The Dynamics of Maritime Security along the South Western Coast of Cameroon 1981-2017: Manifestations and Challenges

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Abstract

Besides its strategic location in West and central Africa, the south western coastal region of Cameroon is endowed with numerous natural resources. Some of which include; a rich sub-soil, fisheries, touristic potentials, and petroleum deposits. These resources drew international attention thus culminating in to a huge maritime traffic along this corridor. From thence, Pirates took advantage and perpetrated criminal activities. From 1981, this maritime corridor therefore became a hot spot for all forms of maritime security threats. Based on this background, this piece attempts to unravel the plethora of maritime security threats that have plagued the south western coastal region of Cameroon over the years. The work argues that the state of Cameroon hitherto suffered from sea blindness but the upsurge of criminal activities in this zone pushed her into developing a maritime security strategy from the 1980s. As such, this piece launches an investigation into 3 basic questions: what were these maritime security challenges that affected this region? What were the changing historical phases of these maritime security threats between 1981 and 2017, and how did these challenges manifest themselves along the region? To ensure a critical reflection on these interrogations, we exploit data from primary, secondary, and online sources. The paper concludes that the manifestations of these maritime security challenges posed a serious threat to national security, public health and the blue economy in general.

Keywords: Insecurity, Maritime borders, Historical dynamics, Maritime security challenges.

Introduction

Recently the phenomenon of maritime insecurity has become a subject of concern in national and international discussions. This explains why it enjoys the attention of a diversity of scholars and is studied from multiple angles. Major in maritime policy, ocean governance and international security have in the past decades started to include maritime security in their mandate. In this light, Christian Bueger, thinks that maritime security is a term that draws attention to new challenges and rallies support for tackling these challenges. Discussions of maritime security are frequently directed towards threats that prevail in the maritime domain. Such threats inter alia span from maritime interstate disputes, maritime terrorism, piracy, trafficking of narcotics, people and illicit goods, arms proliferation, illegal fishing, environmental crimes or maritime accidents to disasters.\(^1\) The argument is then that maritime security should be defined as the absence of these threats.

Basil Germond considers the concept from a geopolitical perspective. He posits that maritime security had to do with (illegal and disruptive) human activities in the maritime milieu, that is to say a certain geographically delimited space. Thus states are differently impacted by maritime

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security threats depending on their actual geographical location. For example, in the case of illegal immigration by sea, Italy was more directly impacted than the United Kingdom because of its very geographical location. Sicily and the Lampedusa Island are located directly on the main immigration route from North Africa to the European Union (EU).

From an African perspective, Maritime security can also be defined as anything that creates, sustains, or improves the secure use of Africa waterways and infrastructure that supports these waterways. This concept involves a vast range of policy sectors, information services and user communities, including maritime safety, search and rescue, policing operations, operational safety for offshore oil and gas production, marine environmental monitoring and protection, navy operation support. Klein’s inspiration towards defining the concept came after the attacks on the world Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001. According to him, maritime security is “the protection of a state’s land and maritime territory, infrastructure, economy, environment and society from certain harmful acts occurring at sea”.

One of the objectives of the UN Secretary General’s report on oceans and the law of the sea, 2008, was to provide a global overview of maritime security. The report noted that the concept of maritime security varied significantly, and as such, there was no single definition of the concept, that was universally applicable. Nonetheless, the report identified seven threats that were generally accepted as maritime security threats: (i) Piracy and armed robbery against ships (ii) terrorists acts involving shipping, offshore installations and other maritime interests; (iii) illicit trafficking in arms and weapons of mass destructions. (iv) Illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances: (v) Smuggling and trafficking of persons by sea: (VI) illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing: (vii) International and unlawful damage to the marine environment.

With the case of the south western coast of Cameroon specifically various maritime security challenges existed here before the 1980s but the major development that pulled the attention of the government was in 1981. The May 16th 1981 attack marked the first serious skirmish between Nigeria and Cameroon forces, in which Nigerian patrol boats came under fire on the Akwayafye River from the Cameroon Navy. This attack kicked-started a chain of happenings which resulted to many other maritime security challenges as years went by. Despite the scholarly works researched on the maritime security state on the coast of Cameroon, no researcher has attempted to the best of our Knowledge to focus on the changing historical phases of these maritime security challenges as well as their manifestations, within the confines of the south western coastal region of Cameroon. This therefore is the gap this article attempts to cover.

