

The Struggle for Atlantic Maritime Security and Safety: Lessons From Africa's Maritime Security Governance

Luka Biong D. Kuol

National Defense University, Washington, USA

University of Juba, Juba, South Sudan

The enormous economic potentials of the blue/ocean economy have made the maritime domain increasingly susceptible to transnational organized crime and a theater for great power competition, particularly in the Atlantic maritime domain. The maritime security threats are more prevalent in the Atlantic African maritime domain than in other continents. These threats are becoming increasingly detrimental to the African security, safety, and human security, particularly in the coastal countries of the Atlantic Africa. Despite its increasing susceptibility to maritime security threats including great powers competition and the presence of non-Atlantic great powers more than in other maritime domains in Africa, the coastal countries of the Atlantic Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have managed to forge strategic inter-regional maritime security partnership that has relatively improved maritime security and safety in the region. There is a growing interest in forging inter-continental partnership of the coastal Atlantic states to collectively respond and address the shared maritime security threats in the entire Atlantic maritime domain. Yet, the way such a complex multilateral partnership would be structured and operationalized has not been worked out. This article assesses the economic potentials, susceptibility to maritime security threats, and level of response to maritime security threats by the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA with the aim of identifying some lessons that could be relevant for forging the Atlantic inter-continental maritime security partnership. Some of these lessons include genuine partnership that is based on sovereign equality and inter-dependence, a code of conduct, cooperation, and coordination framework, and shared common value system of democratic governance.

Keywords: maritime security, threats, Atlantic, partnership, blue economy, Africa, coastal countries

Introduction

The Atlantic Basin is well-endowed with enormous natural resources and biodiversity as well as providing strategic trade routes that are key sources of livelihoods to the people of the coastal Atlantic states. These states have immense untapped maritime industry or “blue economy”, in terms of fisheries, minerals, hydrocarbons, tourism, and trade. The Atlantic Basin also plays a strategic role in the climate system and the entire circulation of heat from the southern to the northern hemisphere. These economic potentials make the Basin susceptible to transnational organized crime and it becomes a theatre of not only increased criminal activities but also it attracts great powers competition and presence of the non-Atlantic great powers.

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Luka Biong D. Kuol, Ph.D., adjunct distinguished professor, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, USA; adjunct professor, Institute of Peace, Development and Security Studies, University of Juba, Juba, South Sudan.

The Atlantic African coastal countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), are becoming increasingly susceptible to a web of growing maritime security threats and challenges—including narcotic, piracy; trafficking of people, drugs, and weapons; Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing; and environmental degradation. The transnational nature of these maritime security threats and challenges makes inter-continental cooperation, coordination, and partnership between and among the Atlantic coastal countries not only urgent but a strategic necessity.

The Atlantic SSA region, particularly Western and Central Africa, provides good examples and experiences in establishing effective maritime governance for advancing and strengthening intra-continental and inter-regional coordination mechanisms. However, there are limited efforts in advancing and promoting inter-continental partnership and coordination of the collective responses to the shared maritime security threats facing Atlantic coastal countries of Africa and other continents. There are significant and salient lessons to be learned from the experience of the Atlantic SSA for forging strategic maritime security partnership for most of the coastal Atlantic countries.

There is a growing interest in establishing a multilateral partnership forum for the coastal Atlantic states to collectively response and address the shared maritime security threats as well as advancing economic, and environmental interests across the entire Atlantic maritime domain. The coastal Atlantic countries of Angola, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Ireland, Mauritania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States issued recently a joint statement on the need for Atlantic cooperation and partnership of all coastal countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean (The White House, 2022). While such a call for partnership is timely and alluring, forging such partnership becomes allusive, challenging, and nebulous (Scheer, 2016), particularly among partners with unbalanced power and different value systems.

While there is a recognition of the increased presence of the great powers' competition and the non-Atlantic great powers in the Atlantic maritime domain, such geostrategic competition is not binary for Africa. This geostrategic competition is of a great maritime security concern in Africa, but it needs to be approached within the context of national, regional, and continental maritime security and safety interests, and maritime security vision, policies, and strategies. This article aims at assessing the experience of the Atlantic SSA region in addressing and responding collectively to the maritime security threats facing its coastal countries and its implications and lessons learned for advancing and forging inter-continental partnership in the Atlantic maritime domain. This will contribute to the debate of what needs to be done to forge effective maritime security partnership of all coastal Atlantic countries and to advance African agency in leveraging strategic partnership in the maritime security domain of the Atlantic.

This article is organized into four sections including this section. In Section Two, the African perspectives of the opportunities and challenges including increasing illegal presence of non-Atlantic great powers in the Atlantic maritime domain are analyzed and discussed. The experience of the Atlantic SSA in forging intra-continental and inter-regional partnership and framework for advancing collectively maritime security and safety in the Atlantic maritime domain is examined in Section Three. The lessons learned from the Atlantic SSA and the implications for forging strategic inter-continental maritime security partnership in the Atlantic maritime domain are presented in the conclusion section.

The Atlantic Africa: A Maritime Domain for Opportunities and Challenges

The African maritime zones, including territorial seas and continental shelf that are under its jurisdiction, are estimated to be about 13 million square kilometers (UNECA, 2016). This maritime area is about 43 percent of the African land area (30.37 million kilometers) with almost half of the continent under the sea. The coastal countries of the Atlantic Africa (24 countries) constitute about 62% of the African coastal countries (39 countries). Although the Atlantic Ocean is the second largest of the world's five oceans, its maritime domain in Africa is the largest in relation to other African oceans maritime zones (see Figure 1). This makes the Atlantic Ocean the most important maritime zone for the African maritime security and safety and livelihoods.



Figure 1. Africa's coastal countries.

The African Blue Economy: The Potentials

The blue economy¹ has the potential of generating not only 400 percent of global current energy demand from its renewable energy potentials but also its maritime related activities may annually generate 2.5 trillion euro (UNECA, 2016, p. x). The African maritime industry in terms of fisheries, minerals, hydrocarbons, tourism, and trade is estimated to be worth US\$ trillion per year (Okafor-Yarwood, 2020). The facts about the enormous potentials of the African blue economy are stunning as summarized in Table 1. It is estimated that the size of the African blue economy is almost three times of its landmass with 90 percent of the Africa's exports and imports transported by water.

The economic value generated from the maritime related activities will increase by 37 percent in 2030 and might almost double with 94 percent increase in 2063. The same pattern is also observed in terms of jobs created by the African blue economy that will surge by 16 percent and 60 percent in 2030 and 2063 respectively. For example, the African fisheries and aquaculture sector employs about 12.3 million people and provides a vital source of protein that is critical to address food security issues of nearly 200 million Africans (Hassan, 2021). Almost a quarter of African jobs depend on fisheries with fish consumption accounting for more than the population's intake of animal proteins in countries such as the Gambia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone (FAO, 2020). The economic potentials of the African coastal tourism are enormous and might generate about USD 100 billion by 2030. In West Africa, coastal cities and ports and coastal agriculture, industries, and fisheries account for 57 percent of the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Stable Seas, 2019).

Table 1

The African Blue Economy Facts

Facts	Estimates
Size of African blue economy	3 times the size of Africa's landmass
Number of costal countries	38 (70% of African countries)
Maritime zone area	13 million square kilometers (43% of African land area of 30.37 million square kilometers)
Economic value potentials	USD 296 Billion in 2018 USD 405 Billion in 2030 USD 576 Billion in 2063
Jobs opportunities	USD 49 Million in 2018 USD 57 Million in 2030 USD 78 Million in 2063
Volume of imports & exports via sea	90%
Coastal tourism economic potentials	USD 100 billion by 2030
Coastal cities and ports and coastal agriculture, industries, and fisheries account	56% of West Africa's GDP*

Source: AU, 2019, (*) Stable Seas, 2019.

In recognition of the critical role that the blue economy could play in advancing its Agenda 2063, the African Union prioritized its blue economy in its first aspiration of a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development that states:

¹ "Blue/Ocean Economy" means sustainable economic development of oceans using such technics as regional development to integrate the use of seas and oceans, coasts, lakes, rivers, and underground water for economic purposes, including, but without being limited to fisheries, mining, energy, aquaculture, and maritime transport, while protecting the sea to improve social wellbeing (AU, 2016).

