

Maritime Security Challenge in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea

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Abstract. The sole aim of this paper is to appraise maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. This implies that the paper will analyse the concept, practices and concerns on maritime security in the study areas (Nigeria and Gulf of Guinea) while identifying the challenges facing maritime security in the study areas. The study also makes a recommendation on the ideal and effective means of tackling the issues of maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. To attain the aforesaid aim of this paper, the researcher applies and adopts a desk-review approach – a kind of qualitative methodology of research – for this research paper. By virtue of the desk-review approach or methodology of research as adopted and applied for this paper, the researcher was able to utilise secondary sources of data and other existing works of literature such as articles, seminar papers, textbooks, reports and policies through which valid, credible and reliable information can be accessed and utilised. Amongst the findings made in this paper are that Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea have a large expanse of the water body. The study finds that the maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea range from hostage-taking, oil theft, piracy and armed robbery at the sea. The study finds that the maritime security challenges have affected maritime transport and security of vessels in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. The study also found that maritime security challenges in the region affected investment in Nigeria, the Gulf of Guinea and other neighbouring territories in severe ways. The maritime security challenges have affected the shipping of cargo goods, fishing trawlers, crude oil tankers, etc. in the study areas. Also, the study ascertains that the maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea have brought about the illegal establishment of offshore trading and transactions in crude oil and refined petroleum as well as bunkering. The contribution of the study to theory, practice and policy are that the paper did not only appraise the issue of maritime security challenge in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea; it also makes comprehensive and ideal recommendations that could be adopted to mitigate the issues of maritime security challenges in the areas.

Keywords: Maritime, Security, Challenges, Nigeria, Gulf of Guinea

Introduction

Maritime security is a pressing issue in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea region. The energy sector and international business/trade depend to a large extent on seaborne transport. Nigeria has a large expanse of territorial waters and coastal towns with the Gulf of Guinea having a link to the country. The Gulf of Guinea is vast covering a diverse territorial area that stretches and draws from Senegal down to Angola covering a coastline of over 6,000km. An important fact to note is that the Gulf of Guinea is a vital geopolitical chokepoint for shipping, maritime transportation of oil extracted in the Niger delta, as well as the transportation of goods to and from various areas in the African continent and beyond (European Union, 2018).

The Gulf of Guinea has been described as covering about eleven (11) coastal countries from the West and Central African countries from Senegal, Ghana down to Angola. In an attempt to conceptualise the maritime domain, it is described as “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, and vessels and other conveyances” (Gilpin, 2007; Onuoha, 2012).

In discussing the maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea, the European Union (2018), reports that “piracy, armed robbery at sea, illegal fishing, smuggling

and trafficking, pose a major threat to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and ultimately to the economic development of the entire region". Maritime security challenges entail that the benefits accruing to the country and region as a result of the maritime resources are lost. This study appraises the maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea while making ideal recommendations.

Statement of the Problem

To maintain the flow of revenues from oil and gas and other marine resources capable of making a significant contribution to the socio-economic growth and development in not only Nigeria but within the entire region. Maritime resources not limited to fish, aquaculture and other ecosystems have a direct contribution to the means of livelihoods of several persons in Nigeria and other countries around the Gulf of Guinea. Maritime security is vital for the exploration of maritime resources, preservation of livelihoods, ensuring socio-economic development and protection of lives and resources (Uadiale, 2012).

Maritime security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea has disrupted shipping lanes and has affected global trade, and while putting the lives and safety of seafarers and other crew members in severe danger. Maritime security challenges have threatened the activities of fishermen, the oil trade, mineral exploration, and the shipment of goods (Mansaray, 2017). While efforts have been put in place by different governments, agencies and stakeholders in order to combat maritime security challenges in Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea; the issue still seems to be getting worse owing to specific aspects of maritime security challenges which have been neglected (Ezeozue, 2019). Based on the foregoing, this paper sets out to appraise the issue of maritime security challenges in Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to appraise maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. The paper analyses the concept, practices and concerns on maritime security in the study areas (Nigeria and Gulf of Guinea) while identifying the challenges facing maritime security in the study areas. The study also makes a recommendation on the ideal and effective means of tackling the issues of maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Maritime security refers to the protection of vessels internally and externally. Maritime security entails the protection and safeguarding of the vessels, the marine resources, marine environment, territorial waters, ports, rivers and other areas connected to the water bodies (Ezeozue, 2019). Maritime security is the protection, preservation and safeguarding of lives, property or resources in and around the marine environment and objects not limited to vessels, seas, oceans, ports, rivers, territorial waters, continental shelf, delta, gulfs, and lagoons (Onuoha, 2012). The lives, property, and resources in and around the marine environment require protection against terrorism, piracy, armed robbery, illegal trafficking and smuggling, human trafficking, piracy, illegal fishing and environmental/water pollution (Onuoha, 2012; Uadiale, 2012).