1. Recurrent Maritime security challenges on the South Western coast of Cameroon

The maritime security situation of the south western coast of Cameroon has been of enormous importance to the state since the early 1980s. Just like any other African nation or world power that had a coastline, the economic and security developments in her maritime space at one moment in history forced her to focus her attention on this domain. A few scholars have attempted to examine the maritime security situation on the Cameroon coast. Kayiem Christian Fulbert, for instance, argues that due to Cameroon expatriates strategy in the fight against maritime security challenges on its maritime space, ECCAS, ECOWAS and Gulf of Guinea states decided to choose Yaoundé as the regional headquarters to host the Interregional

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Coordination Center (ICC) in the GoG. He investigates the effectiveness of the Cameroonian strategy to protect its economic interest in its maritime space. Akah Judith Ewo on her part, props into the problems of maritime security in the CEMAC region. She argues that in recent decades, the Gulf of Guinea generally and the CEMAC maritime space in particular has witnessed an upsurge of criminal activities generally termed maritime violence.

Sylvian Ndong Atok on the other hand draws the attention of political actors of the region to take appropriate measures to mitigate these maritime boundary conflicts. It was in a bid to address maritime insecurity that states in the region instituted a naval architecture. He called on states of the region to equip their navies fully so as to be able to combat these maritime security challenges plaguing the region. Over the years, economic and security developments in Nigeria equally prompted the state of Cameroon to review her maritime security agenda especially happenings on the south western coast of Cameroon. Ndikum Azieh dissects Cameroon-Nigerian relations with particular interest on the internal factors in Nigeria and its regional policy that constituted challenges for the defense and security of Cameroon both on her land and sea boundaries.

In the context of this paper, maritime security challenges are examined in relation to threats that were commonly witnessed on this maritime space that obstructed the smooth movement of people, goods and other economic activities at sea. These threats included piracy and armed robbery against ships, damage on off-shore petroleum installations illicit trafficking in arms and weapons of mass destruction, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, smuggling of persons at sea/ contraband trading, marine pollution on the South-Western Coastal maritime zone of Cameroon. Based on these analyses above, our focus in subsequent paragraphs will therefore be on the various maritime security challenges that affected the south Western coastline of Cameroon.

1.1. Piracy and armed robbery against ships

Translated into its original Latin form “pirates” literally mean “enemies of mankind”. So, by definition, pirates are “not enemies of one state but of all states” and therefore appear as an unparalleled, participated security risk at the global level. The concept of piracy has deep historical roots and has evolved over time. Indeed some kingdoms and their rulers were beneficiaries and perpetrators of pirate activities with pirates generally being regarded as noble people. However, piracy was subsequently considered a heinous crime and a threat to the good of the ocean, and was thus outlawed in many kingdoms. This crystallized in to a rule of customary international law that made piracy a universal crime thus allowing every state to exercise jurisdiction over pirates. This principle of customary international law found its most lucid expression in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the law of the sea (UNCLOS).

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Maritime piracy and armed robbery against ships has been a serious security nut to crack from the early 2000s on the Cameroon coast. The peculiarity about this maritime security threat was that the recurrent attacks from pirates on merchant ships, fishing vessels, tankers have been a major setback on the maritime business sector on the Cameroon coast. Pirates often surrounded and attacked vessels off the coast Cameroon. Thus, the free flow of vessels across the coast of Cameroon became uncertain.

1.2. Maritime boundary warfare

From the early 1980s, the Cameroon Defence Forces had been at the center of a major maritime security challenge on the South Western Coast of Cameroon that had to do with disagreement over the maritime boundary between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula. Even though a more aggravated conflict resurfaced in the 1980s between Cameroon and Nigeria over the peninsula, clashes over the territory had started by 1965. From the 1980s onwards, the Bakassi conflict was a major maritime security challenge to the Cameroon Defence Forces and demanded a lot of attention in terms of human resources, economic resources, military strategy and action at the diplomatic front.

1.3. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing

The South Western Coastal region of Cameroon was home to some of the world most sought-after fish species, like tuna, shrimp, Sardinella, Bonga, sole and octopus. Local livelihoods across the region were dependent on these resources. Fish was vital to food security in the coastal cities of Limbe, Douala, Tiko, Idenau as the main source of animal protein in these coastal communities and cities. Over exploitation of fish stock posed a significant proportion of which was caused by illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This activity was a serious threat to food and protein needs of the population in the region and the country at large. Due to IUU Cameroon lost money worth billions of CFA Francs over the years. Just like piracy and armed robbery against ships, the United Nations Published a comprehensive law against IUU in 1982 in the United Nations Convention on the law of the sea (UNCLOS)\textsuperscript{14}.

