defined by the African Partnership Station (APS) in 2007. The major focus of APS was on International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) aimed at building Regional Maritime Awareness Capability (RMAC). Despite the major achievements of the programme, the maritime volatile security situation in the region characterized by piracy, armed robbery kidnapping, hostage-taking etc has seen upward increase. Thus, given the logic that characterized the composition and structure of the Nigerian state as rooted in the basic assumptions of the Marxist Structuralist theory of the state, the study revealed that a weak environmental law enforcement capacity of the Nigerian maritime institutions undermined the programme objectives of the African Partnership Station in the Niger Delta. This was in addition to the illicit activities of the Nigerian maritime institutions and officials, which was implicated in the study as contributory factors that have aided the escalation of the menace. Stanching the menace, especially on the coast of Niger Delta portends diversifying Nigeria's economy to lessen the country's excessive reliance on foreign capitals and strengthen the country's maritime and environmental law enforcement capacities.

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