

Strategic Partnership and Maritime Security in the Gulf Of Guinea: The Experience Of Economic Community Of Central African States, 2007-2017

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Abstract: This paper examines sub-regional strategic partnership and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea: the experience of Economic Community of Central African States between 2007 and 2016. The study adopted the qualitative method of data collection and analysis as well as systems theory. The paper found that the lack of effective strategic and technical cooperation among ECCAS member states accounted for the rise in maritime attacks in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea between 2007 and 2016. There were poor naval capacities across ECCAS member states. These marred the ECCAS member states' capacity for effective maritime security as the Central African states recorded higher number of attacks between 2006 and 2016. The paper also established that poor governance structures in various ECCAS member states affected maritime security in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea between 2007 and 2016. These bad governance structures resulted in violent criminality and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation. This is linked with piracy and maritime attacks in the Gulf of Guinea. The paper therefore recommended that the ECCAS member states should urgently encourage greater attention to security, development and integration challenges in Central Africa, especially to strengthen and reposition the Central African Multilateral Force (FOMAC) and the Central African Early Warning System (MARAC) for effective maritime security.

Keywords: Maritime Security, Gulf of Guinea, ECCAS, Central Africa, Piracy, Early Warning System.

INTRODUCTION

The Gulf of Guinea is an arm of the Atlantic Ocean located within the geographical area covering over 6,000 kilometre coastal arc which stretches in breadth of waters from Guinea in the north-western part of the African continent to Angola in the south-central part of the continent (Nwanolue and Iwuoha, 2012). The Gulf of Guinea region's geostrategic and maritime potentials are quite attractive. It is endowed with enormous mineral and marine resources such as oil, diamond, gold, and fishes, among others. In particular, it is home to huge hydrocarbon deposits. By 2020, oil production in Gulf of Guinea is expected to surpass the total production of the Persian Gulf nations: 25 percent of the global production as compared to 22 percent from the Persian Gulf (Paterson, 2007). Among the major oil-producing countries in the region are Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Chad, Gabon and recently Ghana.

The Gulf of Guinea contains 50.4 billion barrels of proven reserves and it produces 5.4 million barrels of oil per day. Its low-sulphur oil and proximity to Europe and the US further raise

its strategic importance in global energy supply as well as its vulnerable security (Dietrich, 2004). Devoid of any strait or chokepoint that constrains shipping and increases vulnerability to accidents or attacks, the Gulf of Guinea is a key hub of commercial maritime activities – exports of hydrocarbons and imports of manufactured goods and food items. The growing investments in the region, especially in offshore oil infrastructure, mean that coastal trading and maritime traffic are bound to increase in the region (Onuoha, 2012).

The Gulf of Guinea region bounds both West and Central African countries. These regions within the ambit of their relevant sub-regional groupings (i.e. ECOWAS and ECCAS respectively) have promoted different strategic mechanisms and international cooperation to maintain maritime security off their various coasts. Onuoha (2010), noted that nearly 40 percent of Africa's oil production is concentrated in the Central African coast of Gulf of Guinea. However, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea off the coasts of Central African states has remained a key concern for critical stakeholders in recent time. Central Africa is one of the continent's most fragile and vulnerable

regions, having witnessed a large number of all the coups d'état, crises and conflicts that have taken place in Africa since 1990 (United Nations Commission for Africa, 2017).

However, the lessons from years of conflict and crises within the Central African coast of the Gulf of Guinea which bounded countries of ECCAS made it clear that regional economic cooperation could not succeed without regional peace and security. As a result, ECCAS's mandate was broadened to include the joint promotion of peace, security and stability in the sub-region. At the 10th heads of state summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea's capital, in June 2002, the development of capacities to maintain peace, political stability, internal security and maritime security as essential prerequisites for economic and social development were listed among ECCAS's new priorities (Meyer, 2011).

Challenges of maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea is manifested in different dimensions (piracy, armed robbery, illegal, unreported, and unregulated -fishing, human, drug and arms tracking and smuggling) (UNDP, 2017). The Central African states under the aegis of ECCAS are redoubling their efforts both at the continental, sub-regional, and national levels to develop the cooperative frameworks needed for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. The ECCAS also partners with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to collaborate international efforts in developing integrated maritime strategies (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2015). At the operational level, the concept of maritime zones allowing groups of states to collaborate in the pursuit of common maritime security interests is a vital innovation in this regard. Maritime security has thus become a major issue, calling for closer cooperation within the region, but also at the inter-regional level and with international partners (International Crisis Group, 2914).