1.4. Illegal migration or clandestine migration at sea

Just like other migration channels in Cameroon and elsewhere, the South Western Coast of Cameroon had over the years been a major route of illegal or clandestine migrants from West African states like Nigeria, Cameroon destined for Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. This trend of movement was motivated by the struggle of the migrants to enjoy greener pastures and better living and working conditions in destination states. On the 10 of March 2010 a Joint Task Force in Zone D repatriated a group of clandestine migrants en route to Gabon. Furthermore from 21\textsuperscript{st} and 25\textsuperscript{th} of April 2010, a group of clandestine migrants by sea from Nigeria were equally repatriated on their way to Gabon.\textsuperscript{16} The effect of such ventures was that it could lead to maritime accidents on the high seas since most often than not the boats used were often too crowded and over loaded. This equally strained the relationship between neighbouring states.

2. History of Maritime security threats since 1981

The year 1981 saw the South Western Coast come into the spotlight in Cameroon’s long maritime history as a year in which more attention had to be given to her maritime space in terms of security strategy and policies. The major development was an ensuing tension between Cameroon and Nigeria over the rich Bakassi Peninsula. Bakassi is an area of some 1000 square

\textsuperscript{14} United Nations Convention …
\textsuperscript{15} UNCTAD, Economic Development in Africa Report, 2018, 44.
\textsuperscript{16} F.M. Sylvestic, “Reponse Ideine a la Problematique Securitaire Dans L’Espale Maritime commun AUX Pays De La Zone D” in Pompons Rouges magazineNo.01, Mal 2018, 29.
Km of mangrove Swamp and half submerged Islands very rich in fish and petroleum resources. On the 16th of May 1981 the first serious skirmish between Nigeria and Cameroonian forces occurred when Nigerian patrol boats came under fire on the Akwayafe River. As a result of this confrontation, five Nigerians were killed and three seriously wounded. This incident marked the beginning of a serious maritime boundary dispute between Cameroon and her Western neighbour Nigeria.

The year 1987 was another very important date in the historical narratives of the maritime security situation in the South Western Coast of Cameroon. Between 1982 right up to 1987, there was relative calm amongst the Cameroon Defence force, her authorities and citizens on the one hand and Nigerian citizens on the other hand. But the devastating effects of the global economic crisis of 1987 once more provoked rising tensions between the two neighbouring states over Bakassi and other boundary settlements between Cameroon and Nigeria. The Economic crisis was a global issue. In an International workshop held in Oxford in September 1987 on the theme “Debt Adjustment and the need of the poor” Frances steward gave a very clear analysis of conditions which had given rise to the world economic crisis after decades of steady progress. Cameroon found herself in the crisis and the government tried to cut down expenditure on social programs and reduction in per capita income by half. This led to poverty in both rural and urban areas. The situation in Cameroon was not in any way different from what was happening in Nigeria. In order to divert public attention from the devastating effects of the economic crisis at home, as well as the uncertainty on land and maritime boundaries 1987 saw Cameroon soldiers invade Borno state which was also a disputed area at the time and due to this incident, Nigerian forces moved into Darak, a locality in the Hile-Halta Subdivision. In the same year there were equally small scale disputes on the Bakassi Peninsula.

Between 1987-1990, the maritime security strategy of the Cameroon Defence Force was intact to check any excesses from the Nigerian troops. But due to the devastating effects of the global economic crisis, no major confrontation was recorded between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Peninsula. This development therefore support our argument here that the minor clashes during this period were basically to divert public attention from domestic problems at home in both countries. The crisis hampered economic activities so smuggling/contraband trade was bound to increase as border people were bound to develop all kinds of techniques to survive. The maritime security threat of informal cross border trade in terms of smuggling became so alarming. The economic regulations of the Nigerian authorities caused by the Structural Adjustment Program favoured smuggling between Cameroon and Nigeria. In fact, this great neighbour of Cameroon progressively adopted “wild liberalism” and “Rigorous protectionism”. Liberalisation led to a significant increase in imports from Nigeria and exhausted the country’s huge foreign exchange reserves. This disorder caused the development of smuggling. Illegal fishing in the area became so high as locals were bound to survive. There was equally uncontrolled movement of the border people within the maritime boundaries between Cameroon and Nigeria. This situation contributed to mass influx of Nigerians into Cameroon cities likes Tiko, Limbe and Douala.

In the early 1990s, democratic reforms were introduced across the sub-Saharan region of Africa. This was another wave of multi partism which all African states were bound to embrace as part of the conditions to qualify for the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). Cameroon just like

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Nigeria had to dance to the rhythm of this new democratic tone. Tensions died down between Cameroon and Nigeria over the boundary dispute. This was due to the fact that Defence and security forces had to focus more on ensuring territorial security from the rioting citizens and ensuring peace within the new political dispensation. By 1993, the border issue resurfaced again. On the 21st December 1993, a Battalion of Nigerian troops occupied Diamant and Jabane, two Islands on the Peninsula with the fishing communities requesting help from Calabar and Abuja against Cameroon soldiers. The crime of Cameroonians was an alleged harassment and maltreatment of Nigerians living on the Peninsula. These Nigerians were notorious in tax evasion and for dealing in contraband goods. The fighting continued intermittently as both parties increased the quantity and quality of weapon in the disputed territory.