Empirical Review

Orji (2013) conducted a study on the tackling of piracy and other illegal maritime-related activities in the territorial waters of Nigeria. The study was carried out with the use of an extensive review of existing works of literature and other comprehensive secondary documents

gathered from relevant agencies and institutions. Orji (2013) observed that a major factor that is responsible for increased maritime security challenges in Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea could be traced to underdevelopment and poverty in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. According to the study, the failure of successive governments and their institutions to address issues of underdevelopment, poverty and environmental degradation in the region has brought about the emergence of different militant camps. Fattah in examining the maritime security challenges focuses on the issues of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, enumerating the causes, efforts and solutions to issues of piracy. Fattah applied qualitative research techniques and was able to analyse the prevailing maritime security challenges in the west of Africa with a particular interest in the Gulf of Guinea. The study made use of statistical analysis to cover issues of piracy between 2010 and 2016 (Fattah, 2017).

Neethling (2010) investigated the factors contributing to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The study finds that factors include but are not limited to “legal and jurisdictional weakness, favourable geography, conflict and disorder, underfunded law enforcement, inadequate security, permissive political environments, cultural acceptability, and promise of reward”. The issue of piracy as it affects maritime in Nigeria is one that has a link to oil development and the consequent conditions affecting the socio-economic and environmental being in the Niger Delta (Neethling, 2010).

Research Methodology

In this paper, the researcher adopted and applied qualitative research methodology as the research methodology appropriate and adequate for this particular discourse and topic. Qualitative research methodology has distinct techniques and approaches which can be applied and adopted in any given research depending on the objectives of the study and the subject matter being investigated. For this particular study, the inductive approach is applied as the research approach. The study is exploratory in nature while desk review is a method applied in the collection of data and information which form the findings in this study. The desk-review method helps the researcher to peruse existing studies such as journal articles, seminar papers, and grey literature in relation to the subject matter being discussed in this paper. This provides the researcher with large sources of information and data to choose from. However, there are tendencies the researcher may be bound with the sentiments and biases contained in existing studies utilised as sources. To avert such risk and its implications on the findings made in this study and the general composition of the study; the researcher ideally utilised a comparative framework to verify the information by weighing the consistency of any observation or finding.

Findings, Analysis and Interpretation

Piracy is one of the activities constituting maritime security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea. In most of the cases of pirates' attacks at the Gulf of Guinea; their aims are often to kidnap victims for the sake of ransom; capture vessels and commandeer the cargo and crew members to extort money from the owners of the ship/vessels. It is observed that most of the pirates operating in and around the Gulf of Guinea do launch their attacks mainly from Nigeria. These attacks ensure that the pirates seize and steal cargoes, tools or valuable items from a vessel and the crew (Treves, 2009; Onuoha, 2012).

There have been cases where the crew members are kidnapped and held hostage until a ransom is paid and the worse is the fact the pirates at Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea like their colleagues in Somalia, operate with highhandedness and severe levels of violence as they are less concerned with ensuring the welfare, safety and health of hostages. This study finds that the rate of piracy attacks and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea is on average the fifth largest of all recorded and known maritime attacks and incidents across the globe counting between 2010 and 2016 (Fattah, 2017; International Maritime Bureau, 2018). Also, it is

suggested that the issues of incessant neglect of the welfare of creek towns, riverine settlements and oil-rich states in Nigeria have escalated the issues of maritime security challenges in Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea. The neglect and denial of good quality of life have brought about increased rates of militant activities, terrorism, among others, along with the marine environment (Tepp, 2012).

The poor rate of civil-military cooperation has been cited in some cases as being amongst the maritime security challenge in the Gulf of Guinea and Nigeria. The concept of civil-military cooperation is relating to the means and processes of enhancing the workability and collaboration of both the civilian actors and military actors in carrying out the security and State functions geared towards the protection of the State against internal insurrection and external aggression, as well as preserving the sovereignty of the State (Wakawa, 2018). In most cases, the civilians do have information that may be utilised by the military in combating the maritime security challenges, however, due to poor rate of cooperation between the civilian (especially host communities in creek towns and riverine settlements) and military; maritime security is being frustrated. There are perceived military's poor relations with civilians as well as poor interagency cooperation amongst personnel that should ensure maritime security (Karen, 2004). This poor state of the relationship between the actors is reckoned as one of the major causes behind the incessant challenges of maritime security in Nigeria (Wakawa, 2018; Phinos & Ogbu; 2019).

