

# **An Assessment of the Role of Nigerian Navy in Enhancing Regional Cohesion and Mitigating Security Threats Within the Gulf of Guinea Environment**

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## **Abstract**

This study assesses the role of the Nigerian Navy in the maritime environment. Global maritime environment is an indispensable medium to mankind, both as a source of livelihood and a catalyst for national development. Contemporary growth of the maritime industry comes with great security and safety challenges. Maritime security revolves around safety and security within and around the maritime domains of a nation. It points to threats and how to mitigate these threats. The Gulf of Guinea is a vast, diverse and highly important region covering about 250,000 sq. nm connecting about 16 countries that are strung along roughly 6,000 kilometers of unbroken coastline. The study aims to assess the contributions of the Nigerian Navy operations within the GoG region. Exploratory research method was utilised with semi-structured interviews and questionnaires as instruments of data collection. Propositions were highlighted and affirmed based on the responses of respondents and available records. The findings revealed that NN operations had been effective and efficient in enhancing security and regional maritime cohesion. It also discovered that the insufficient requisite platforms and dearth of funds are key challenges to NN operations. The study therefore recommends the creation of a Joint Multinational Maritime Force (JMMF) and coordination centre to aid liaison and sharing of resources among others.

**Keywords:** Maritime Security, Maritime Environment, Nigerian Navy, Gulf of Guinea.

## **Introduction**

Globalisation and worldwide economic trends have accelerated the pace of maritime commerce and reinforced the need to keep the global maritime domain safe and secure. The oceans are growing in importance as both arteries of the global economy and back alleys of the criminal underworld. The role of naval power in securing the maritime domain gains prominence when viewed in the context of economic development, growth and promoting political stability.

(Walter, 1982) opines that “whosoever commands the sea, commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world and, consequently, the world itself”. This statement underpins the importance of total control over one's own maritime environment as it relates to national security and

economic development. Seas and oceans are natural endowments that require careful development for a nation to have command and reap their immense benefits.

The economic lifeline of many coastal states and other land locked ones evidently depends on the maritime domain of such states which is a vital conduit for trade. Hence, an effective management of the maritime environment is imperative to a sustainable national economy as well as regional development. It is of immense strategic value to both the nation and other bordering states, contributing to their individual and collective economic growth. With such crucial benefits and prospects, no littoral state can afford to leave its maritime domain unsecured.

The maritime domain of any nation is of vital importance to that nation as it serves as a source of livelihood, a crucial tool for national development as well as connection to the rest of the world. Therefore, failure to effectively police this domain could undermine economic fortunes and by extension, national development with a direct impact on the national security of that Nation. (Gambo, 2020) rightly opined that the global maritime environment is an indispensable medium to mankind, both as a source of livelihood and a catalyst for national development. Global powers have exerted control and influence via the maritime environment, wars were fought and military might and prowess exerted. Here lies the criticality of the maritime domain to nationhood. Empires, nation-states have fought to keep their territoriality and sovereignty, by identifying the crucial role played by the maritime domain. It serves as a conduit to the world at large connecting economies, cultures, one to the other and the resources contained therein are enormous. Global powers such as the USA, UK, China as well as other nations have demonstrated the immense benefit accruable from effective and efficient control and utilisation of the maritime environment, building a robust maritime security strategy to ensure its optimal and continuous usage.

Nigeria occupies a strategic location in international seaborne trade along the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The areas have an estimated 24 billion barrels of crude oil reserves that is five per cent of global reserves at five million barrels of crude oil per day . Also, the GoG is a primary conduit of international trade and is central to the economy of the associated regions. It is increasingly looked upon today as a resource provider and critical contributor to national growth and prosperity of the several nations lining its coasts and even those landlocked and with no shared boundaries.