Africa's blue/ocean economy, which is three times the size of its landmass, shall be a major contributor to continental transformation and growth, through knowledge on marine and aquatic biotechnology, the growth of an Africa-wide shipping industry, the development of sea, river and lake transport and fishing; and exploitation and beneficiation of deep-sea mineral and other resources. (AU, 2015, p. 3)

These enormous potentials of the African blue economy do provide not only a “new frontier of the African renaissance” (Hassan, 2021), but also the much-needed resources for Africa to realize the UN Sustainable Development Goals and its aspirations for 2063.

Atlantic Africa: The Status of Maritime Security and Blue Economy

The economic potentials of the African blue economy remain generally untapped. This is largely attributed to the maritime security threats and weak maritime security governance that provides buffers against these threats. The Maritime Security Index scores² for the coastal countries of Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and Atlantic SSA were on average 57, 56, and 56, respectively, out of the aggregate score of 100, with the scores of individual countries ranging from 35 to 73 (see Figure 2). The 2021 average Maritime Security Index score (56) for Sub-Saharan Africa has slightly increased from the average score of 54 in 2018, with the scores of individual countries ranging from 34 to 71 (Glaser, 2018). Despite this slight improvement, these statistics indicate that the governance conditions of maritime security in Africa are weak, particularly in the countries that are fragile, conflict-prone, and poorly governed. These conditions are even worse than the maritime security conditions of other coastal countries in the world.

The feeble conditions of the maritime security in Africa are even more evident in the conditions of its blue economy³, with the coastal countries of Africa, SSA, and Atlantic SSA having an average score of 43, 42, and 43, respectively (see Figures 2 and 3), and with average scores for individual countries ranging from 24 to 60. These scores are very low and far less than half of the aggregate score of 100. The conditions of the blue economy of the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA are slightly better than that of the coastal countries of the SSA. The conditions of the blue economy of the coastal countries of SSA (42) have slightly deteriorated compared to 44 score in 2018 (Glaser, 2018). These conditions are worse in fragile, and conflict-affected countries such as Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, and Somalia.

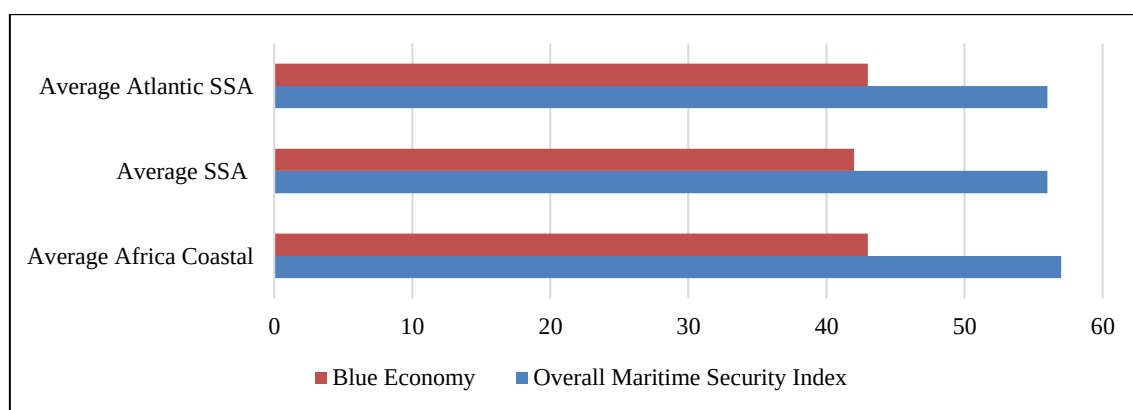


Figure 2. Africa's maritime security and blue economy. Source: Data from Stable Seas, 2021.

² This index is called Stable Seas Maritime Security Index and is being developed by One Earth Future, with 0 index score reflecting worse conditions, while 100 index score shows better conditions (Stable Seas, 2020).

³ The conditions of the African blue economy are assessed on issues related to fisheries, offshore oil and gas, coastal tourism, maritime transportation, adjusted net savings, and climate vulnerability (Stable Seas, 2020).

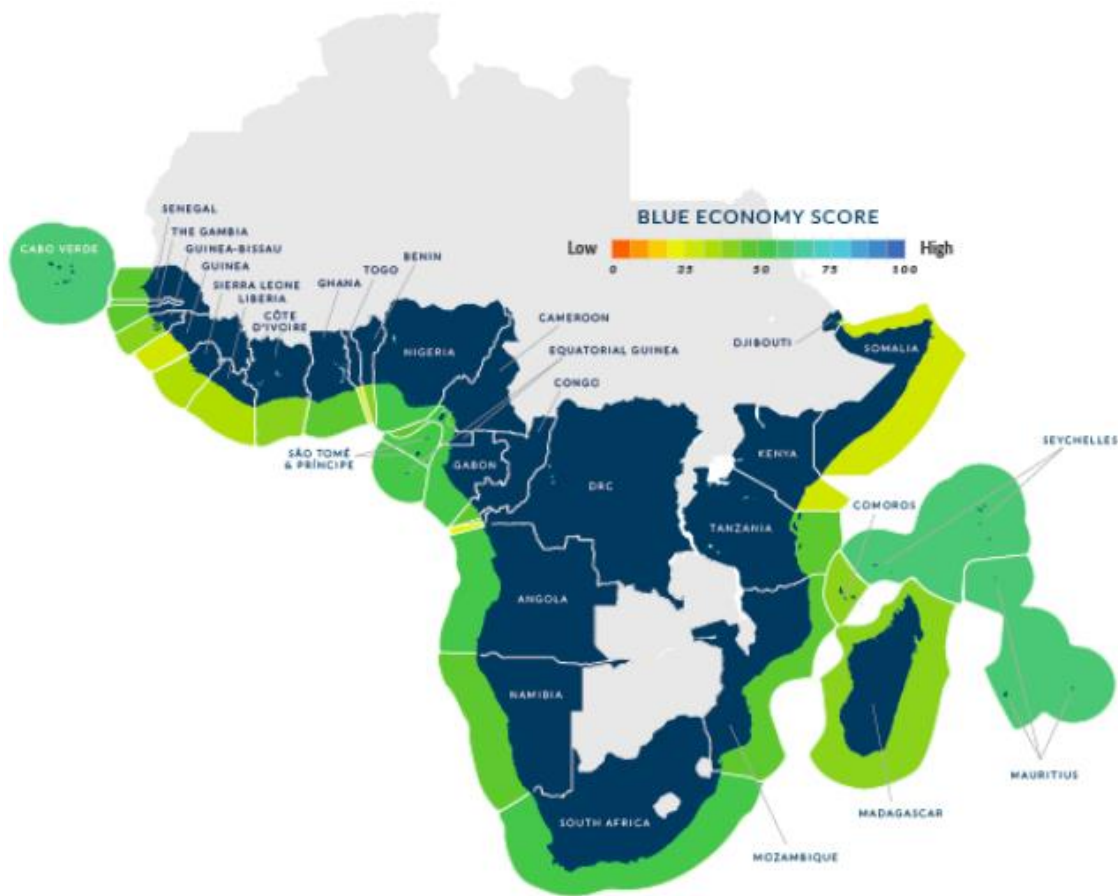


Figure 3. SSA blue economy score. Source: Glaser, 2018.

The Atlantic SSA: The Maritime Security Threats

The enormous economic potentials of the African maritime domain have made it susceptible to web and entwined maritime security threats and challenges and a theatre of criminal activities and great powers competition. These criminal activities include Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) and other natural resource theft, as well as piracy and armed robbery at sea (Okafor-Yarwood, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated the security threats in the maritime domain in Africa, particularly by disrupting supply chains and increasing the risk of ports becoming targets for criminal activities.