Observation shows that the military being used to combat the maritime security in Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea is one that is not adequately staffed. In some cases, the security personnel are inadequately-trained and a troop of over-stretched staff. It is reported that the ratio of military personnel when compared to Nigeria's population is poor at a ratio below 1: 1,000; which is relatively low when compared to other developing countries that are neighbours to Nigeria (Phinos & Ogbu; 2019).

Another challenge of maritime security in Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea is the structured network and organised system in which the crime is perpetrated. The structured network and organised system ensure that the perpetrators are connected to other high-class members of the society in and outside the country who aids and abets them in the crime. There are cases where the perpetrators are aware of sensitive and high profiled security details and intelligence, thereby foiling any attempt to apprehend them.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Summary of Findings

The Gulf of Guinea is an important maritime route for commercial shipping from Europe and America to West, Central and Southern Africa. Its proximity to Europe and North America for the transportation of the low-sulphur crude oil from the region further raises its importance in the global supply of energy. The region produces about 5.4 million barrels of crude oil per day. However, issues of maritime security challenges have bedevilled Nigeria from exploring the benefits accruing from the Gulf of Guinea and other territorial waters consisting of its maritime areas. Maritime security issues in Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea are not limited to oil theft/bunkering, acts of terrorism, piracy, fish trawling, etc. The maritime security challenges identified are not limited to poor civil-military cooperation, poor rate of interagency collaboration, inadequate staffing, ineffective and poor training of security personnel, non-utilisation of modern security tools and gadgets, and underfunding/corruption. The maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea range from hostage-taking, oil theft, piracy and armed robbery at the sea. The study finds that the maritime security challenges have affected maritime transport and security of vessels in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.

The study also found that maritime security challenges in the region affected investment in Nigeria, the Gulf of Guinea and other neighbouring territories in severe ways. The maritime security challenges have affected the shipping of cargo goods, fishing trawlers, crude oil tankers, etc. in the study areas. Also, the study ascertains that the maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea have brought about the illegal establishment of offshore trading and transactions in crude oil and refined petroleum as well as bunkering.

Conclusion

The paper appraised maritime security challenges in Nigeria/the Gulf of Guinea. The paper analyses the concept, practices and concerns on maritime security in the study areas (Nigeria and Gulf of Guinea) while identifying the challenges facing maritime security in the study areas. The study also makes a recommendation on the ideal and effective means of tackling the issues of maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. The researcher applied and adopted the desk-review approach and thus, was able to utilise secondary sources of data and other existing works of literature such as articles, seminar papers, textbooks, reports and policies through which valid, credible and reliable information can be accessed and utilised. The study found that Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea have a large expanse of the water body. The study finds that the maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea range from hostage-taking, oil theft, piracy and armed robbery at the sea. The study finds that the maritime security challenges have affected maritime transport and security of vessels in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. The study also found that maritime security challenges in the region affected investment in Nigeria, the Gulf of Guinea and other neighbouring territories in severe ways. The maritime security challenges have affected the shipping of cargo goods, fishing trawlers, crude oil tankers, etc. in the study areas. Also, the study ascertains that the maritime security challenges in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea have brought about the illegal establishment of offshore trading and transactions in crude oil and refined petroleum as well as bunkering. The contribution of the study to theory, practice and policy are that the paper did not only appraise the issue of maritime security challenge in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea; it also makes comprehensive and ideal recommendations that could be adopted to mitigate the issues of maritime security challenges in the areas.

Recommendation

The maritime security of the Gulf of Guinea is beyond the capacity of a single country or a particular regional body acting solely. Therefore, it is necessary for Nigeria and other countries linking to the Gulf of Guinea to share a common interest in maritime security. It is also necessary for the regional organisations within and around the Gulf of Guinea to share common interests in maritime security. Thus, instead of the overlapping duties and duplication of functions, the regional organisations not limited to the “Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC)”, should strategise for more effective and efficient integration and coordination of maritime initiatives/strategies concentrated towards maritime security. There is a need to frame a national and regional policy that is beyond immediate needs and reactive responses. The policy should be one that ideally contemplates civil-military cooperation; interagency collaboration; and competent staff training as parts of the strategies and initiatives to combat maritime security challenges in Nigeria/Gulf of Guinea.

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