The Review of Maritime Transport – 2021 by UNTAD highlighted maritime transport as the backbone of international trade and global economy. Over 80% of the volume of international trade in goods is carried by sea, and the percentage is higher in most developing countries. (UNDP, 2015)

Furthermore, no nation could afford to leave its maritime domain unchecked, unsafe and unsecured. The basic idea of security encompasses an array of measures put in place to ensure that individual lives and properties are safe

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without any deliberate harm or destruction. As (Muyiwa, 2015) rightly noted, security has to do with the presence of peace, safety, gladness and the protection of human and physical resources or absence of crisis or threats to human dignity, all of which facilitate development and progress of any human society (Afolabi, 2015). This statement gives credence to the fact that without security, the possibility of having a meaningful development will be a mirage.

Udofia (2022) opined that “development is the primary goal of every well-meaning government and it essentially depends on the level of economic activities in a country; the level of economic activities is in turn enhanced by peaceful coexistence by people”. He therefore called for concerted efforts of all security agencies to synergies and collaborates with each other in tackling

The idea of maritime security just like other forms of security revolves around safety and security within and around the maritime environment of a nation. Threats such as maritime inter-state disputes, terrorism, piracy, trafficking of narcotics, people and illicit goods, arms proliferation, illegal fishing, environmental crimes, or maritime accidents and disasters (Bueger, 2015).

Like most navies around the world, the Nigerian Navy (NN) was established to guarantee freedom of the seas in order to respond to current and emerging threats towards making the Nigerian Maritime Environment secure for national development. In addition to a collective mandate to protect Nigeria’s interests, her people and core values, the National Defense Policy 2017 further expects the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN), inclusive of the NN to be capable of responding effectively to internal and external threats towards safeguarding national development. The NN is constitutionally charged to guarantee the nation’s maritime defense, safeguard of the nation’s offshore resources as well as other constabulary functions. In carrying out these roles however, the NN has been able to partner with the Navies of other African nations having collective interest in the (GoG) to enhance safety and security thereby fostering regional synergy and collaboration.

Ukeje and Ela, (2013) noted that centuries ago, the GoG was the hub of extensive trans-Atlantic trade relations linking Africa with Europe; trade relations which at various times was dominated by the export of slaves, palm oil, rubber, ivory, gold, etc., and the importation of sundry goods such as firearms and ammunition, liquor and spirits (Ukeje, & Mvomo, 2013). In recent time however, all these have metamorphosed into transnational trades in the form of oil and gas trade which has continued to remain a major mainstay of GoG countries with such resources, transportation of processed and finished goods and services as well as other raw materials. However, with the contemporary growth of the maritime industry comes a great security and safety concern. The region has had its fair share of crude oil theft, illegal smuggling activities, sea piracy and hostage situations, illegal unregulated unreported fishing, terrorism, transnational crimes among others.

A safe and secured GoG is beneficial to the blue economy of the nation with a multiplier effect on both development and national security. This vast maritime space is not only of utmost economic significance to the adjoining countries and landlocked states but also has political, military and economic importance to the east and west power blocs.

A perennial challenge remains the availability of the right mix of platform, assets and resources. Without the requisite platform, NN operations are bound to fail within the GoG. While the NN has sustained the use of its Falcon Eye Project and the Regional Maritime Awareness Capabilities for surveillance, aimed at creating the enabling environment for effective NN presence in the GoG maritime environment to enhance national as well as regional security, upgrading existing structures as well as training and development remains a bane to its efficiency and effectiveness.

To address the stated problems, this study assessed the role of the NN in enhancing regional cohesion by:

- i. Assessing the contributions of NN operations within the GoG.
- ii. Ascertaining the impact and efficiency of the NN in enhancing regional cohesion within the GoG.
- iii. Examining the challenges militating against the NN operations in the GoG.
- iv. Highlighting key strategies to enhance NN operations in the GoG.
- v. The NN operations have been effective and efficient in the GoG.
- vi. Investigating the dearth of requisite platforms and insufficient funds as key challenges to NN operations in the GoG.
- vii. Interrogating the importance of platform acquisition, funding, multinational maritime force are key strategies to enhance regional cohesion and security.