Bell and Glaser (2020) group the maritime security threats into: (i) piracy and armed robbery, (ii) illicit trades in arms, cannabis, coca, opiates, synthetic narcotics, and wildlife products, and (iii) maritime mixed migration, which includes migration, trafficking, and human smuggling. The security threats posed by maritime mixed migration are more challenging in Africa than those related to illicit trades and piracy and robbery, as shown by the low average maritime security index score of 54 that is lower than the average overall index (see Figure 4). The conflict-prone and fragile countries such as Somalia and Libya have the lowest score of maritime security index of 27 that is almost half of the average score for the coastal countries of Africa. In terms of piracy and armed robbery, Africa has better score, with the coastal countries of North Africa having the highest score of 100, while some coastal countries of Atlantic SSA have the worst scores such as Nigeria (0), Cameroon (4), Equatoria Guinea (8), and Benin (14).

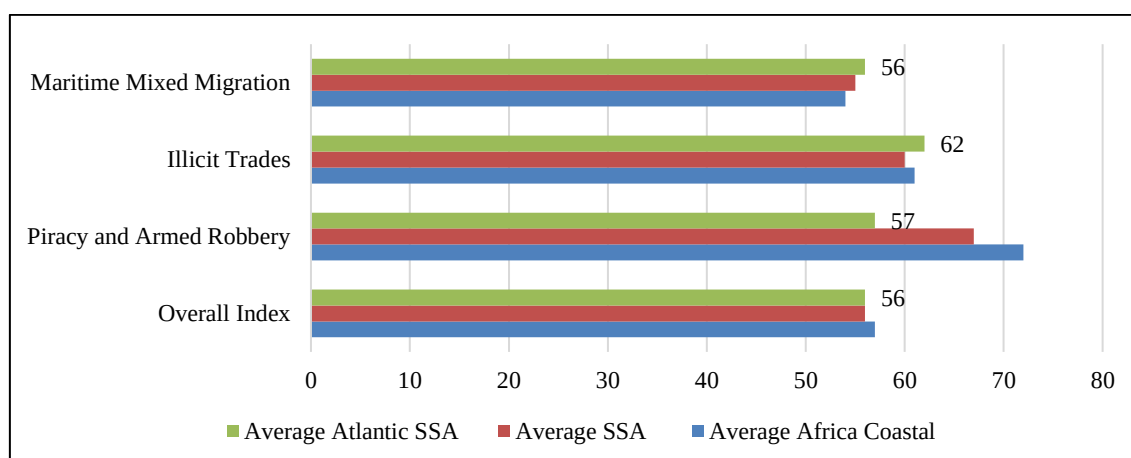


Figure 4. Maritime security threats in Africa. Source: Data from Stable Seas, 2019.

The conditions of maritime security threats in terms of maritime mixed migration and illicit trades in the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA are better than other regions. While the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA have an average score of 56 of maritime mixed migration, North Africa has the lowest score (49), followed by Africa (54), and SSA. Namibia has the best score in terms of mixed migration (75) and the second-best score after Mauritania in terms of illicit trades (80). These improved conditions of maritime security threats in Namibia are a manifestation of the concerted efforts by the government of Namibia in partnership with regional and international actors to collectively contain and mitigate the impacts of these threats. Some coastal countries of Atlantic SSA with appalling socio-political conditions, such as Cameroon (44), DRC (45), and Mauritania (47), as well as some coastal countries of North Africa, such as Libya (27), earned low maritime mixed migration scores. These scores are an indication of the prevailing weak maritime governance conditions that are conducive to illegal migration, smuggling, and human trafficking.

Illicit trade is the most harmful maritime crime in Africa in terms of economic cost, health implications and its negative role in undermining lives and livelihoods, sustainable development, peace, and stability (Stable Seas, 2019). The conditions of illicit trades are relatively better in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA (62) compared to the conditions in SSA (60) and Africa Coastal (61) (see Figure 4). Some coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA such as Sao Tome and Principe (91), Mauritania (84), and Namibia (82) achieved very high scores of better conditions of illicit trades, while other countries like Nigeria (24) attained the lowest score. It was estimated in Nigeria that the economic cost of crude oil theft in both 2016 and 2017 was greater than the resources allocated to both health and education in the 2018 federal budget (Stable Seas, 2019). The trade in illicit drugs and transshipment of cocaine are among the major common maritime crimes confronted by coastal countries of Atlantic SSA and South America (UNODC and EUROPOL, 2021; Stable Seas, 2019, p. 12).

The conditions of piracy and armed robbery in Africa are relatively better than the conditions of other maritime security threats (see Figure 4). However, the Atlantic SSA remains the region with the highest presence of criminal activities of piracy and armed robbery. Some countries with poor quality of governance recorded the lowest piracy and armed robbery scores such as Nigeria (0), Cameroon (4), Equatorial Guinea (8), and Benin (14), while other countries achieved the highest scores such as Namibia (100), South Africa (100), and Cabo Verde (98). Despite this high prevalence of piracy and robbery, the actual and attempted piracy and armed robbery incidents against ships have been declining since 2017 (see Figure 5). These incidents against ships in

the coastal countries of Africa, Atlantic SSA, and Nigeria constituted respectively on average 39 percent, 37 percent, and 18 percent of the aggregate global incidents. The incidents in Atlantic SSA and Nigeria represented respectively on average 95 percent and 46 percent of the aggregate incidents in all the African coastal countries.

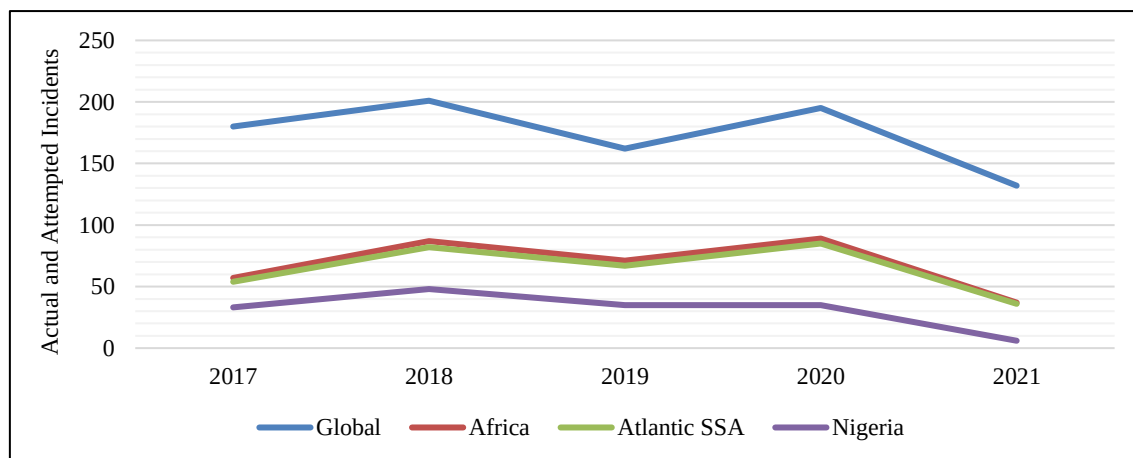


Figure 5. Actual and attempted piracy and armed robbery incidents, Jan.-Dec. 2021. Source: Data from ICC-IMB, 2022.

Despite the general decline in piracy and armed robbery incidents, these incidents declined considerably in Nigeria by almost 82 percent between 2017-2021 with its share of the global aggregate incidents declining from 18 percent in 2017 to less than 5 percent in 2021. This progress could largely be attributed to the passing in 2019 of the Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Bill that gives effect to the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (Stable Seas 2019, p. 20). Despite the criticism of this Bill of its inability to buffer the threats of piracy and armed robbery (Emen, 2021), it seems that the Nigerian government has been successful in implementing this Bill, as reflected in substantial drop of piracy and armed robbery incidents from 35 incidents in 2019 to only six incidents in 2021.

