CHAPTER 9

International Cooperation and the Dynamics of Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea

9.1 Introduction

Maritime security is a shared concept and the analysis in the preceding chapters has illustrated the convergence of maritime security interests in the Gulf of Guinea. Addressing these security concerns necessitates the participation of external actors and the building of international partnerships. The legitimacy of external interventions is also founded on the notion that such interventions are in the ‘interest’ of the global community. The role of external actors can also be justified on the basis of relevant UNSCR analysed in both the introductory chapter and the preceding chapter. These Resolutions implore the international community to support the adoption of comprehensive strategies by Gulf of Guinea States to address incidents of piracy and armed robbery in the region. Moreover, as will be illustrated in this chapter, a number of Gulf of Guinea States have expressly requested the support and intervention of the international community to address the maritime security situation in the region.

Therefore, the situation is not just one of convergence of interest but also of need and requirements. However, despite such convergence, there exists a simultaneous divergence of interests, because the objectives and priorities of the various actors may differ. There may, for instance, be widespread agreement on the scope of maritime security threats, but differences of opinion regarding the order in which to address these threats. Also, as with other areas of State relations, maritime security cooperation may be underpinned by strategic motives or involve the trading of certain benefits and opportunities, thereby evoking competition or conflict among participants at different levels. The implication of this is that maritime security efforts may pull in different directions, while cooperative outcomes may not deliver durable security.

It is against this background that the contribution of external actors to maritime security regime building in the Gulf of Guinea will be examined.

Consideration will also be given to the challenges and limitations that accompany these interventions. Drawing on the analysis of the strategic interests in the Gulf of Guinea in chapter three, and also the threat analysis in chapters five and six, the author has selected the United States (US), France, the United Kingdom (UK), China and the European Union as the key actors for the purpose of the analysis.

There are additional strategic reasons underlying the scope of the chapter. Apart from being a global power, the US has a dedicated maritime security cooperative engagement with the Gulf of Guinea, and thus it is important to assess the scope and context of this engagement. A combination of historical and contemporary connections, which in some cases includes defence and security arrangements and maritime security imperatives, makes France, the UK and the European Union important candidates for the chapter. Finally, China’s growing economic interest in Africa, and in particular the presence of Chinese companies in the offshore oil and gas industry of the Gulf of Guinea, makes it also an important candidate for interrogation.

The substantive analysis is organised in six parts. The first five parts will examine the interventions, policies and contributions of these actors, while the sixth part is devoted to an examination of the challenges and limitations of the interventions.

9.2 United States and Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea

As the world’s superpower, the US has a spectrum of maritime interests. This ranges from the protection of international trade and shipping, energy security, to combating transnational organised crimes (including drug trafficking, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)). These maritime security objectives are elucidated in key US policy documents that inform the country’s maritime security engagements and policies in Africa, and in particular, its maritime security cooperative framework in the Gulf of Guinea. This section will review the relevant policy frameworks and

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