The year 2002 also had a direct impact on the historical dynamics of the maritime security threats of the South Western Coast of Cameroon. As tension continued to mount and many lives were lost as a result of the conflict, the Cameroonien government took legal action on March 29, 1994 by filling a law suit against Nigeria at the International Court of Justice on her sovereignty over the Bakassi and another on 6 June 1994 while complaining to the OAU central organ of conflict prevention and management of the Nigerian illegal occupation of her territory. The ICJ took some time to investigate and cross examine the conflict between the two nations. Thus on October 10, 2002, the ICJ at the Hague delivered this judgment on the entire land and maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria based on the Anglo-German Treaty of 1913, and the Yaounde II and Maroua declarations of 1971 and 1975 respectively. The judgment confirmed Cameroon’s sovereignty over portions of the territory in question and ordered Nigeria to expeditiously and without condition withdraw its administration, military and police from the Peninsula.

After the ruling, the security and Defence Forces had to beef up efforts of handling thousands of illegal immigrants fleeing from the trouble stricken regions of Nigeria at the time as well as the fact that most Nigerians on the Peninsula became so aggressive towards the Cameroon authorities. Defences Forces equally had to contain with smuggling/contraband trade from Nigerians who were looking for survival measures. The aggressive behaviour was caused by the fact that the over 300,000 Nigerians on the Peninsula kept complaining about harassment of Cameroonien Gendarmes. Their plight was now left to themselves. The court had decided on the sovereignty of the land not of the people. This was definitely going to be another security nut to crack.

Three years later after the ICJ ruling of 2002, 2005 stood out as a turning point in the South Western Coastal region of Cameroon. It corresponds to the creation of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) within the Delta states of Nigeria. MEND virtually paralyzed the energy industry through kidnappings and other violent criminal activities. Unlike Somalia where pirates set out hunting for victim ships, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea undertook calculated attacks by converging on locations of interest. Attacks by insurgents during this period expanded beyond the South and West Coasts of Nigeria, with Westerly swam targeting vessels of the coast of Benin, while those to the South targeted ships beyond the neighbouring coast of Cameroon. It is worth noting here with emphasis that maritime piracy was purely a

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23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.

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Nigerian problem that later on extended its effects to the Cameroonian territorial waters from 2005 and later on became so intense after the signing of the Green Tree Accord between Cameroon and Nigeria in 2006\textsuperscript{27}.

MEND’s activities affected the entire coastline of the GoG and due to these activities, the wave of attacks from 2006-2009 on the Cameroon coast were alarming. Statistics reveal that 193 incidents of piracy against fishing boats were recorded off Nigeria coast between 2003 and 2008 while 199 people were kidnapped in 2007 alone\textsuperscript{28}. In 2008, the wave of insecurity hit the South Western Coast so badly that on September 28, 2008 several bank buildings were attacked by assailants from the sea. In October of 2008 there was a major attack in Bakassi waters with hostages taken. On February 17, 2009 pirates invaded the presidential Palace situated in Bioko Island in Malabo from the sea\textsuperscript{29}. The developments of 2005-2008 necessitated the ECCAS leaders to call for a summit for their defence ministers in Yaoundé on May 6, 2009. In this meeting a Technical Agreement to create the Multi-National Coordination center of Zone D made up of Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe was hatched\textsuperscript{30}.

The above summit had a direct security impact of the maritime security situation on the South Western Coast from 2009 onwards. Due to this summit, the zone D multinational headquarters was opened in Douala; a new and more consistent military patrol plan was put in place to mitigate all forms of maritime security threats on the South Western Coast of Cameroon in particular and the entire Cameroon Coast generally. The immediate effect was a drop in piracy attacks on ships between 2009 and 2011.

The year 2013, equally stands out as a unique year in tracking the historical dynamics of maritime insecurity off the South Western Coast of Cameroon. Taking into cognisance resolution 2018 of 2011 and resolution 2039 of 2012 of the United Nations Security Council in relation to piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Gulf of Guinea, which, interalia welcomed the intention to convene a summit of Gulf of Guinea Heads of state in order to produce a comprehensive response, the Gulf of Guinea summit was convened in Yaoundé on the 25\textsuperscript{th} of June 2013.\textsuperscript{31} The fallout of the GoG Summit in Yaoundé had a great impact on the fight against maritime security threats of the South Western Coast of Cameroon. The summit gave birth to 3 major instruments which included; the memorandum of understanding (MOU), the declaration of the Heads of State and the code of conduct\textsuperscript{32}. With implementation of these instruments, the impetuous to wage a stiff war against these threats coming from the sea in the South western Coast of Cameroon greatly intensified.