Atlantic SSA: Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

Besides these maritime security threats, the Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing poses extreme strain on fisheries in the coastal countries of SSA and Atlantic SSA in particular. The IUU fishing plays a leading role in overfishing and constitutes 20 percent of the global fish stocks, with coastal regions such as Atlantic SSA that are dependent on artisanal fishing for protein experiencing rapid depletion of their fish stocks (Daniels, Kohonen, Gutman, & Thiam, 2022). This overfishing is exacerbated by climate change that is expected to have profound negative impact on fish stocks in the global south coastal communities such as Atlantic SSA as the rising ocean temperatures will force fish population to migrate away from the tropics (Daniels et al., 2022, p. 5).

The IUU fishing is considered as the third most profitable natural resources global crime after timber and mining (Reid, Dury-Agri, Brush, & Copeland, 2021) with its annual illicit trade estimated to be around USD 10 billion-USD 23.5 billion (Agnew et al., 2009). The prevalence of IUU fishing is very prominent in Africa causing an economic loss of illicit financial flows estimated to be about USD 11.49 billion (Daniels et al., 2022, p. 6).

The scores⁴ related to vulnerability⁵ to the risk of IUU fishing and prevalence⁶ of IUU fishing incidents in Africa show the coastal countries of Africa are more vulnerable to the risk of IUU fishing and experienced more IUU fishing incidents than the rest of the world (see Figure 6). However, the level of vulnerability to the risk of IUU fishing in Africa is almost twice of the level of prevalence of IUU fishing incidents.

In relation to other regions, Africa was ranked 4th in 2021 in terms of vulnerability, with no change in its ranking in 2019, while its ranking in terms of prevalence dropped to 3rd rank in 2021 from the 2nd rank in 2019 (Macfadyen & Hosch, 2021, p. 36). In terms of the best performing countries, Morocco ranked 2nd and Djibouti ranked 7th in terms of vulnerability, while only Morocco was ranked 1st as the best performing country in 2019. No African country managed to be among the 10 best performing countries in 2021 and 2019.

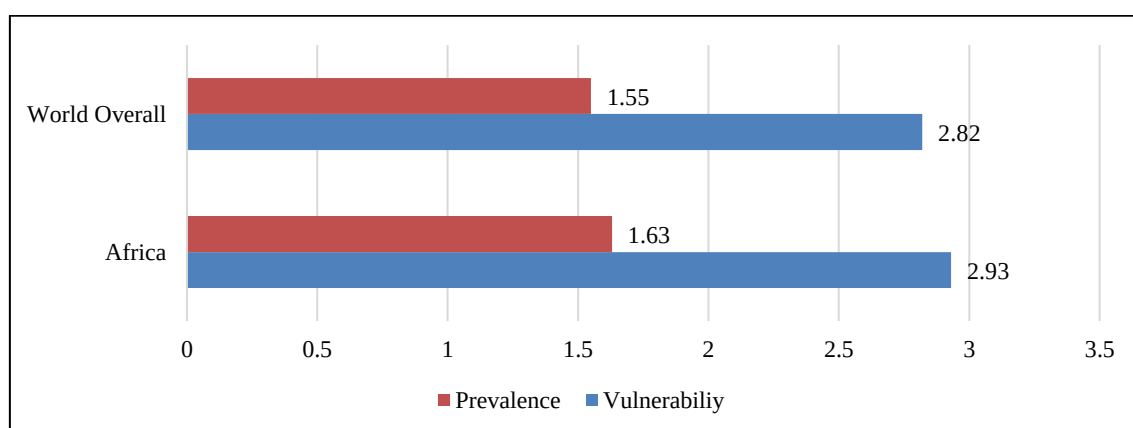


Figure 6. Vulnerability and prevalence of IUU fishing in Africa, 2021. Source: Data from Macfadyen & Hosch, 2021.

The level of susceptibility of the African coastal countries to the risk of IUU fishing improved in 2021 compared with the level in 2019, but it remains more than the world's overall level of vulnerability (see Figure 7). However, the prevalence of IUU fishing incidents increased in 2021 in both the global and African coastal countries compared to the incidents in 2019 (see Figure 7). This increased trend in the incidents of IUU fishing in Africa is alarming, particularly in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA.

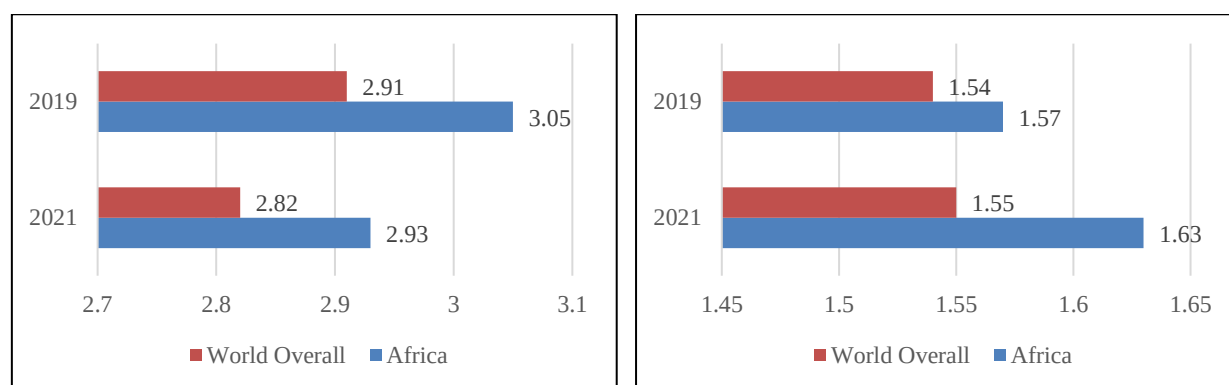


Figure 7. Vulnerability and prevalence of IUU fishing in Africa, 2021 and 2019. Source: Data from Macfadyen & Hosch, 2021.

⁴ Maritime Security Index provides score for each country; a score is provided between 1 and 5 (1 = good/strong; 5 = bad/weak) comprised of weighted indicators belonging to different "indicator groups" (Global Initiative, 2021, p. 11).

⁵ Vulnerability captures indicators that relate to risks that IUU fishing may occur (Global Initiative, 2021, p. 11).

⁶ Prevalence refers to indicators that relate to known/suspected IUU incidents (Global Initiative, 2021, p. 11).

Atlantic SSA: Increasing Illegal Presence of Non-Atlantic Third Parties

The scrambling of the great powers for influence in Africa is not new but has taken new approaches and dynamics, particularly in the post-colonial and Cold War periods. Besides ensuring and sustaining their power influence, access to enormous resources and economic potentials is increasingly shaping the competition of the great powers in Africa. This competition is increasingly shifting from land to the sea, particularly in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA that have enormous resources and incredible economic potentials from the blue economy. Recent studies have shown the increasing influence of China and Russia in the Atlantic SSA by overtaking the dominant influence of France and USA in Western and Central Africa (Gooch, Goethe, Sobrepena, & Eckstrand, 2022, p. 7). The dominant influence of France within the regions of Western and Central Africa since the colonization and even after decolonization has been eroded with the surge of Russian influence, particularly in the security sector. The upsurge of violent extremism and terrorism activities and coup d'états in some coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA has given opportunity for the Russian Wagner Group, the shadowy mercenary company, to deepen its influence and gradually assume the traditional and strategic military and security partnership of France with countries of Western Africa, particularly in Mali and Burkina Faso.

Also, China with its Belt and Road Initiative that focuses on investment in ports, railways, manufacturing, mining, telecommunications, and the agricultural sector (Krukowska, 2018) has replaced the United States as the major African trade partner (Gooch et al., 2022). In West and Central Africa regions, China identifies these regions for its long-term investment and targets Nigeria, the biggest economy in the region, as a strategic country to project its soft power in Africa (Gooch et al., 2022, p. 7). Besides its growing economic investment in West and Central Africa, China is increasingly deploying more military forces in the UN peacekeeping missions in these regions with substantial military aid contribution to the African Union (Albert, 2017). Despite this increasing influence of China and Russia, the United States retains strong economic and military power in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA (Gooch et al., 2022).