Cases of abductions of maritime personnel, including the risks posed to foreign maritime staff operating across the Gulf have been on the rise since 2011 as the trend of violent kidnappings for ransom increased by 85% in 2013 when compared to the previous years. The Gulf now exceeds the number of recorded cases in the coastal waters of the Horn of Africa, which were considered to be highly volatile before the decrease in Somali piracy following concerted international security efforts (Max Security, 2014).

According to the International Maritime Organization (2015) an estimated 50 cases of piracy attacks in the Gulf of Guinea are reported each year. Pirates in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea mainly target both oil drilling platforms and ships, with the intention of seizing money, radio equipment and goods from the crew and the passengers. These attacks occurred in spite of increased attempts by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) at regional and international cooperation to counter the rising incidents of piracy and acts of violence in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea. Soon after ECCAS' establishment, the community's performance was severely affected by financial difficulties and the lack of support from its members, resulting in institutional dysfunction and a series of logjams and bottlenecks. During the 1990s, the rise of

political instability, crises and conflicts in the majority of Central African countries, as well as the engagement of some member states on opposite sides in the Great Lakes wars, brought an additional challenge to regional cooperation to tackle issues of maritime security. For over a decade, the ECCAS went through a period of inactivity and paralysis, which is often referred to as ECCAS' hibernation (Meyer, 2008).

In addition, Inter-state conflicts over boundary limitations, overlapping Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and exploitation of resources within the Gulf of Guinea region constitute a big challenge and a hindrance to the realization of effective multinational cooperation and security in the region. The poorly mapped border areas within the Gulf of Guinea create a lot of avenue for inter-state conflicts over conflicting claims on potential oil-rich areas.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Strategic and Technical Cooperation Among ECCAS Member States And Acts of Violence in the Gulf of Guinea

African countries in the Gulf of Guinea have generally consolidated their policies on maritime security. After signing a memorandum of understanding in March 2013, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea (CGG) met 24–25 June 2013 for a summit on securing traffic in the Gulf of Guinea. Expressing its deep concern "that Africa has become one of the major hubs for global crude oil theft, money laundering, illegal arms and drug smuggling, human trafficking and smuggling, environmental crimes, piracy and armed robbery at sea, dumping of toxic waste, and maritime terrorism" (Engel, 2014).

The Establishing Treaty of ECCAS does not mention peace, security, stability and governance in its institutional structure. However, ECCAS adopted the Protocol of Peace and Security in February 1999, to deal with the conflicts and political instability in the region. The Protocol gave way for the establishment of the Security Council in Central Africa (COPAX) with three key instruments, the Commission for Defense and Security, the Central African Early Warning System and the Central African Multinational Force (African Development Bank, 2011). The protocol establishing COPAX was formally ratified in January 2004 to include defense and security mechanisms aligned with the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture (Meyer, 2015).

In parallel, member States of Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) formed a regional peace force, the Multinational Force in the Central African Republic in 2002, to promote peace and security in the conflict inflicted Central African Republic. However, in July 2008, CEMAC transferred its authority for the Multinational Force in the Central African Republic to ECCAS and is a part of COPAX. In addition, ECCAS adopted the Protocol Relating to the Strategy to Secure ECCAS' Gulf of Guinea in October, 2009 as well as the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in 2013 to promote the regional maritime security in the Central African region (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2017).

Max Security (2014), is of the view that Gulf of Guinean states have attempted to increase regional cooperation in recent times given the persistent threats of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea region. Thus, on June 24-25, 2013, leaders the Economic Community of Central African States, (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (CGG), held a summit in the Cameroonian capital of Yaounde to address the threat posed by piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. During the June 2013 summit, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted a new Code of Conduct to combat maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, resembling the Djibouti Code of Conduct established in 2009 to address piracy in the Horn of Africa.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) in its report (2008) noted that it has established an Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme ("ITCP"), the purpose of which is to assist countries in building up their human and institutional capacities for uniform and effective implementation of the Organization's regulatory framework. The role of the ITCP in promoting sustainable development was officially affirmed in 1999 by the IMO Assembly, through the adoption of a resolution entitled "IMO and technical cooperation in the 2000s – capacity building", as a major contributor towards ensuring safer shipping and cleaner oceans. By fostering capacity-building in the maritime sector, the ITCP helps countries to ensure safe, secure and efficient shipping and protection of the marine environment. During the 2006-2007 biennium, under the ITCP, 36 consultancy missions were carried out, with a preponderance of Maritime Safety and Security assignments; 93 courses, seminars and workshops were held at the national, regional and global levels; 70 fellowships and other activities were carried out; and approximately 2433 participants worldwide attended the courses. International Maritime Organization (Imo) (2008) reported that the IMO Assembly at its 22nd session held in November 2001, titled "Enhancement of Maritime Security: Measures To Prevent And Combat Terrorism", SOLAS XI-XII and the ISPS Code adopted a resolution on review of measures and procedures to prevent acts of terrorism which threaten the security of passengers and crews and the safety of ships. As a result, a Diplomatic Conference on Maritime Security was held at the London headquarters of IMO in December 2002 ("2002 SOLAS Conference"), which adopted a number of amendments to the SOLAS Convention, the most far reaching of which enshrined the new International Ship and Port Facility Security Code ("ISPS Code").