Finally the year 2017 is our concluding date as far as analyses in this section are concerned. On the 21\textsuperscript{st} of November 2016, the Anglophone crisis started in the two English speaking regions of the North West and the South West. By September 2017, the hitherto peaceful crisis degenerated into a violent phase, with the emergence of armed separatist militia groups. We lean on M.B. Funteh’s argument here stating that the violent twist in the crisis witnessed in 2017 was due to

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{27} During the Bakassi conflict, the presence on both sides of the Akwayafe of Nigerian and Cameroonian forces hindered the extension of piracy from the Niger Delta to Cameroon. The 2006 Green Tree Accord which obliged Nigeria to demilitarize the zone was welcomed by militants of MEND and other affiliated groups like the Bakassi Freedom Movement, the Bakassi Freedom Fighters who immediately occupied the areas liberated by the Nigerian military to use the base for operations along the coast.
\bibitem{29} C. Ukeje, and W.M. Ela, \emph{African Approaches to maritime Security: The Gulf of Guinea} (Fredrick Ebert-sifting. Abudjio, 2013) 16
\bibitem{30} Interview with Lt DJOPONG de Massok on the 08/10/2020 Officer in charge for Cameroon, Zone D Headquarters Command Post, Douala, age 43.
\bibitem{31} Code of conduct of Gulf of Guinea States, Yaounde June 25, 2013
\bibitem{32} Interview with Dr. Mbock Eric in Yaounde, ICC on the 13/10/2020. Expert in charge of Ocean Governance.
\end{thebibliography}
the porous nature of the land and the maritime boundaries on the South Western Coast of Cameroon\textsuperscript{33}. As a matter of fact, more has been done by the Cameroon Navy in terms of securing the maritime space of Cameroon generally and the South Western Coast of Cameroon in particular.

3. Manifestations of Maritime security threats

The first two sections of the article have been geared towards understanding the various maritime security challenges that plagued the south western coastal region of Cameroon as well as the changing historical phases of maritime insecurity in the region. This next segment of the paper focuses on the manifestations of the various maritime security challenges. After a careful study of the piracy and Armed robbery situation witnessed of the South Western Coast of Cameroon, one realised that these attacks presented themselves at different locations in different forms and seasons. The malady manifested itself in terms of attacks on on-shore military position, banks, hijacking of vessels for ransom, kidnaping of crew members, robbery on ports and anchorages and attacks on fishing vessels.

The first major manifestation of Nigerian militancy on Cameroonian territory was the attack of a military position in C3 Bakassi Peninsula on the 12\textsuperscript{th} of November 2007. This dramatic incident led to the death of 21 Cameroonien soldiers and the taking away of an important quantity of arms and ammunition. In effect, at about 11:30am on that fateful day, 03 heavily armed speedboats later known to belong to the Bakassi Freedom Fighters (BFF) of Ebi Dari came from Nigeria through the special zone of the Bakassi Peninsula, which was still theoretically under the control of the Nigerian administration and took the soldiers by surprise\textsuperscript{34}.

In another dimension, piracy manifested itself on several occasions off the South Western Coast of Cameroon in the form of hijacking of vessels and kidnapping. Since maritime piracy in the wider Gulf of Guinea region is intricately linked to the Niger Delta insurgency, this form was not only peculiar to the South Western Coast but it was also common across the sea lanes of otherGoG States. Geographically, piracy and armed robbery extended to a wider region, with higher concentration of violence of both Brass and Bonny in Nigeria and off Idenau and Douala in Cameroon. Looking at recent statistics of early 2018, vessel hijackings for product or for ransom, or to kidnap crew for ransom, became violent, unpredictable, and opportunistic\textsuperscript{35}. During attacks, up to ten pirates in speed boats chased vessels, firing at the bridge. Vessels were boarded using a ladder with hooks or a hook attacked to a rope. At times hijacked vessels were used as mother ships to launch additional attacks.

Communication and navigation equipment were destroyed once the pirates or robbers boarded, and vessels were often ransacked\textsuperscript{36}. Naval escort vessels, armed on board security teams, and security measures implemented by the crew often discouraged pirates, but pirates in the Gulf of Guinea were more brazen than those of the coast of Somalia and were not always dissuaded when security guards returned fire. Security personnel and crewmembers were killed or wounded during attacks. While senior crew such as the master, chief officer, or chief engineer were often targeted in years past, an increase in the number of crew members kidnapped (with as many as 20 taken in a Single incident) has been noted since early 2018\textsuperscript{37}.