### **Literature Review**

(Corps et al., 2007) defined maritime security as “the creation and maintenance of security at sea. This is essential to mitigating threats short of war, including piracy, terrorism, weapons proliferation, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities. Countering these irregular and transnational threats protects our homeland, enhances global stability, and secures freedom of navigation for the benefit of all nations”. Mejia (2016) sees maritime security as an operation performed by appropriate civil or military authorities and multinational agencies to counter threats and mitigate the risks of illegal or threatening activities in the maritime domain.(Mejia, & Restrepo, 2016). Furthermore, Feldt, Roell and Thiele (2014) noted that maritime security is a responsibility, which has no clear definitions when it comes to Maritime Security Operations. (Fedt, et al., 2013). It is a governmental responsibility, but the authority to act on behalf of a state is a sovereign decision with different options. This has a strong influence on maritime collaboration. It has no universal legal or agreed definition due to the fact that it is a broad topic, covering many policy sectors. Elements, which are part of maritime security, are:

- i. International and national peace and security.

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- ii. Sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.
- iii. Security of Sea Lines of Communications.
- iv. Security protection from crimes at sea.
- v. Resource security, access to resources at sea and to the seabed.
- vi. Environmental protection.
- vii. Security of all seafarers and fishermen.

Similarly, Rahman (2009) identified five (5) perspectives which are: security of the sea itself, ocean governance, and maritime border protection, military activities at sea and security regulation of the maritime transportation system (Rahman, 1966, & 2009)

( Rahman, 2009) sees maritime security as the security of sea, ocean, backwaters, its environment, assets or resources and platforms, which are vulnerable targets. He also sees maritime security as deterring criminal activities such as sea robbery, smuggling and illegal bunkering within a nation's maritime domain and adjoining maritime space. In advanced and developed societies, there is the tendency to see institutional structures representing these perspectives and carrying out assigned roles and responsibilities.

Maritime security has been broadly considered to mean the protection of water borne craft, resources, infrastructures and people located within the maritime domain, both internally and externally. The areas from which ships and maritime operations need protection include; terrorism, piracy, robbery, illegal trafficking of goods and people, illegal fishing and pollution (Feldt, et al., 2013). An environment where illegalities and crime thrive impacts negatively on the socio-economic and political stability as well as the security of individuals, infrastructures and foreign policy approach of that nation. Therefore, how safe and secured a maritime environment of a nation is a reflection on the collective security, development and economy of a nation.

Gambo (2021) posits that contemporary threats to the Nigerian maritime environment are multi-faceted and can broadly be classified as external or internal (Gambo, 2022). External maritime security threats manifest in various forms including sabotage of sensitive military, economic or other strategic installations, threat of force by unfriendly states as well as maritime boundary disputes with neighboring countries. It could also be through denial of access to markets, especially crude oil markets, since Nigeria's economy is largely dependent on sale of crude oil or hostile propaganda like amplification of occurrence of negative incidents in Nigeria's water.

Common internal threats include; crude oil theft and pipeline vandalism, piracy and sea robbery as well as youth restiveness. Others are illegal unreported and unregulated fishing, transnational organised crimes and marine pollution. Emerging intelligence has shown that most of these acts are perpetrated by local linchpins with foreign accomplices and have potential to further exacerbate the already fragile domestic socio-economic conditions and security in the affected areas. Owing to the significant impact of these security threats within maritime

space, which is the mainstay of Nigeria's economy, their occurrence has a negative impact on national developmental efforts (Gambo, 2022).

Development is the transformation of a community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. Development is an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence. This however, translates to an improvement in the well-being of citizens in a sustainable manner. It also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Naomi (1995) believes that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life (Naomi, 1995).