The International Maritime Organization (Imo) (2008) further explained that the prevention and punishment of crimes at sea are particularly difficult to prosecute and punish them on account of the interaction between flag and coastal State jurisdiction in the territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone and the exclusivity of flag State jurisdiction in the high seas. The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, 1988 (1988 SUA Convention) introduces legal certainty in this regard by enabling clear distinctions between piracy and other unlawful acts. On the basis of these distinctions the 1988 SUA Convention define crimes and

establish procedures to ensure that alleged criminals are detained and prosecuted, or extradited to another country with jurisdiction to prosecute. The "prosecute or extradite" principle is therefore regulated by the 1988 SUA Convention bearing in mind the unique jurisdictional features imposed by the law of the sea and international criminal law.

A feature of paramount importance for the implementation of the 1988 SUA Convention is the incorporation of different offences into the domestic law, as well as the need to coordinate this incorporation with existing legislation and treaties on extradition. The 1988 SUA Convention provides the legal basis for action to be taken against persons committing unlawful acts against ships, including the seizure of ships by force, acts of violence against persons on board ships, and the placing of devices on board which are likely to destroy or damage the ship (International Maritime Organization, 2008).

Baker (2011), discusses the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership. He maintained that the United States and the government of Cape Verde initiated the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership (AMLEP) in June 2008. This operation pairs African maritime boarding teams and police with U.S. Coast Guard boarding teams and U.S. Coast Guard or Navy vessels in combined operations to enforce African maritime law, along the lines of the Southern African Joint Surveillance Patrols. The AMLEP has been a successful operation, by which partners have built their own capacities and improved the management of their maritime environments through combined maritime law enforcement. It offers an immediate operational framework for small African maritime forces, extending their reach throughout their territorial seas and exclusive economic zones.

The AMLEP operations focus on illegal fishing, narcotics smuggling, and other illegal trafficking. To date U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Naval Forces Africa have conducted five AMLEPs (June 2008 and October–November 2008, with Cape Verde; July–September 2009, with Cape Verde, Morocco, Senegal, and Sierra Leone; December 2009, with Sierra Leone; and June–August 2010 with Cape Verde, Senegal, Morocco, and Sierra Leone). France has provided cueing support (i.e., surveillance and vectoring by maritime patrol aircraft based in Dakar, Senegal), and U.S. Africa Command has coordinated the operations, through the Maritime Analysis Operations Center–Narcotics in Lisbon, Portugal.

Debos (2008) maintained that among the 10 ECCAS member states, only a few have escaped serious internal crisis and violent conflict during the last two decades. The porosity of national borders, the uncontrolled movement of combatants and armed groups across borders and between different zones of conflict and the proliferation of illegal arms and weapons increase the risk of spill-over from conflicts in neighbouring states. For Debos (2008), this risk is magnified in the case of Chad, Sudan, Uganda and the CAR in particular by the willingness of combatants to readily shift allegiances between conflict parties and rebel movements.

Apart from the risk of the regionalization of conflicts and crises, the presence of armed groups is also a direct source of insecurity among the population. In the border provinces of the CAR, the

high level of violence by gangs that attack local people and villages, burn down houses, kidnap children for ransom, poach wildlife and rustle cattle has led to the displacement of almost 200,000 Central Africans within the country and a further 150,000 to neighbouring countries, especially Chad (UNHCR 2010; Meyer, 2011).

Meyer (2011) therefore observes that an overarching security challenge lies in the internal political instability of Central African states. Weak political legitimacy leading to fragile social cohesion threatens the stability of political structures and challenges the capabilities of state institutions. This strengthens centrifugal tendencies, while reducing the reach of governments essentially to capitals and their immediate vicinity. Moreover, in post-conflict settings, the difficulty of reaching arrangements and agreements between former conflicting parties impedes the peace process, while the limited willingness of political actors to compromise and build consensus also challenges the “relative” stability in other states.

Governance Structures in ECCAS Member States and Maritime Security in the Central African Part of the Gulf of Guinea

United Nations Department of Political Affairs (2016) noted that over the past few years, there has been a steady decline in the number of recorded incidents of piracy, armed robbery at sea and other illicit and illegal activities in the Gulf of Guinea. However, insecurity at sea remains a source of concern in the region. In the first quarter of 2016, the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre has recorded six attacks and six attempted attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, including nine in Nigeria, one in Côte d'Ivoire, and two within the territorial waters of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Cases of hijacking of vessels for political purposes by the self-described “Biafra” militants off the coast of Nigeria and kidnappings along the coasts of Western and Central Africa have also been recently recorded.