The last form of attack which we also identified in the course of this research was the attack staged by pirates against fishing vessels or trawlers. Over the years, occupants or settlers in small fishing communities mostly in the Bakassi Peninsula had been harassed by pirates from other

\textsuperscript{33} Interview with Mark Bolak Fanteh, Professor of History, age 48 in the University of Bamenda, Bambili on the March 18, 2020


\textsuperscript{35} I. O. Yarwood and M. Pigeon, Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea (one earth future, March 2020) 42

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
neighbouring communities, in some cases fisher men in these communities were forced to pay illegal taxes to these criminal gangs. Still on the same note, pirates have orchestrated attacks on several fishing trawlers off the South Western Coast of Cameroon. For example, on the night of 10 to 11 October 2009, the Bakassi Freedom Movement attempted to attack a trawler in the Bakassi waters and the BIR DELTA responded, killed 4, wounded 4 and captured 1. The table that follows shows the various piracy attacks that ever occurred on the South Western Coast from 2007-2011.

Table 1: Timeline of acts of violence on the South Western Coast of Cameroon from 2007 to 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Observations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) 12 November 2007</td>
<td>Attack on C3 military Base in Bakassi by pirates on board 3 speed boats.</td>
<td>21 soldiers killed, weapons and ammunition taken away by pirates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) 6 June 2008</td>
<td>Attack on a boat of the Cameroon Navy in mission near Akwa</td>
<td>Kidnapped and murdered the sub-Divisional Officer of Kombo Abedimo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) 12 July 2008</td>
<td>Attack on Munia Military Post</td>
<td>More weapons taken away. 3 soldiers badly wounded and fire set on the military base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) 24 July 2008</td>
<td>Attack on the 22rd Marines Bafullion (BAFUMAR) port in Kombo a Jenea</td>
<td>10 pirates killed and 8 taken as prisoners of war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) 28 September 2008</td>
<td>Attack of several bank buildings in the city of Limbe</td>
<td>Attackers came from the sea 01 civilian dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) March and July 2009</td>
<td>Several attacks from pirates into kita</td>
<td>Violently repelled by BIR Delta Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Night of 10 to 11 October 2009</td>
<td>Bakassi Freedom movement attempted to attack a trawler</td>
<td>BIR DELTA responded killed 4, wounded 4 and captured 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) 24 February 2010</td>
<td>03 trawlers attacked</td>
<td>In Rio-del-Rey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) 29 March 2010</td>
<td>Attack on the Gendarmeries Brigade of Bamusso</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) 6 February 2010</td>
<td>Attack and kidnapping of sub-divisional officer of Kombo-Abedimo</td>
<td>Kidnap of 12 members of his entourage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) 17 May 2010</td>
<td>Attack on 02 ships</td>
<td>Bouy A (Wouri Channel) hostages taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13) 25 July 2010</td>
<td>Attack on 02 trawlers OLUKUNAY and KULAK 7</td>
<td>Cap Debundscha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14) 12 September 2010</td>
<td>Attack on 02 ships (SALMA, AMERI-GO VESPUCI)</td>
<td>Bouy Wouri channel base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15) 01 February 2011</td>
<td>Attack on 21 BAFUMAR at Ekondo Titi</td>
<td>01 dead and 01 injured,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16) 07 February 2011</td>
<td>Attack on the Gendarmerie Post in Bonjo Bakassi</td>
<td>02 dead, or wounded and 10 hostages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(17) 27 February 2011</td>
<td>Attack on Kangue village</td>
<td>02 hostagestaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18) 18 March 2011</td>
<td>Attack on Ecobank, Bonaberi-Douala</td>
<td>05 dead and 07 wounded at sea, 02attackers apprehended.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In May and June 1991, Cameroonians entered nine fishing villages, hoisted their national flag to pay reparations, this somewhat eased the tension. To checkmate future crisis, Nigerian troops were deployed to the Bakassi region to stop the persistent attitude of Cameroonian gendarmes from reoccurring.

In May and June 1991, Cameroonian entered nine fishing villages, hoisted their national flag

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In the domain of maritime boundary warfare precisely the Bakassi conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria, it manifested itself at particular times and levels differently. We found out that it manifested itself at three different dimensions; Primarily the bilateral attempts by Nigeria and Cameroon to mutually handle the conflict before its escalation, secondly the open arms confrontation phase between their various Defences Forces and finally the diplomatic mediation of the conflict at the level of the OAU, the UN security council and the International Court of Justice at the Hague.