Additionally, Okereke's (1999) idea of development is conceptualised as the qualitative improvement in the living standard of the majority of the people through the provision of economic and social infrastructures like industries, employment, water, electricity, health facilities, good roads, etc (Okereke, 1993). Conversely, national development is believed to be the gradual manifestation of positive changes in the economic, industrial, political, social, cultural and administrative life of a country ((Ogai, 2003).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2008), further describes national development as the ability of a nation to fashion an environment in which the people develop their full potentials and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests (UNDP Annual Report 2008, 2015). The UNDP took cognisance of the human perspective of national development. This idea however, does not explicitly explore other aspects of national development such as infrastructural development and economic growth.

Again, national development has been described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political and religious advancement of a country. This is best achieved through development planning, which can be described as the country's collection of strategies mapped out by the government (Lawal, & Oluwatoyin, 2011).

In a more elaborate approach, national development as the transformation and restructuring of society in social, economic, political, military, scientific and technological realms through gainful exploitation and utilisation of national resources which encapsulates economic growth, protection of maritime resource infrastructure, reduction in maritime crimes, increased shipping, employment generation, and provision of infrastructure for the well-being of the citizens. This concept meets the objective of this study hence capturing the attributes of national development to include increased shipping activities, protection of and employment generation.

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Economically, the GoG waterways serves as a critical gateway to the world for virtually all of its littoral countries, but also for land-locked countries including Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and the Central African Republic, which depend on access to the sea for the import and export of goods and services from and to major global markets. With globalisation, the region is also fast becoming pivotal to international navigation as a relatively safer, if longer, route connecting the Far East to countries in the North and South of the Atlantic. Given that over 90% of global freight is by sea, the GoG has become a veritable sea-route for international trade and commerce, especially now that the shorter Arab Gulf passage is costlier and riskier due to wars and piracy in the Middle East and North Africa (Ukeje, & Mvomo, 2013).

The GoG has been plagued with a series of threats such as piracy, sea robbery, trafficking in narcotics, organised transnational crimes, illegal bunkering, and ecological risks among others which have drastically affected the national as well as collective security of the Region. This has a direct negative impact on the economies of the member states. Notably, in 2020 the GoG saw 84 attacks on ships, with 135 seafarers Kidnapped for Ransom – K4R (IMB Report, 2020) The GoG experienced about 50% increase in K4R between 2018 and 2019 and around 10% increase between 2019 and 2020 (IMB Report, 2020)

Although as Ukeje & Mvomo Ela (2013) rightly noted, that apart from Nigeria, and to a lesser extent Angola, no other GoG country boasts of any significant naval or coastguard capability to constitute effective deterrence or countermeasure against growing maritime crimes ( Ukeje, & Mvomo, 2020). This is a debilitating weakness if one considers the pivotal role that GoG waters play in the extractive industries that underpin most economies in central and western Africa. This narrative is however one of the greatest challenges but it is currently being mitigated due to collaborative efforts such as the GoG Maritime Collaboration Forum for the Shared Awareness and De-confliction (GOG-MCF/SHADE), the introduction of the Yawunde Cameroon Conference and other regional maritime security architecture such as the Heads of navies conference, Deep Blue Project among others

The NN's role in enhancing regional cohesion in the GoG maritime environment could be exemplified through the periodic conduct and participation in international maritime exercises, conferences and seminars, joint coordinated patrols by Navies of member states and intelligence sharing just to mention a few. Just in 2022, the NN hosted a number of joint international maritime exercises all geared towards boosting security in the GoG. Some of these exercises such as, Obangame Express, Grand African Nemo, Dakarta da Barawo etc.

Apart from maintaining presence with the deployment of capital ships, the NN has constantly been at the forefront of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). With the deployment of the Falcon Eye and Regional Maritime Awareness Campaign (RMAC) these facilities have ensured and assisted the NN to build and have a broad-spectrum MDA capability, a feat worthy of emulation by other GoG

nations, however has some peculiar challenges such as inadequate manpower, training and development, availability of requisite platforms as well as funding are militating factors.