In this regard, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (2016) maintains that tackling international crimes of trafficking, piracy and theft requires a combination of efforts and an understanding that suppression, while necessary, is not sufficient. Those who commit illegal acts at sea are highly adaptable, increasingly sophisticated in their methods and often well-informed. This requires national, regional and global efforts to be flexible and proactive. Initiatives aimed at addressing socio-economic development and lack of job opportunities are also required to provide prospects to marginalized populations that may be involved in piracy activities, most notably the youth. Ultimately, countering the current threats requires a combination of capacities including qualitative improvements in the collection of intelligence; the sharing and improved analyses of intelligence; enhancement of the capacities (both infrastructure and training) of local law enforcement agencies of the Gulf of Guinea countries; and the establishment of an effective customs and border control system throughout the sub-region.

United Nations Department of Political Affairs (2016) also stressed on the financial implications of effective maritime security cooperation within the Gulf of Guinea states. With regard to the budget, the meeting of member states of the region

recommended that member States contribute 40 percent of the necessary resources, while bilateral and international partners would contribute the rest. The Summit also recommended that ECCAS, ECOWAS, the GGC and their member States expedite the disbursement of funds to allow for the operationalization of the ICC between July and December 2016. Moreover, it was proposed that additional sources of funding be explored through the taxation of beneficiaries of the ports situated in the Gulf of Guinea. The mobilization of resources remains a key priority for ensuring the effective operationalization of the ICC, particularly given that a significant component of the centre's budgetary resources is expected to come from bilateral and international partners.

Ukeje & Ela (2013) observes that maritime security problems in the Gulf of Guinea present two profound contradictions for the region. Notwithstanding the fact that the region's waters have been some of the most lucrative both for legitimate and illegitimate activities, Gulf of Guinea states are among the poorest and worst governed states in the world. Indeed, in most of the countries, the exercise of state control is very lean and pales as one moves away from their capitals into the hinterland, or towards the coastline and into the territorial waters.

Second, despite substantial revenues from natural resources, virtually all Gulf of Guinea countries are compounded with myriads of developmental challenges with unstable governance systems. The last contradiction is that while its huge potential is not lost on governments and the international community, the Gulf of Guinea waters have become a breeding ground and safe haven for a network of local and international criminal elements whose transnational criminal activities undermine security in the entire region and threaten the supply of critical resources to the global market (Ukeje & Ela, 2013).

Theoretical Nexus and Explications

This study is based on the System's theory. System theory is rooted in the work of David Easton (1965), Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968), Benathy (1998), Talcott Parsons (1951), Howard and Odum (1983), Kuhn (1974), Ackoff (1978), Checkland (1981) and Fritjof Capra (1997). A system is any collection of elements that interact in some way with one another such as 'a galaxy, a football team, a legislature, a political party'. In other words, a system is a whole, which is compounded of many parts – an ensemble of attributes (Dahl, 1991).

The aptness of the system theory for this study is clearly captured by Koontz and O'Donnell (1980: 23):

The advantage of approaching any area of inquiry or any problem as a system is that it enables us to see the critical variables and constraints and their interaction with one another. It forces scholars and practitioners in the field (of management) to be constantly aware that one single element, phenomenon or problem should not be treated without regard to

its interacting consequences with other elements.

Easton (1965) depicts political system essentially as a system for converting inputs into authoritative decisions. Easton further identifies five concepts under which his model can be explained. To arrive at authoritative decisions therefore, the system takes inputs from the environment in the form of demand and support. Demands are claims on how values are to be allocated. Support on the other hand, exist when the environment backs up the system or is favorably disposed to it. Output emerges from the system in the form of authoritative decisions. The environment reacts to these decisions or outputs through a process of feedback. Feedback is a process through which the system adapts itself to the environment by modifying its behavior and changing its interest structure.

Indeed, the goal of systems theory is for a group to gain insight into each member's role as it relates to the healthy functionality of the whole. Hence, Benathy (1998) notes that system means a configuration of parts connected and joined together by a web of relationships. This means that the framework of ECCAS presented a scenario in which the Central African states bounding the Gulf of Guinea region are working together as system to achieve an objective which is effective maritime security in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea. There is utmost need for effective cooperation and synergy to achieve this set goal from all the units.

More importantly, the ECCAS lacked what Ake (1979) described as extractive capacity (i.e. ability to generate resources, both materials and human, for use in meeting set goals). The ECCAS member states failed to accomplish their collective role as a system, especially by withholding funding for the ECCAS to function adequately. This resulted in shortfalls and distortions in ECCAS annual budget estimates for combating maritime security. The ECCAS thus depended on external funding which constrained its independent commitment toward building its own sub-regional security infrastructure.