The first phase of the conflict was a mutual attempt between Cameroon and Nigerian authorities to resolve the crisis so as to prevent the escalating conflict. Due to this uncertain land and maritime boundaries, between the two countries, the first attempt in resolution was made in January 1965. After the 1965 border incident in which a joint Nigeria-Cameroon boundary Demarcation Team was set up to carefully and cordially study the matter and settle on the respect for terms of the Anglo-German treaty of 1913 Treaty. The work of this commission was interrupted by the 1966 crisis ensuring the Nigerian civil war. By the end of the Biafran war in 1970, both governments reconstituted the joint commission, which accepted the Anglo-German Agreement of 1913 as point of reference. But disagreement in the commission cantered on the definition of the course of the Akwayafe River. On April 4th 1971, President Gowon of Nigeria and President Ahidjo of Cameroon met in Yaounde accompanied by delegations and signed the “Coker-Ngoh” line which gave full recognition of the March 11, 1913 Anglo-German agreement. In another meeting still in Yaounde between August 12-14 Gowon and Ahidjo signed charts defining the new maritime boundary. Other meetings were equally held between 1971, 1972 and 1974. But from May 30th to June 1, 1975, another very important meeting was held by President Gowon and Ahidjo in Maroua. The Maroua Accord certainly conceded Cameroonian sovereignty over Bakassi. But on 29 July 1975, Gowon was overthrown by General Murtala Mohammed who repudiated the Maroua Accord. These accords and agreements of the 1970s calmed down tension on the Peninsula and by 1981 things changed.

The second dimension of the maritime boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi was the Arms confrontation between Cameroon and Nigerian Defence Force on the peninsula. The first of such numerous conflicts occurred on the 16th of May in 1981. At that time, Nigerian boats were on patrol when they were attacked leaving some Nigerians injured and others dead. Cameroon negated the need for an apology and this further faint their relationship. Although she later on offered to pay reparations, this somewhat eased the tension. To checkmate future crisis, Nigerian troops were deployed to the Bakassi region to stop the persistent attitude of Cameroonian gendarmes from reoccurring.

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39 Ibid.

40 Ibid. 79

and announced that they were renaming the settlement. On the 21 December 1993, a battalion of Nigerian troops occupied Diamante and Jabane two Islands on the Peninsula after Nigerian fishing communities requested help from Calabar and Abujia against Cameroon. In retaliation to the December 1993 occupation, the Cameroon Defence Force responded. The response resulted to several deaths and immense destruction of property. The Nigerian troops occupied the localities of Abfabato, Uzuma, Kombo and Janea in 1994. The fighting continued as both parties increased the quantity and quality of weaponry in the disputed territory and by early February 1994 over 18000 people fled into the Cross River State. Armed confrontations resumed in 1996. Occupying Nigerian troops on the Peninsula further clashed with Cameroon Defence Forces that led to several deaths on both sides with both capturing prisoners-of-war.

The third dimension of the conflict involved diplomatic mediation due to persistent bloodshed caused by armed confrontations between the Cameroon Defence Forces against the Nigerian Army on the peninsula. The Cameroon Government therefore, took legal action on March 29, 1994 by filing a law suit against Nigeria at the ICJ on her sovereignty over the Bakassi and the second on the June 6 1994 to the OAU. When Togolese president Eyadema was instructed to follow-up the peace talks, from the 16 to 17 of February 1996, Ferdinand Leopold Oyono and Chief Tom Ikimi, Cameroon’s External Relations Minister and Nigeria’s Foreign Minister respectively met in Kara, Togo and agreed as follows: that Cameroon and Nigeria recognized that the matter was with the ICJ; and they agreed to end all hostilities on the Peninsula. The Kara Accord was one of the bases of inspiration for the UN. The UN Security Council insisted the Kara accord be respected by both parties over the Bakassi Peninsula. A UN Mission was dispatched to the area on 15 March 1996 and the court made an interim ruling.

Matters dragged on indecisively until 2002. On October 10th 2002, the ICJ at The Hague delivered its judgment on the entire land and maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria based on the Anglo-German Treaty of 1913, the Yaoundé II and Maroua Declarations of 1971 and 1975 respectively. The judgment confirmed Cameroon’s sovereignty over portions of the territory in question and ordered Nigeria to “expeditiously and without condition withdraw its administration and military or police from the Bakassi Peninsula. After the ruling, diplomatic negotiations between Cameroon and Nigeria facilitated by the U.N. Secretary General continued later on by of November 15th 2003, at Geneva, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission was created with the aim of enabling a smooth handing over ceremony, and recommendations on confidence building between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Smuggling and contraband equally manifested itself differently in the region. The possibility of this maritime security threat came from the fact that Cameroon was actively involved in international trade with Nigeria (her greatest trading partner) and other neighbouring states like Gabon, Congo and Equatorial Guinea through her maritime borders. Contraband trade/smuggling involved a variety of products traded across maritime boundaries some of which included wild life products, drugs, fuel, rice, sugar, bottle wines, canned drinks, small and light weapons, Eru leaves, plastic bags, spaghetti.