According to Ashworth, (2012) , the most important theory of symbolic school is that of George Herbert Mead. Mead is a pragmatist and anti-dualist philosopher. He believes that mind and ego are products of society. Mead assumes that symbols develop mind and they are used as means for thinking and communication. Symbolic interactionism develops interaction perspectives on mind, society and environment based on the ideas. The foundation of this theory is 'meanings' by the social actors in the phenomenon they live in Aksan, et al., (2012). This theory is based on meanings that emerge from the interaction of people such as individuals in a social environment with other individuals by focusing on symbols and meanings.

According to Blumer cited in Nilgun et al. (2009) these “meanings” formed by humans can be viewed in two ways: (1) Something attributed to objects, events, phenomenon, etc. (2) A “physical attachment” imposed on events and objects by humans. Blumer believes that meaning is a condition that emerges as a result of the interaction of group members and not an intrinsic feature of the object. Consequently, meaning is created as a result of the interaction between people, and meaning allows people to produce some of the facts forming the sensory world. These facts are related to how people form meaning. Thus, fact consists of the interpretation of various definitions.

Amaechina (2010) conducted research on ‘Maritime Security and the Gulf of Guinea: Lessons for the Regional Navies’. The researcher adopted descriptive research using both quantitative and qualitative methodology to get responses on the challenges confronting maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The study identified the security challenges in the GoG as being socio-economic, geo-political and environmental. The work further noted that the NN who is a key player in the GoG security efforts is constrained due to inadequate funding, limited availability of operational platform mix, as well as lack of technological expertise. The study recommended, among others, that member states should synergise their efforts through bilateral agreement and expand regional cooperation Ozor, et al., 2010

While she was able to highlight most of the challenges faced by the NN, he however failed to highlight already established structures as well as efforts to build strategic collaboration as well as efforts made to enhance security and cohesion with the region. Gambo, (2022) in his paper “maritime security and national development: the Nigerian Navy experience and future perspectives”, noted that the NN has been resolute in achieving the set objectives of ensuring that the Nigeria’s maritime area is safe and open to legitimate activities for national development through the emplacement of appropriate strategies. This resolve according to Gambo is anchored on the fact that the nation’s maritime domain will continue to be of strategic importance due to its inherent resources and utility for global



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mercantile activities. Gambo however highlighted that the environment is prone to diverse contemporary threats which portend dangers to the nation's well-being and security if not curbed.

Bashir, J. (2021) in his speech "strengthening sub-regional collaboration for enhanced maritime security in the GoG: Nigerian Navy's perspective" examined the sub-regional collaboration efforts for enhanced maritime security in the GoG. The work highlighted the geo-strategic importance of the GoG, the mutual maritime interest of nations within the GoG, the identified an emerging threat within the GoG maritime environment, as well as collaborative frameworks. He pointed out some of the challenges bedeviling the GoG as follows;

- i. An increase in ship traffic as a result of globalization;
- ii. The debilitating leadership of many of the 23 states in that region;
- iii. The proliferation of small arms;
- iv. The poor monitoring and control of the oceans;
- v. Corruption, poverty, unemployment and criminality.
- vi. Other factors are legal and jurisdictional weaknesses, location, conflict and disorder situations,
- vii. Underfunded law enforcement or inadequate security,
- viii. Permissive political environments, Cultural acceptability/maritime tradition, and the promise of reward.
- ix. Issues necessitating the "Greater Stakeholder Collaboration -: in tackling maritime Insecurity

The need for increased collaboration to tackle maritime insecurity can be explained from a political-economy, and international stand point.

This work is quite expository but lacks account of the Nigerian perspective and did not consider some efforts made by other member states.

### **Research Methodology**

The research design encompasses methods for the collection, measurement and analysis of data related to the study objectives. This research is of an exploratory nature and utilised a mixed-methodology approach with semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. To achieve this, the researcher used primary and secondary sources in gathering and analyzing relevant data. More so, in generating primary data for the study, personal interviews and questionnaires were used. While secondary data would be information sourced or gathered from other researchers, governmental/institutional records and publications.