The great powers' competition is even more evident and intense on the sea, particularly in the coastal countries of the Atlantic SSA. This competition on the sea is increasingly taking the form of transnational maritime crime, particularly in terms of IUU fishing and illegal presence on the sea and the Atlantic Africa maritime domain. The coastal countries of Africa and particularly the Atlantic SSA have become the epicenter of IUU fishing and increasing illegal presence of non-Atlantic third parties. While almost 50 percent of the global vessels involved in IUU fishing occurred in Africa, West Africa reported about 40.2 percent of all offences which constituted about 82 percent of all offences occurred in Africa. Most of these IUU vessels were detected in the coastal states of Atlantic SSA with five of its states, namely Sierra Leone, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, The Gambia and Senegal among the top 10 locations of detected IUU vessels. This IUU fishing crime is causing about USD 9.4 billion in Illicit Financial Flows that is estimated to be up to 20 percent of the aggregate tax revenues of countries of West Africa (Daniels et al., 2022).

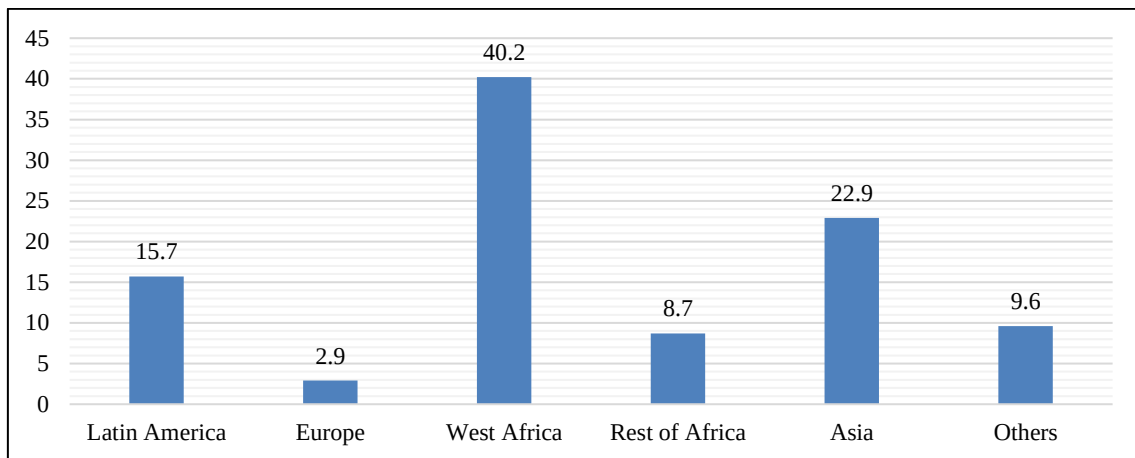


Figure 8. Location offences (%) of vessels involved in IUU, 2010-2022. Source: Data from Daniels et al., 2022.

This increasing illegal presence of third parties on the African seas can be captured by using indicators related to IUU fishing that are specific to vessels that states flag or on their vessel register. Despite the increased occurrence of offences related to vessels involved in IUU, Africa is currently less vulnerable to IUU vessels and less susceptible to the presence of the vessels that states flag in comparison to the trend in the world (see Figure 9). However, the level of vulnerability remains higher than the presence of the IUU vessels that states flag and involved in IUU fishing. The level of vulnerability and presence of states flag vessels involved in IUU fishing in 2021 has remained unchanged and improved respectively in comparison to the situation in 2019 (see Figure 9).

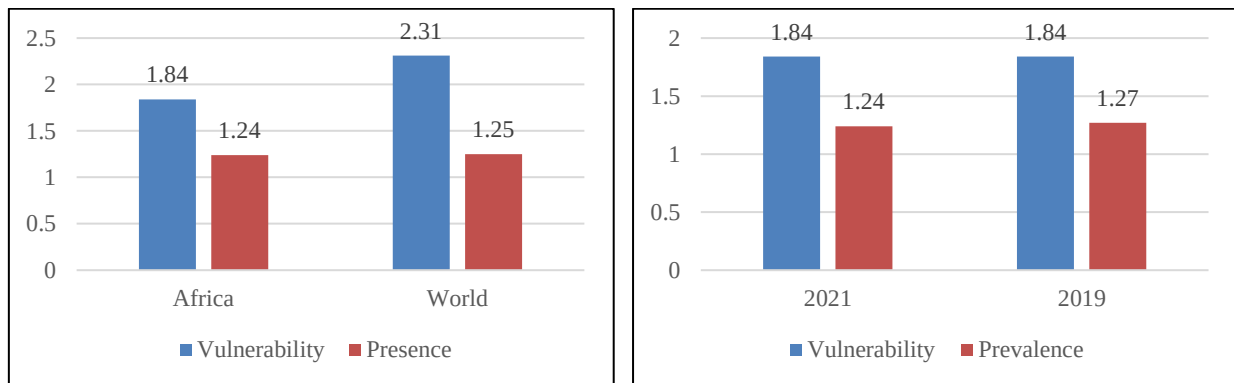


Figure 9. IUU vessels flag state scores in Africa, 2021 and 2019. Source: Data from Daniels et al., 2022.

Angola has been the best performing country in terms of vulnerability to flag state responsibility in IUU fishing, while China has been the worst performing country in terms of vulnerability and presence of its vessels involved in IUU fishing (Macfadyen & Hosch, 2021). In addition, 33 percent of all IUU vessels were flagged to China, followed by Ghana with 5 percent, while China owned 84 percent of the 10 top companies that own 23.7 percent of all the vessels reported to have been involved in IUU fishing (Daniels et al., 2022, pp. 24-25). This increased and active involvement of China as a flag state and its companies in the IUU fishing is attributed to its non-compliance and non-adherence to international conventions, covenants, and regulations related to global maritime security governance (Daniels et al., 2022, p. 22). Even the ranking of Ghana as the second country with the largest flag for vessels engaged in IUU fishing activities is largely related to its vessels being operated by Chinese firms (Daniels et al., 2022, p. 23). These statistics clearly show that China is the most active non-Atlantic

country with its vessels involved increasingly in IUU fishing in the Atlantic African maritime security domain. It is argued that China's Belt and Road Initiative may increase illicit trade and transnational organized crime on land and at sea (Comolli & Rose, 2021).

The Atlantic SSA: A Collective Regional Maritime Security Governance

The region of Atlantic SSA is relative less susceptible to maritime security threats than the other African regions. This may be attributed to the quality of governance of the maritime security sector including adherence to international conventions, obligations, and regulations for maritime security governance and the strategic regional partnership for responding collectively to the shared maritime security threats.

Maritime Security Governance: Responses to Maritime Security Threats

The poorly governed coastlines are likely to provide a conducive and enabling environment for transitional maritime criminal networks as onshore violent criminal non-state actors resort to maritime space to commit illicit trade, IUU fishing, and piracy and armed robbery at sea. The coastal governance or coastal welfare is conceptualized in terms of physical and economic security, with its score calculated with four equally weighted components: coastal physical security, coastal economic security, countrywide physical security, and countrywide economic security (Bell & Glaser, 2020, p. 12). In relation to other subregions, Atlantic SSA performs relatively better (see Figure 10).

While relatively better-governed small island countries such as Cabo Verde (81) and Sao Tome and Principe (80) recorded the highest coastal welfare scores, the weakly governed and conflict-affected countries such as Nigeria (26), Cameroon (40), and DRC (44) recorded the lowest scores in the Atlantic SSA region. This exceptional good coastal governance performance of Cabo Verde is largely attributed to its adoption of the National Integrated Maritime Security Program and its adherence to international maritime agreements, while the poor performance of Nigeria could be attributed to high levels of corruption among port users, operators, and government officials that weaken coastal welfare and enable illicit markets (Stable Seas, 2019, pp. 27, 37).