Over the years, the activity was carried out through various channels and routes both on land and sea borders. The most used maritime channels here included the seaport of Douala, creeks of

42 Ibid.
43 Funteh, “Cameroon-Nigerian Dispute Over… 76
44 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
48 Interview with Tardzenyuy Appolos age 38 in Douala, customs controller of the Cameroon Customs on June 21, 2020.
Tiko, Limbe, Idenau, Mabeta and the Bakassi peninsula. The Idenau- Bakwa-Oron corridor was also a busy smuggling channel. There was also the Mundemba-Ikang corridor, the Mundemba-Calabar corridor and the Ekondo Titi-Calabarchannel. The Calabar-Ekondo Titi-Mundemba channel was noted for the smuggling of petroleum products. According to I.O. Yarwood contraband trading on the South Western Coastal Region was through the Port of Tiko. He stated that the goods were ferried from neighbouring countries through the Tiko Seaport before being transported by land to other regions in the country. He further stated that in 2019, the world Health organization warned about the circulation of counterfeit hypertension drugs in Cameroon which were known to cause hypoglycaemia.

From the 1980s till date, petroleum products had been a major smuggled product off the South Western Coast of Cameroon especially through the Tiko Creeks, Limbe Port, Idenau, the Ndian division generally and the Bakassi Peninsula. Smuggling of petroleum products in the South Western Coast and the Ndian Division was impossible to stop the phenomenon for two reasons; primarily the absence of fuelling stations in the towns of the Ndian Division and the Bakassi Peninsula made smuggling very possible here. Secondly the low fuel prices in Nigeria caused by ample production and price subsidies greatly encouraged both Nigerians and Cameroonians to continuously engage in the illegal activity. The effect this activity had was that it threatened the existence of SONARA, the lone petroleum refinery in Cameroon. It equally had a terrible effect on the health sector as well as a devastating security effect in the North West and the South West regions of the country.

IUU fishing was a major problem plaguing the global seas. The South Western Coastal region of Cameroon over the years had equally experienced the same problem. The various forms of illegal fishing rendered the issue very complex. Drivers were very different between large and small-scale sectors, and lack resources means deterrence rates were low. Forms of illegal fishing common within the South Western Coast included fishing by unlicensed foreign vessels: fishing in prohibited areas, including inshore waters; fishing with illegal nets and without a turtle excluding device for shrimping vessels: illegal fishing by small-scale fishers, including fishing in restricted areas or with nets or explosives: and illegal trans-shipment to avoid port controls and to maximize profits. There was also an aspect of IUU fishing which we found out in our research that was common on the Bakassi peninsula. This was an aspect in which approximately 99.9% of the manpower in the fishing sector in the Bakassi was manned by Nigerians. After the fishing activity, all of the fish stock harvested was all transported to Calabar, depriving the Cameroon population on the peninsula and beyond of protein supply. While all forms of IUU fishing were harmful to the marine environment, fishing without a license by foreign vessels and fishing in prohibited areas was most responsible for accelerating over exploitation and as such did the most damage to fisheries health. Though small-scale fishers also engaged in IUU fishing, the scale of their operations was far less significant.

Although Cameroon declared an EEZ as late as 2000, there were already “illegal” fishing vessels in 1989, when Cameroon arrested 9 vessels fishing illegally within her waters. Chinese illegal vessels caught an estimated 9,500 tons in 2009. Illegal catches was reconstructed here were overwhelmingly taken by Chinese vessels, with the remainder taken by Russian vessels. The acuteness of the problem partly came from the fact that fishing vessels did not undergo...
inspection on regular bases. Accord to recent data from COREP only 12 foreign fishing vessels were boarded in 2015. Interpol (2014) report suggested that only 20 inspections were conducted at sea and ports between the years 2007 to 2012\textsuperscript{56}. According to the ministry of live stocks, fisheries and Animal Industry (MINEPIA) the IUU loss in this country was more than CFA 20 billion in 2009\textsuperscript{57}. A major effect of illegal fishing had been that it deprived the population of the south western coastal cities of protein supply and secondly the state spent enormous sums in the importation of frozen fish.

6. Conclusion

The main focus of this work has been to unravel the maritime security challenges which plagued the South Western coastal region of Cameroon, in conjuction with its dynamics between the historical period of 1981 and 2017. The findings revealed that, these threats experienced an upsurge in the 1990s, but from the year 2005 they became so aggravated that more concerted and combined action was needed for its mitigation. The security strategies implemented by the defence forces to mitigate these threats included surveineillance of the coast, routine patrols, escorting of vessels and stationment of equipment and officers around petroleum off shore installations. Our research found out that each maritime security challenge posed a serious threat to either National Security, food security, public health or the blue economy in general. This insecurity equally resulted to loss of lives and consequently, threats on the populations of the sea-lanes of this coastal region were enormous.

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