The population for this study consists of maritime industry actors such as port operators, Nigerian Port Authority, Oil and Gas exploration firms, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), NNPC and the NN.

Given the fact that it would be cumbersome to study the entire population due to time, cost and accessibility, a subset of the population, sample size was chosen to represent the whole population. Sample is viewed not as a whole in itself but as an approximation of the whole. Therefore, the sample size for this study was 500.

Sampling technique would be judgmental/purposive and convenience sampling techniques owing to the nature of the research.

Several methods are used to collect data in social science research. These include questionnaires, interviews, and observational techniques. Twumasi (2001) posited that the selection of a particular method to collect data must be decided upon in the light of one's problem. He further states that in making this decision, the researcher must keep in mind the type of people he or she is dealing with, the nature of the social situation, the mood of the social environment and the psychology of the people. The design adopted for this research is survey design which involves obtaining information directly from a group of individuals by administering questionnaires (Twumasi, 2001). Therefore, in order to address the research questions, empirical data was gathered through administration of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Researchers and senior lecturers were consulted and their inputs validated the research instruments with respect to their reliability and validity. Qualitative analysis was used in analysing and processing the information that was gathered from the administered questionnaire as well as the various interviews. The research questions guided the researcher in randomly selecting major questions out of the questionnaire items. The data from the questionnaires were analysed, followed by the interviews. Responses from respondents were thereafter presented in a tabular form with percentage to calculate the degree of response to the questions asked while a thematic presentation and analysis of the findings follows. At the end of the analysis, the results were assembled and carefully presented.

### **Respondents Demographics**

The table below highlights the sex distribution of respondents. The results presented therein indicates that a total of 369 out the total number of respondents representing 76% of responses were male while 117 respondents (24%) were female.

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Male	369	76
Female	117	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Age Distribution**

The result for the distribution of respondents' age is presented in table 4.2. Majority of respondents (36%) were of the 26 – 35 years age range, while 23% were aged between 36 – 45 years, 22% were 46 and above. Respondents within the age bracket of 25 below were 19%.

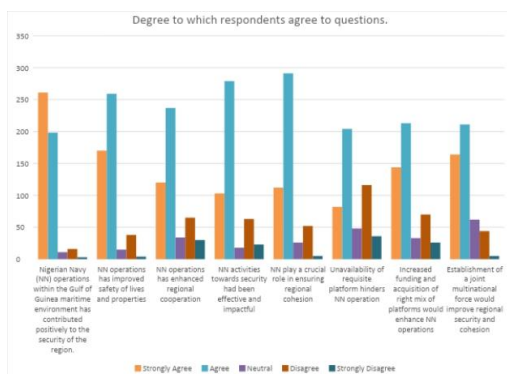
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Age range	Frequency	Percentage
25 – Below	93	19
26 – 35	174	36
36 – 45	113	23
46 – Above	106	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>100</b>

### Occupational Distribution

Respondents were individuals who either belong to the Maritime industry and/or have a security background. The data shows that 50% of respondents which is about 244 respondents were from the Nigerian Navy, 16% of total respondents were members of the Armed Forces of Nigeria other than the Nigerian Navy. 22% were from other security organizations, and maritime workers were 2% while those who indicated others were 10%.

Occupation	Responses	Percentage
NN Personnel	244	50
Other AFN personnel	77	16
Security Agency	105	22
Maritime Industry Worker	12	2
Others	48	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>100</b>



*A chart showing the degree of agreeableness to study objectives*

**Findings**

The Nigerian Navy's continuous operations within the GoG maritime environment has greatly contributed to the success and achievement recorded within the region. Through her constant patrols, joint maritime exercises and joint training which has and is still being conducted regularly have seen the rapid decline of criminal activities within Nigeria's coastal waters, the EEZ and the GoG corridors. Additionally, the NN has been at the forefront of collaborations and information sharing through its Regional Maritime Domain Awareness Capabilities and ability to sustain presence. There is however the need for more robust and sustained efforts geared towards enhancing the regional security within the region.