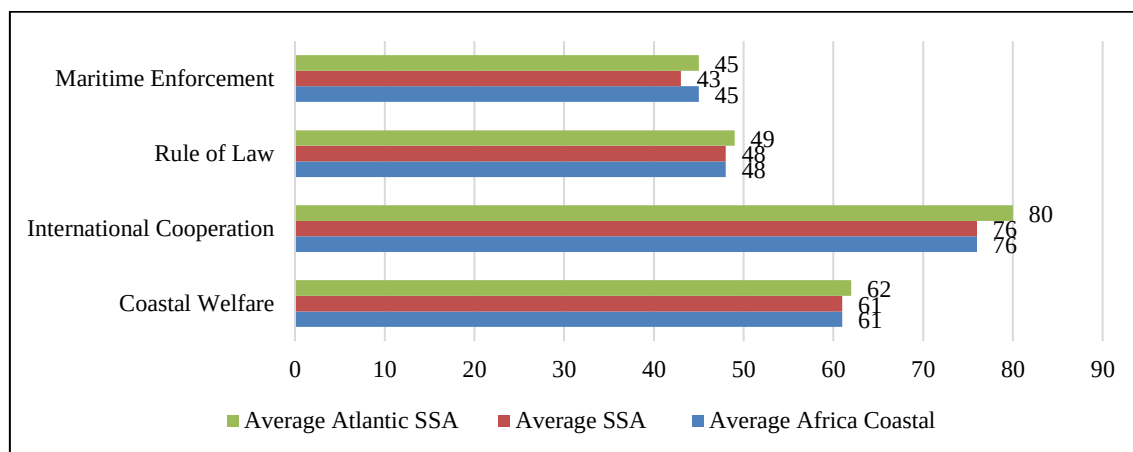


Figure 10. Maritime security governance, 2019. Source: Data from Stable Seas, 2019.

Linked to the coastal welfare and governance is the maritime enforcement that measures the scores related to the capacity of each country to effectively patrol its territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for the purposes of investigating illicit activity and enforcing maritime law (Bell & Glaser, 2020, p. 8). The average score of maritime enforcement is generally low in the African coastal countries (45), particularly in the countries

of the Atlantic Africa region (43). The average score for the region of the Atlantic SSA (45) is the same as the average score for all African coastal countries but better than that of Atlantic Africa. Despite its poor coastal physical and economic security, Nigeria (80) has the highest maritime enforcement score in the Atlantic SSA region because of its effective navy while Liberia has the lowest score (19) in the Atlantic SSA region because of its inadequate coast guard capacity that undermines its maritime security (Stable Seas, 2019, p. 36).

Breaking the cycle of maritime insecurity requires having effective legal structures and instruments that are able to address threats to the rule of law and enhance the capacity of the state to provide good maritime governance. The score for the Rule of Law is measured with five equally weighted components: corruption, government efficacy, government efficiency, judicial integrity, and inclusion (Bell & Glaser, 2020, p. 5). Generally, the average score for the rule of law in Africa is very low and below half of the aggregate score (see Figure 10). This is a manifestation of increasing threats to the rule of law in terms of corruption, bribery, discrimination, and ineffective political institutions.

Despite this weak rule of law in the African maritime domain, the Atlantic SSA region provides a better level of rule of law than other regions (see Figure 10). The small island country of Cabo Verde (79) recorded the highest rule of law score, while the conflict-prone DRC (20) registered the lowest score. This high rule of law score of Cabo Verde is attributed to the good quality of a functioning governance with the existence of legal structures and instruments that are capable of implementing and enforcing maritime security policies, conventions, and agreements. Also, Cabo Verde remains as one of the most democratic states in Africa with a stable democracy, competitive elections, and periodic transfers of power between rival parties (Freedom House, 2022).

Maritime Security Governance: Responses to the IUU Fishing

The IUU fishing is one of the major maritime security threats facing the coastal African countries and its management provides a good measure for the quality of maritime security governance. Global Initiative provides indicators to measure states' responses to IUU fishing that are specific to managing their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and management of their ports (Macfadyen & Hosch, 2021, p. 11). Generally, the level of Africa's responses to IUU fishing is weaker than the level of the world's responses (see Figure 11). However, the level of management of the African countries of their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in relation to IUU fishing is better than other responses such as management of their ports.

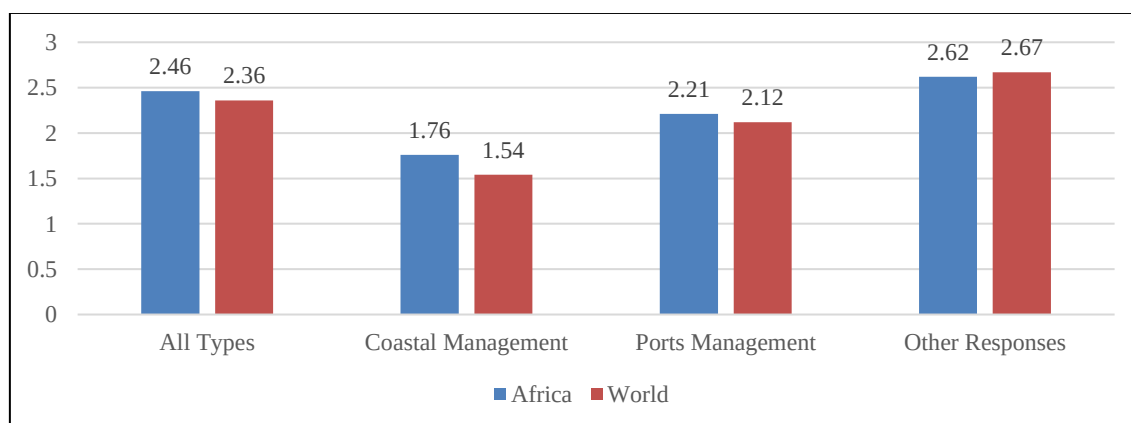


Figure 11. IUU fishing responses⁷. Source: Data from Macfadyen & Hosch, 2021, p. 11.

⁷ These are indicators that relate to actions that set out to reduce IUU fishing (Macfadyen & Hosch, 2021, p. 11).

While a democratically stable Ghana (1.36) has recorded the best response score to IUU fishing, the conflict-prone and fragile DRC (3.48) has the lowest response score. This high IUU fishing response score in Ghana is attributed to its emergence as the epitome of democracy and good governance in Africa as well as its recent investment in vessel availability and naval capacity, construction of a forward operating base, and acquisition of new patrol boats (Stable Seas, 2019, p. 33). Besides these impressive good governance measures, Ghana has developed its national maritime security policy with the vision of ensuring by 2040 a safe and secure Ghana's maritime space with a thriving blue economy that benefits every Ghanaian (Van Dyck & Very, 2022).

Maritime Security Partnership: The African Experience

The nature of maritime security threats necessitates not only collective responses, but it also requires effective collaboration, cooperation, and coordination between and among countries facing common maritime security threats. As security is increasingly recognized as a multi-disciplinary phenomenon, it has been shown that inter-agency and inter-state coordination, cooperation, and collaboration shape not only the performance of security networks but also improve the security sector governance (Whelan, 2017). The way international cooperation facilitates maritime security and governance is measured in terms of the score related to the level of participation in and commitment to multilateral efforts and incidents of violations and disputes (Bell & Glaser, 2020, p. 12).

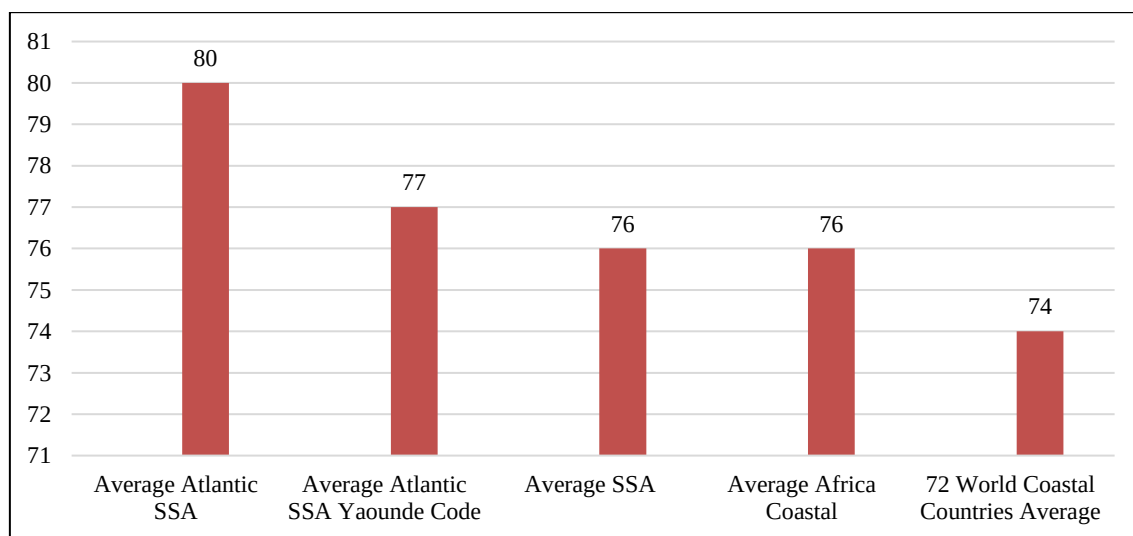


Figure 12. Regional and international maritime security cooperation. Source: Data from Stable Seas, 2019.