Finally, the ECCAS member states are unable to depict shades of integrity in governance structure. Igwe (2007) asserted that a system must posse a level of integrity with a knowable structure or logically arranged parts, such parts or elements must interrelate in a certain, law governed manner to fulfill a purpose or produce an ordered outcome. Hence, the poor governance structure in various states of Central Africa as defined in terms of inter-state conflicts, human rights abuses, poverty, breach of rule of law, bad leadership and precarious economic conditions all constitute a big challenge and a hindrance to the realization of effective multinational cooperation and security in the region.

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative method of data collection. Qualitative method involves the act of extracting valuable information from the available evidence so as to reach a conclusion (Sun, 2009). In qualitative method, information is gathered in form of words, pictures, descriptions, narratives and numerals from both primary sources like unstructured observations, interview schedules, focus group discussion, etc,

and secondary sources such as documentary studies of official documents, library materials, internet materials, etc. Nze (2009) enumerates three main qualitative methods of data collection which are interactive interviewing, written descriptions and observation.

Strategic and Technical Cooperation among ECCAS Member States

In June 2000, the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) adopted the Protocol on the establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), with its three technical structures, namely (i) the Commission for Defence and Security (CDS) brings together member states' chiefs of staff and commanders in-chief of police and gendarmerie forces. It advises the conference of heads of state on security and defence issues as well as on the organization of any joint military operations. (ii) The Central African Multinational Force (FOMAC) and (iii) the Central African Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC). MARAC is tasked with collecting and analyzing data for the early detection and prevention of conflicts and crises. It currently consists of the Central Structure located at the ECCAS Executive Secretariat in Libreville (Gabon) and 31 Decentralized Correspondents spread throughout the ten member states of ECCAS (Koko, 2013).

Naval Capacities of ECCAS Maritime Zones

Naval power is highly crucial and demands effective commitment of individual states to protect its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf against illegal encroachment or attack. The ECCAS region has three geographical maritime zones, A, B and D. Under Zone A are Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zone B has Republic of Congo and Gabon and Zone D – Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe (the most at risk from maritime insecurity).

Bessing (2016) depicts the strength of the different naval structures of the ECCAS member states within their respective zonal groupings. In Zone A, the maritime sea area is vast for Angola (864 nm) with a tiny stretch for DRC (20 nm). Both countries' navies were classified as Token Navies, however, Angola has made an impressive headway in modernization of its navy with the acquisition of 12 large patrol craft and 6 inshore patrol craft. Apart from 4 inshore patrol craft which were commissioned in 1993, the rest were commissioned between 2006 and 2009, indicating a modern fleet. The Navy also has an impressive Naval Aviation Wing that could support maritime operations in the Zone and beyond. The DRC Navy however continues to remain as a Token Navy with an old fast attack craft of doubtful serviceability, commissioned in 1976. The only advantage DRC has is its large manpower but it is likely that they are not skilled considering the fact that DRC is still going through security sector reform (SSR). Cooperation between the two navies would therefore be to the advantage of DRC. In Zone B, Gabon Navy, classified as Constabulary Navy is paired up with a Token Republic of Congo Navy. In the inventory of the Congolese Navy, are 4 large patrol craft commissioned in 1960 and 7 small patrol craft against 10 large and 7 small patrol craft of the Marine Gabonaise respectively.

Force Multinationale de l'Afrique Centrale (FOMAC)

The Force Multinationale de l'Afrique Centrale (FOMAC) or Multinational Force for Central Africa is the military outfit with which to promote peace and security as well as maritime security within the ECCAS. The force is designed to be part of global anti-terrorism initiatives. FOMAC was set up in 2002 with standing orders that identified the force as being made up of military, police, gendarmerie and civilian personnel, ready to carry out "peace, security and humanitarian assistance missions". FOMAC's duties also extend to disarmament and demobilization work and control of fraud and organizational crimes (Reliefweb, 2014).

Often overshadowed by the French military presence, FOMAC again faced accusations of poor leadership and incoherence and having little real presence outside Bangui. FOMAC's Chadian contingent was accused of aligning itself with the Séléka rebels, a charge strongly denied by the Chadian authorities (Reliefweb, 2014). It is instructive to note that FOMAC has remained unfit and paralyzed as it has been faced with operational challenges and technical difficulties which have made the outfit unworkable. Deadlines to make FOMAC operational have constantly been postponed. Major challenges have been problems of underfunding and the fact that the region is prone to conflict (Kinzel, 2008).