The NN has positively impacted not just the safety of lives and properties but has also enhanced regional cohesion within the GoG. The findings of the study have revealed a positive impact and this has been felt within the region due to the reduction of crime rate and safety related occurrences. Quite a number of pirate attacks have been averted and cases where there had been incidents related to security and safety, victims had been rescued unhurt, saving resources which would have ordinarily gone for the payment of ransom. Reduction of crime rate implies bringing to the barest minimum, crime related occurrences that threatens the safety and security of lives and properties. This perhaps was achieved through early detection, proactive response, deniability and deterrence. In a similar report, ICC of IMB's Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Report for the period 1 January 31 December 2021, indicates that Nigeria had 33 in 2017, 48 attacks in 2018, 35 in 2019, 35 in 2020 and 6 in 2021 (ICB-IMB,2021). This speaks volume to how significant NN operations had been in the safety of lives and properties.

These actions have further increased shipping activities within the region thus directly impacting on the blue economy of member states. Collaborative actions are taken to enhance the region's security and safety which incidentally is a panacea for development. The collective security of citizens, economic viability of the nation as well as the survival of the nation depends largely on its maritime industry. Having a safe and secure maritime environment is a reflection on the collective security and economy of that nation. Notably, an environment where illegalities and crime thrive will impact negatively on the socio-economic and political stability as well as the security of individuals, infrastructures, foreign policy approach of that nation.

Having the right mix and requisite platform and infrastructure are catalysts to effective and efficient performance. With the vast stretch of area of the GoG, it is only expedient to have the required resources to police the area. Jointly, more can be achieved, but the NN do not currently possess the strength to maintain an all-round presence at sea, even areas where its presence is felt, there are limits to where they can cover. Hence the need for the acquisition of the right mixes of platforms to cope with myriads of challenges confronting them in safeguarding the maritime front and enhancing cohesion within the region. Tied to this is adequate funding

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and provision of resources by the federal government, stakeholders as well as private-public partnerships.

Other strategies include Improved Maritime Domain Awareness, joint training and development as well as joint naval exercises. Others are; installation of ICT facilities to aid information sharing, interoperability and the effective management of existing facilities and a Policy/Legal framework to spell out procedures and guidelines. Again, the undertone of the strategies aforementioned entails joint efforts, geared towards regional cohesion on the basis of collectivism and shared responsibilities. For these to work however, there is the need for joint training and establishment of a joint desk with various member countries representatives to serve as liaison desk officers in assessing and sharing of intelligence as well as other resources that aid rapid responses to security related incidences.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted on the premise of maritime security and national development with a focus on assessing the role of the NN in enhancing regional cohesion and security in the GoG maritime environment. It discovered that NN has enhanced regional cohesion and security within the GoG maritime environment from the glass prism of national development and maritime security. NN operations and activities have played a crucial role in ensuring the safety of lives and properties within the region and have achieved a lot through constant patrols, training and development as well as joint naval exercises and operations, international conferences among others. Among these success stories however, lies the challenge of inadequate funding and dearth state-of the art of assets and platforms. It is however imperative to address these challenges in a bid to deliberately enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of NN operations.

### **Recommendations**

Firstly, the Federal Government of Nigeria in partnership with other navies of the GoG member state should come up with modalities for the establishment of a Multinational Joint Maritime Force.

Secondly, the FG should establish a Joint Coordination Centre with various member countries of the GoG region serving as liaison desk officers in assessing and sharing of information, intelligence and other resources.

Thirdly, FG should increase budgetary allocations, acquire State-of- the-Act technologies and life gun boats for 24/7 patrol of our Economic Exclusion Zone.

Finally, local and international training and manpower development should be regularly organised for the personnel.

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