Generally, the level of international efforts to address maritime security threats is relatively high (74) but it is even higher in Atlantic SSA (80) and the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA (77) that signed the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCOC). Almost all of the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA and Atlantic SSA that signed the Yaoundé Code have also signed, ratified, or acceded to legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the United Nations Conventions on Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention), the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Vienna Convention), and the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) (Stable Seas, 2019, p. 13). The YCOC that was signed in 2013 by most countries of the Atlantic SSA provides a regional cooperative framework to confront transborder personae of the maritime crimes faced by the region. All the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA that

signed YCOC have more than 50 scores of international cooperation with the exception of the conflict-prone DRC (47). In particular, Ghana (100) and Senegal (100) as signatories of most of the international agreements and the YCOC achieved the highest scores of international cooperation.

The main objective of this Code of Conduct is to enhance cooperation among its signatories in the fight against transnational organized crime in the maritime domain, interdict ships and aircraft involved in illicit activity, investigate and prosecute individuals suspected of carrying out illegal activities at sea, and provide adequate care for seafarers, fishers, and others who are victims of violent maritime crimes (YCOC, 2013, p. 5). The Code provides some guiding principles for its implementation including the commitment of its signatories: (i) carry out measures taken in pursuant to the Code through law enforcement officials or other authorized officials, (ii) liaise, cooperate, and coordinate with the relevant multiple states and other stakeholders to facilitate the rescue, interdiction, investigation, and prosecution, and (iii) conduct and support the conduct of investigations in cases related to transnational organized crime in the maritime domain (YCOC, 2013, p. 6).

Besides these guiding principles, the signatories of the Code commit themselves at the national level to individually develop and implement national maritime policies, necessary national legislations, regulations, and procedures to ensure effective protection of the maritime environment, as well as establishing national inter-agencies maritime security coordination committee and adopting a national maritime security plan for harmonizing and coordinating the implementation of national maritime security measures taken pursuant to this Code (YCOC, 2013, pp. 6-7). Also, the Code provides detailed protection measures to be taken by signatories for ships including measures for repressing piracy, armed robbery against ships, and IUU fishing as well as mechanisms for asset seizure and forfeiture, coordination and information sharing, incident reporting, indictment, prosecution, and dispute settlement (YCOC, 2013, pp. 7-11).

The Code establishes a comprehensive Maritime Security Architecture framework known as Yaoundé Architecture (YA) for its implementation in Western and Central Africa from strategic to tactical level, each with a different role in preventing illegal maritime activity in the region (see Figure 13). At the strategic level, two Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) are identified as key strategic partners in the implementation of the Code, with the African Union (AU) identified as a strategic contributor to the implementation of the Code (YCOC, 2013, p. 1). Also, the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC) is established to coordinate and share information among the Regional Maritime Security Centre for West Africa (CRESMAO) and the Regional Maritime Security Centre for Central Africa (CRESMAC).

The ICC acts as a multifunctional institution to oversee the implementation of the Code by the two RECs and to coordinate interregional efforts against threats and illegal activities in the maritime domain with a focus on activities on cooperation, coordination, pooling of resources, and interoperability by implementing the regional strategy on maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea and Central and Western Africa (Arthur, 2021). At a tactical level, the regional maritime sphere is divided into five operational zones (see Figure 13), each with a separate Maritime Multinational Coordination Center (MMCC) with Maritime Operational Centers (MOC) established at the state level to act as a hub for bringing together the different stakeholders in charge of state maritime activity at sea (Modou Mboob, 2022, p. 3).

Recent evaluations of the progress in the implementation of the YA since its establishment in terms of its fundamental mandates, such as information sharing, effort coordination, and strengthening regulations to

meticulously address the maritime security challenges in the region, show that the YA has made some strides as it has resulted in some successful maritime crime interventions in the region (Modou Mboob, 2022, p. 4). The decline in the level of maritime crimes, particularly maritime pirate incidences and armed robbery, is attributed to the ongoing efforts and cooperation amongst authorities in the region and with its international partners (ICC-IMB, 2022, p. 18). In particular, the Report has shown that the YA as an information-sharing tool has succeeded to connect all layers of the security framework, enabling consistent cooperation, surveillance, expeditious information exchange, and uniformity of operation within the framework.

Using the two cases of the M/T MAXIMUS and the M/T ANUKET AMBER vessels, Rably (2019) shows the success of the cooperative architecture of the YA in terms of improved capacity and capability of navies increased focus on legal understanding that improves resilience of the navies and new laws and improved inter-regional operation. Building on this success of the YA, Rably (2019, p. 5) highlights some areas for improvement such as ensuring smooth command and control, seamless cooperation, and the need for stronger cooperative mechanisms during the legal finish phase of an operation.

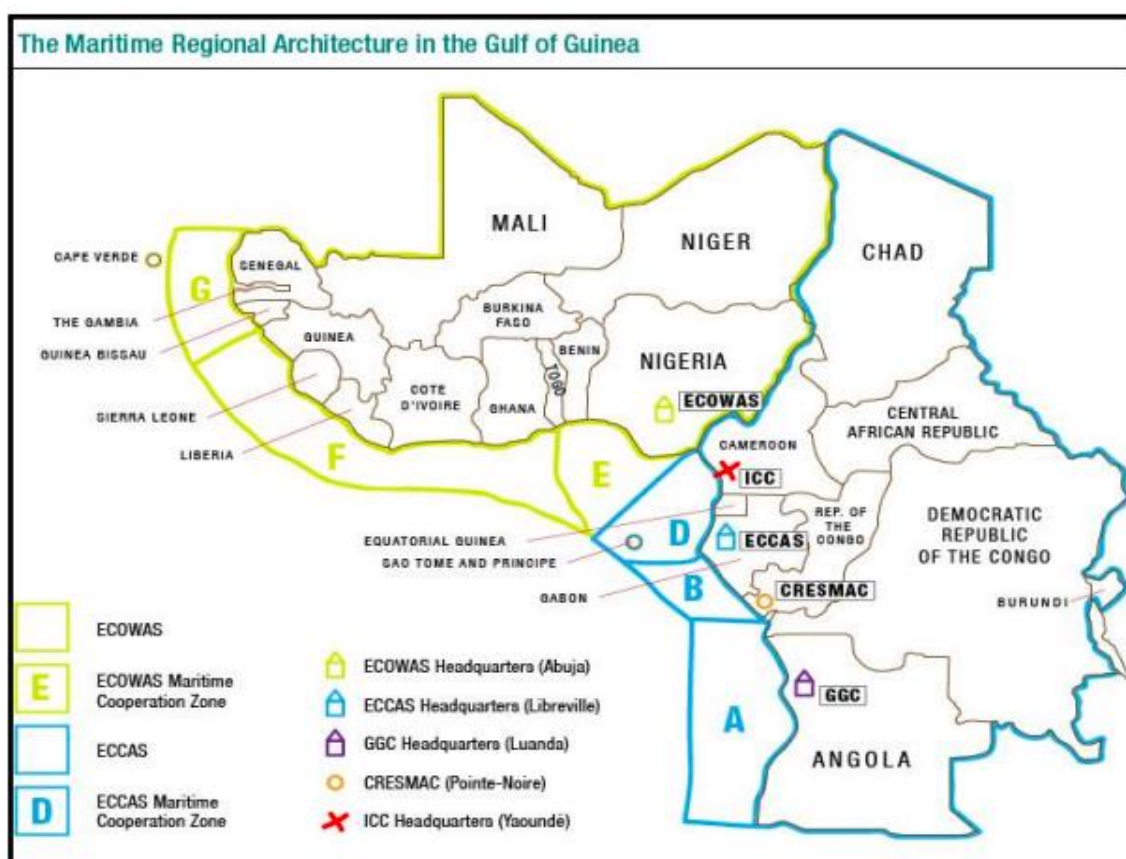


Figure 13. The Maritime Regional Architecture zones in the Gulf of Guinea. Source: Kuppen, 2016.