Central African Early Warning System Mechanism (MARAC)
The Central African Early Warning Mechanism was created by the COPAX Protocol that was adopted in 2000 and entered into force in 2004. However, MARAC only started to operate in 2007, when it was allocated offices at the ECCAS Executive Secretariat in Libreville (Gabon) (Koko, 2013). MARAC is tasked with collecting and analyzing data for the early detection and prevention of conflicts and crises. MARAC is the Central African early warning mechanism, responsible for conflict and crisis observation, monitoring and prevention. It is charged with the collection and analysis of data, and the preparation of various kinds of reports to inform ECCAS' secretary general, the CDS and other ECCAS officials about peace and security developments in the region, as well as about potential security risks and threats. MARAC is part of the Directorate of Political Affairs and it is one of the three directorates within ECCAS' Department of Human Integration, Peace, Security and Stability (DIHPSS) (Meyer, 2016).

Another problem regards the processing of the data MARAC receives from the DCs. Because of the data's sensitivity, states are rather reluctant to share information within the community and

beyond, such as with the AU and the Continental Early Warning Mechanism (CEWS) (Meyer, 2016).

ECCAS' Funding Problems

Lack of adequate funding remains key factor and constraint to achieving ECCAS' regional objective of maritime security. The ECCAS Community Integration Contribution agreement (CIC/ECCAS) places a 0.4% levy on imports from outside ECCAS, representing CFAF7.6bn (approximately EUR11.5m) in 2008 and CFAF 11.6bn (EUR17.6m) in 2009. However, member states later refused to finance specialized ECCAS institutions with international partners filling the gap. This saw the self-financing rate drop from 71 percent in 2007 to 30 percent in 2014. A budget of 42bn Francs CFA was made for ECCAS in 2015 (approximately EUR60m) (ECCAS, 2015).

The ECCAS' regular budget, at about US\$ 18 million, is small compared to other African regional communities: ECOWAS's budget is US\$ 121 million and SADC's about US\$ 45 million (Fanta 2009). Within MICOPAX's budget, international contributions are again significant. In contrast to FOMUC, ECCAS is supposed to provide 20 per cent of the operation's budget, but so far the real contributions by member states have been lower. This high dependency on external funds is a critical challenge to the idea of African ownership in the case of Central Africa (Esmenjaud, 2009).

Maritime Attacks in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea

Piracy Attacks

For much of the recent past, maritime piracy has been on the increase around Africa in spite of growing national, regional and international efforts at improving maritime security in these sea routes. Based on statistics from the International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships Annual Reports, there were a total of 1803 incidents of piracy in Africa between 2003 and 2016. Beginning from 2007, the number of attacks has been on the increase. It jumped from 61 in 2006 to 189 in 2008; 266 in 2009; 259 in 2010; and to all time high at 293 in 2011; 147 in 2012, and 61 in 2016. Table 1 presents analysis of acts of violence against ships in African waters between 2003 and 2016.

Table 1: Actual and Attempted Attacks Against Ships in African Waters, 2003 – 2016

Africa	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Angola	3			4	1	2			1			1		2
Benin	1						1		20	2				1
Cameroon	2	4	2	1		2	3	5		2				1
Congo Dr				3	4	1	2	3	4	1		1	1	
Egypt					2			2	3	7	7		1	
Equatorial Guinea						1								
Eritrea		1			1									
Ghana	3	5	3	3	1	7	3		2	2	1	4	2	3
Guinea	4	5	1	4	2		5	6	5	3	1		3	3
Guinea Bissau							1							
Gulf of Aden	18	8	10	10	13	92	117	53	37	13	6	4		1

Ivory Coast	2	4	3	1		3	2	4	1	5	4	3	1	1
Kenya	1	1			4	2	1		1	1	1		2	2
Liberia	1	2		1	1			1				1	2	
Madagascar		1	1		1									
Mauritania		2	1	1							1			
Morocco			1		1	1					1	1		1
Mozambique	1				3	2				2	2	1	1	1
Nigeria	39	28	16	12	42	40	29	19	10	27	31	18	14	36
Red Sea						15	25	39	13	2	4			
Senegal	8	5												
Sierra Leone		3		2	2				1	1	2	1		
Somalia	3	2	35	10	31	19	80	139	160	49	7	3		1
South Africa	1													1
Tanzania	5	2	7	9	11	14	5	1		2	1	1		
The Congo						1		1	3	4	3	7	5	6
Togo	1			1		1	2	6		15	7	2		1
Total	93	73	80	61	120	189	266	259	293	147	77	52	32	61

Source: Adapted from IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships Annual Reports, 2003-2016

However, attacks off the coast of Gulf of Guinea (GG) constitute a fair share of the high incidents of piracy recorded in Africa. The GG pirates are known to be violent, as they usually deploy sophisticated arms and weapons like AK47s. The traditional modus operandi of pirates operating in the region had largely involved the use of speedboats to attack and dispossess shipping crew of cash, cargo and valuable, when the vessel is at anchor or in harbour, but

mostly close to shore (Onuoha, 2012). Table 2 below further shows the rising degree of violent attacks in the Gulf of Guinea. It is established in the table that the Gulf of Guinea accounted for 659 of the 1803 attacks in African waters between 2003 and 2016. The frequency of attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, while not as high as those of the Somali coast, is however on the rise.

Table 2: Actual and Attempted Attacks Against Ships in the Gulf of Guinea, 2003-2016

GoG States	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Angola*	3			4	1	2			1			1		2
Benin	1						1		20	2				1
Cameroon*	2	4	2	1		2	3	5		2				1
Congo DR*				3	4	1	2	3	4	1		1	1	
Eq. Guinea*						1								
Ghana	3	5	3	3	1	7	3		2	2	1	4	2	3
Guinea	4	5	1	4	2		5	6	5	3	1		3	3
Guinea Bissau							1							
Ivory Coast	2	4	3	1		3	2	4	1	5	4	3	1	1
Liberia	1	2		1	1			1				1	2	
Nigeria	39	28	16	12	42	40	29	19	10	27	31	18	14	36
Senegal	8	5												
Sierra Leone		3		2	2				1	1	2	1		
The Congo*						1		1	3	4	3	7	5	6
Togo*	1			1		1	2	6		15	7	2		1
Total	64	56	25	32	53	58	48	45	47	62	49	38	28	54

Source: Adapted from IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships Annual Reports, 2003-2016. Note: Central African countries (*).

More specifically, the table above indicates that Central African states (*) such as Congo DR recorded higher number of attacks between 2006 and 2016. The attacks increased from 3 in 2006 to 4 in 2007 and 4 in 2011. Similarly, that of Cameroon rose from 1 in 2006 to 3 in 2009 and 5 in 2010. The Congo case was particularly

significant. The number of attacks rose accordingly from 1 in 2008; 3 in 2011; 4 in 2012; and as much as 7 in 2014; 5 in 2015 and 6 in 2016.

An illustration of the nature and context of the attacks in the ECCAS maritime zone is presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Timeline of Maritime Attacks on the ECCAS Waters

Date	Incidence	Observations
28 September 2008	Attack of several bank buildings in the city of Limbe	Attack by perpetrators from the sea 1 killed

October 2008	Attack on Bakassi waters with hostages taken	Hostages taken: 7 French, 2 Cameroon and 1 Tunisia
17 February 2009	Attack on Malabo (Bioko Island)	Pirates from sea attacked the Presidency and bank buildings
24 February 2010	3 Trawlers attacked	In Rio del Rey
29 March 2010	Attack on the Gendarmerie Brigade of Bamuso	
17 May 2010	Attack on 2 ships	Buoy A (Wouri Channel) hostages taken
25 July 2010	Attack on 2 trawlers OLUKUN4 and KULAK7	Cap Debundscha
12 September 2010	Attack on 2 Ships (SALMA, AMERIGO, VESPUCI)	Buoy Wouri Channel Base
16 November 2010	Attack on MOUNGO7	Moudi site, 5 killed
1 February 2011	Attack on 21 st BAFUMAR at Ekondo Titi	1 killed, 1 injured
7 February 2011	Attack on the Gendarmerie post in Bonjo Bakassi	2 killed, 1 wounded, 10 hostages
27 February 2011	Attack on KANGUE village	2 hostages
18 March 2011	Attack on ECOBANK, Bonaberi	5 killed, 7 wounded at sea, 2 attackers apprehended
19 March 2011	Confrontment at sea between RIB/DELTA patrol and the alleged attackers of ECOBANK	18 killed
23 July 2011	Attack on 2 MONGO MEYEN I and II trawlers in Equatorial Guinea waters	In the Beta zone
28 July 2011	Attack on 2 trawlers in Equatorial Guinea waters (to be confirmed)	Beta region
9 October 2011	Attack on a Gendarmerie unit from Isangle on a recommended mission to the Bakassi Peninsula	2 gendarmes killed

Source: Ukeje, C. & Ela, W. (2013) "African Approaches to Maritime Security: The Gulf of Guinea," Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung.

It is apparent that the attacks remained highly violent, with recorded casualties. The poorly equipped ECCAS navies have been unable to effectively combat and confront the attackers who usually deploy sophisticated arms and weapons like AK47s. The traditional modus operandi of pirates operating in the region had largely involved the use of speedboats to attack and dispossess shipping crew of cash, cargo and valuable, when the vessel is at anchor or in harbour, but mostly close to shore.