This success of the YA has underscored not only its critical role play in improving regional maritime security governance and maintaining maritime law and order, but it has also demonstrated its worth as a tool for international collaboration on maritime security (Ifesinachi & Maisie, 2020, p. 78). This success of the YA has been enhanced by the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Collaboration Forum and Shared Awareness and De-confliction (GoG-MCF/SHADE), which fosters communication and information sharing among regional and international

stakeholders (Modou Mboob, 2022, p. 4). Despite its success, some weaknesses of the YA have been highlighted such as overlapping and duplication of roles and lack of “political will” that will necessitate making the YA a legally binding agreement (Modou Mboob, 2022).

This success of the YA is largely informed and guided by the maritime policy direction of the African Union (AU). In recognition of the growing maritime security threats to the African Maritime Domain (AMD), the AU adopted in 2014 its maritime security strategy known as the 2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy). The 2050 AIM Strategy provides a broad framework for wealth creation from the African blue economy by establishing effective maritime security governance for the protection and sustainable exploitation of the AMD. Its overarching vision is “to foster increased wealth creation from Africa’s oceans and seas by developing a sustainable thriving blue economy in a secure and environmentally sustainable manner” (AU, 2012, p. 11).

One of its goals is to provide a common template for the AU, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and member states to guide maritime security governance. Some of its strategic objectives include: (i) establish a Combined Exclusive Maritime Zone of Africa (CEMZA), (ii) improve awareness on maritime issues, (iii) enhance political will at all levels, and (iv) ensure security and safety of the AMD. Although the 2050 AIM Strategy has not been evaluated, Lekunze (2022, p. 2852) attempts to review the AIM Strategy in terms of theory and practice and concludes that the AIM Strategy is a wish list with no realistic or practical steps to its realization. However, the success of the YA in improving maritime security governance in Western and Central Africa shows that the 2050 AIM Strategy has made some strides in achieving some of its strategic objectives.

As the 2050 AIM Strategy and YCOC are not legally binding agreements, the AU adopted in 2016 the Lomé Charter to translate the African maritime security agenda to a legally binding maritime security and safety charter (Brits & Nel, 2018). The Charter advances good governance in the African maritime security domain by promoting security-safety-stability-development nexus within the overarching concept of human security (AU, 2016, p. 13). Besides providing detailed definitions of key terms such as “blue/ocean economy”, the Charter sets some objectives including prevention and suppression of national and transitional crime in the AMD, promotion of inter-agency transnational coordination and cooperation as well establishment of appropriate institutions and effective implementation of relevant policies that promote safety and security at sea. Importantly, the Charter adopts measures to prevent and combat crimes at sea including national coordination structures and harmonization of national legislation as well as mechanisms for effective maritime governance in terms of better information sharing, effective communication, efficient coordination, and development of the blue/ocean economy.

Although the examination of the implementation of the Charter shows that some states have made progress to secure their maritime territories, some challenges have been identified including non-prioritization of maritime security related interests, lack of political will, corruption of government officials, and weak harmonization of regional actions in the AMD (Uppiah, 2021, p. 186). Also, the Charter has been signed by only 35 African states out of 55 states, with only three states ratifying it, while most of the Atlantic SSA coastal countries have signed (17) the Charter with two states, Togo and Benin, having ratified it (AU, 2022). This makes the coastal countries of Atlantic SSA distinctively different from other African regions in adhering to international, continental, and regional maritime security agreements, covenants, and treaties.

Conclusion: Lessons From Africa’s Maritime Security Governance

The recent call by the Atlantic coastal countries to establish a multilateral partnership forum to collectively

address the commonly shared maritime security threats in the Atlantic Maritime Domain will require a thorough and strategic approach to operationalize such a call. Some of the lessons from the YA will be valuable for establishing an effective Atlantic multilateral partnership forum. One of these lessons is the need for forging a *genuine and enduring partnership*. The YA is established on a firm foundation of equality and not patronage. In particular, the YA is informed and guided by the AU's principles of sovereign equality and inter-dependence among its member states, the traditional African value of equal burden-sharing and mutual assistance, and the indivisibility of the security of African States, with the security of one African country being inseparably linked to the security of other African countries, and the African continent as a whole (AU, 2004, pp. 6-7). The member states of the YA consider any maritime security threat on one of its member state is deemed to be a threat on the others, and their two RECs of ECCAS, and ECOWAS. As the envisioned Atlantic Maritime Security Forum will have diverse member states with different national security interests, asymmetric power structure, and colonial legacies, these founding principles of the YA may lay a solid foundation for forging a genuine partnership for the forum.

Besides these principles of a genuine partnership, the YA is governed by the YCOC that is informed and guided by the continental strategy, the 2050 AIM Strategy. Although this Code is not a legally binding agreement, it has provided *the necessary covenant* to nurture and enhance the much-needed political will and guide the behaviors, performance, and conduct of its member states to work collectively to confront the commonly shared maritime security threats. The evaluation of the YA has shown that the YCOC has encouraged many of its signatories to develop and implement their national maritime security policies as well as promulgating the necessary legislations, regulations, and procedures that contribute to improving maritime security governance and to the considerable decline in maritime security threats and crime in Western and Central Africa. Importantly, Lomé Charter has moved the African maritime security agenda from a non-binding to a legally binding agenda. Having a simple code of conduct for the anticipated Atlantic multilateral forum will make the forum effective by making its member states adopt policies, strategies, and legislations that are necessary to advance and sustain maritime security, safety and good governance as well as limiting the undue influence of non-Atlantic actors and their presence in the Atlantic maritime domain.

Other lesson that might be relevant to the Atlantic multilateral forum is the *implementation and coordination framework* adopted in the YA at strategic, tactical, and operational levels. The success of the YA rests by anchoring its implementation to all the Atlantic SSA regional economic communities, with the exception of the Southern Africa Development Communities (SADC). This has contributed to the creation of a model of a community of maritime security coordination practice with national and sub-regional institutions adopting relevant maritime security policies, strategies, and legislations as critical for establishing effective maritime co-operative and coordination system. Also, the South Atlantic arrangements including the Co-ordination for South Atlantic Maritime Area (CAMAS) provides another relevant experience in multilateral and inter-continental maritime security cooperation framework (Medeiros & Moreira, 2017).

The shared values and common understanding of *security* play a critical role in forging effective multilateral maritime security governance. The traditional military and state-centric approach to security has made states in Africa unable to adopt and implement the relevant and people-centered national security policies to deliver security and safety to their citizens. The AU (2004) adopts the concept of human security and the 2016 Lomé Charter accentuates the crucial linkages between maritime security and safety within the overarching concept of human security. This necessitates addressing maritime security and safety through an inclusive, participatory,

and people-centered process that involves all stakeholders including civil society and media. Also, governance plays a critical role in addressing the maritime security and safety as democratic coastal countries of Atlantic SSA tend to outperform the autocratic and fragile coastal countries in delivering maritime security and safety. Cherishing and promoting a commonly shared value system of *democratic governance* in terms of participation, transparency, accountability, and capacity to respond to the needs of citizens are critical for forging and sustaining strategic Atlantic multilateral maritime security partnership.

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