Therefore, the preponderance of empirical evidence and statistical facts presented in this section has validated and confirmed the research hypothesis 1, which states that: The lack of effective strategic and technical cooperation among ECCAS member states accounted for the rise in maritime attacks in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea between 2007 and 2017.

Poor Governance Structures in ECCAS Member States

Central African countries particularly score poorly across governance and fragility indicators. For instance, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, DRC, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo are among the countries at the bottom of the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) (EIU, 2013). This is mainly as a result of highly personalized system of rule that has been historically familiar in Africa, and especially in Central Africa (Bayart, 1993). This is manifested in the form of sit-leadership which has had far-reaching effects on the dynamics of state structure and security dimensions across the region and its environments. Table 4 depicts the trend of sit-tight leadership in Central African region.

Table 4 – Regional Presidents and their Longevity in Central Africa

Country		
Angola	José Eduardo dos Santos	1979 – present
Equatorial Guinea	Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo	1979 – present
Cameroon	Paul Biya	1982 – present
Chad	Idriss Déby	1990 – present
Rwanda	Paul Kagame	1994 – present
São Tomé e Príncipe	Manuel Pinto da Costa	1975–1991; 2011 – present

Republic of Congo	Denis Sassou Nguesso	1997 – present
Congo Dr	Joseph Kabila	2001 – present
Burundi	Pierre Nkurunziza	2005 – present
Gabon	Ali Bongo Ondimba	2009 - present (son of Omar Bongo, 1967 - 2009)
CAR	Faustin-Archange Touadéra	2016 – present

Source: Byiers, B. (2016) "Understanding Regional Economic Policies in Central Africa: Struggling to Integrate in an Intertwined Region," European Center for Development Policy Management.

The table above shows that 6 presidents have ruled their countries for over 30 years, others for nearly 20 years. Many of these sit-tight leaders have made repeated constitutional amendments to sustain their longevity. The socio-political systems which sustain such long-term regimes of government have been shown to generate their own inherently fragile momentum with weak state legitimacy a core factor determining long-term fragility and insecurity (UNDP, 2017).

Poor Governance Structure and Maritime Security in the Central African Part of the Gulf of Guinea

Poor governance structures and defective development trajectories has had debilitating effects on security structures across the ECCAS members states. With bad governance, violent criminality, SALWs proliferation, ill-equipped and underfunded navies, and the absence of a maritime strategy coexisting with affluence, it is not surprising that piracy and maritime attacks are brewing in the region (Onuoha, 2012). The interrelated manifestation of these factors has contributed greatly to the prevalence of maritime disorder in the region. The governance systems in ECCAS states depict a situation in which a steadily growing population of young people lacks rights and opportunities in Central Africa. The potential for violent and extremist ideologies to root more deeply in what are frequently religiously, ethnically polarized and socially disadvantaged national contexts across the sub-region, is real as is the potential for the crises related to Boko Haram and the violent conflicts in Central African Republic (CAR) to merge.

Maritime attacks and expansion of the activities of armed groups across borders in the sub-region are readily facilitated by weak state authority, porous borders, social exclusion of minority groups, underdevelopment and alienation of young people and state support to rebel groups by neighbouring states motivated by domestic political concerns and tensions (UNDP, 2017). It is also noted by the UNDP report (2017) that neighbouring states are found providing political and financial support to rebel groups operating in neighbouring countries, that is 'conflict exportation'. Such tactics, aimed at regime-reinforcement, nonetheless yield a patchwork of state and non-state interests that develop their own momentum and quickly slip beyond the control of any one actor or set of actors (Ayangafac, 2008). In this sense, there has been increased incidence of maritime attacks in the Central Africa part of the Gulf of Guinea especially by armed groups. Table 8 shows cases of these violent attack.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper examined sub-regional strategic partnership and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea: the experience of Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), 2007-2016. The review of extant literature showed a researchable gap in

knowledge upon which two essential hypotheses were derived and they determined the course of the study, namely: (1) The lack of effective strategic and technical cooperation among ECCAS member states accounted for the rise in maritime attacks in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea between 2007 and 2016, and (2) The poor governance structure in various ECCAS member states affected maritime security in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea between 2007 and 2017. Based on the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made

The ECCAS member states should urgently encourage greater attention to security, development and integration challenges in Central Africa, especially to strengthen and reposition the Central African Multilateral Force (FOMAC) and the Central African Early Warning System (MARAC) for effective maritime security.

Again, ECCAS member states must take urgent measures to equip and strengthen their naval capacities so as to effectively combat violent maritime attacks in the Central African part of the Gulf of Guinea.

Finally, the ECCAS should establish national bureaux for Central African Early Warning Systems across member states to effectively supervise and coordinate early warning system activities at the member state's level.

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