

Rethinking the Agency of Civil Maritime Security Actors in the Exploitation of Kenya's Blue Economy Resources

Faith Mwagandi ¹ and Joseph Mutungi²

Abstract

Policing the world's oceans has increasingly become a shared function between defence and civil security actors due to the ever-emerging challenges. With their finite nature and the increasing appetite for blue economy resources, a new challenge of securing this vast area emerges. The purpose of the study was to determine the contribution of civil maritime security actors in the extraction of blue economy resources in Africa. Specifically, the study sought to analyse the security dynamics that inform the integration of civil maritime security actors into the blue economy space and the nature, forms and responsiveness of security strategies adopted to facilitate sustainable exploitation of blue economy resources in Kenya's territorial waters. Theoretically, the study was anchored on the structural functionalism and securitization theories. The study was anchored on a pragmatic research paradigm, incorporating a descriptive research design. Data was collected from a sample size of 188 respondents using questionnaires and key informant interview guides. The resulting qualitative data was analysed using content analysis while the quantitative data set was analysed using a mix of descriptive and inferential statistics such as the chi-square tests. This study found a Pearson chi-square value of 4.113 at 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.091. This finding depicts that there is a significant relationship between security dynamics and exploitation of blue economy resources at 0.1 level of significance. This study also found a Pearson chi-square value of 4.001 at 3 degrees of freedom which implies presence of a significant relationship between nature, form and responsiveness of security strategies and exploitation of blue economy resources. In addition to these findings, a joint policy framework and the need for collaboration in various matters pertaining to maritime security such as sharing of data and information were found to be critical in successful exploitation of blue economy resources. This study recommends adoption of regional partnerships and joint training among actors in enhancing protection of blue economy resources.

Key words:

Civil Maritime Security Actors, Blue Economy, Sea Blindness, Strategy, Synergy

¹ Kenya Navy, Kenya Defence Forces

Email: faithmwagandi87@gmail.com

² Lecturer, Joint Command & Staff College, National Defence University

Email: fmutunggi@gmail.com

Introduction

The concept of maritime security has been characterized in various ways. Scholars such as Feldt et al (2013) and Very (2010) present it as a multiplicity of preventive, anticipatory and responsive security strategies implemented by various actors to safeguard the maritime domain against different threats and illegal activities. Maritime security is thus concerned with protecting the maritime space from a combination of emergent challenges, such as piracy, inter-border state disputes, terrorism or other forms of transnational crimes, while ensuring good order at the sea. This study uses the concept to denote the presence of enabling conditions that facilitate legal hydro-based commerce as well as the sustainable exploitation of the resources therein, thus contributing to national socio-economic progress and wellbeing. Such conditions are created by defence forces with support from a range of civil maritime security actors such as maritime police, Beach Management Units, Coast Guard Services, port authorities among others.

The Africa Union considers sustainable exploitation of the hydro-based resources coupled with climate resilience as the new front of the African awakening. The regional outfit asserts that this 'blue growth' will only be attained if ideal security and a healthy environment in the oceans are assured. It further roots for interstate cooperation, diplomacy and fidelity to the enforcement of international law in the drive towards ensuring maritime safety and security that yields dividends to the continent. To ensure the sustainability of extracting oceanic resources, maritime safety and the cooperation of all actors must be innovative and leverage emerging technologies to counter the threats. Feldt et al (2013) suggest that since this endeavour entails a combination of preventive, anticipatory and responsive security actions, collaboration of the defence as well as civil maritime security actors is critical.

Kenya is endowed with a wealth of aquatic marine resources that present a great opportunity to boost the growth of her blue economy while also supporting the traditional sectors of the broader economy by improving food security, generating jobs, reducing poverty, and assisting other industries. By diversifying to produce sustainable and equitable economic growth, the nation has embarked on a journey towards deliberate use of the blue economy to steer her growth away from an over-reliance on traditional terrestrial-based economic building blocks (UNDP, 2018). Muigua (2018) observed that the blue economy in Kenya is significantly underdeveloped, primarily due to obstacles, including inadequate infrastructure, the policy framework and maritime insecurity.

Whilst most developed nations across the world have, for a long time, included maritime security in their broad security mandates, the same only began gaining salience in Kenya's national security in the recent past. Efforts in this regard include the institutionalization and launch of Kenya Coast Guard Unit in 2018, which is entrusted with the responsibility of protecting territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) under Kenya's jurisdiction. However, inland aqua ecosystems like Lake Victoria which equally need similar security arrangements have seemingly been ignored

despite the various challenges and insecurities faced in these maritime ecosystems as observed by Smed and Wivel (2017). It is instructive to note that the vast and varied maritime zones of Kenya form a critical gateway to the Eastern Africa hinterland, beyond the specific benefits they accrue to the country. It is in this context, coupled with the geostrategic location of Kenya, that maritime security and safety concerns must be appreciated and attended to. This explains why Kenya has recently implemented a multi-agency approach to security. Civil maritime security actors in collaboration with communities living at the coast have a critical function to play in this drive. This study therefore sought to evaluate the agency of civil maritime security actors in the exploitation of Kenya's blue economy resources.

The Research Question

Despite her rich endowment with resources in the maritime domain, Africa continues to suffer from sea blindness and hasn't developed a sea vision that can enable her to sustainably exploit her hydro-based resources to spur her economic growth and development. The sea blindness may be attributed to a high level of maritime illiteracy and lack of awareness on the opportunities within the blue economy space in Africa's maritime space (Attri, 2016). This is worsened by recurrent security challenges that undermine effective conduct of maritime commerce and other attendant productive activities. Kenya's territorial waters in particular have remained inadequately policed and its blue economy potential has thus largely remained underexploited. Security actions have mainly been centred on military/naval activities, but these have been found to be inadequate (Busiega, 2016).

Recently, the government of Kenya invested in a maritime police department, the Kenya Coast Guard Service, among other civil maritime security actors to shore up security and thus create an enabling environment for the conduct of legal hydro-based commerce and the sustainable exploitation of the resources therein. Nevertheless, despite the increased investment in shoring up maritime security, little is known as to what exactly the civil maritime security actors have done to support the country's quest of sustainably exploiting blue economy resources. This scenario is compounded by the continued insecurity concerns that include; piracy, seaborne terrorism, pollution of the maritime environment, and over exploitation of maritime resources. These concerns formed the crux of this study – an examination of the nature, forms and responsiveness of strategies used by civil maritime security actors in the realization of a safe maritime ecosystem that optimally facilitates commerce and exploitation of the inherent resources.

Debates in the Extant Literature

In many African states, knowledge of the maritime domain is restricted to opportunities pertaining to maritime subsistence. With the exception of port facilities and the extraction of hydrocarbons, which are primarily the domain of foreign entities, the exploitation of the maritime domain is still

primarily the province of coastal communities. Even within coastal African communities, some people perceive the maritime domain as a "demonic world" that should be avoided rather than investigated. The situation is compounded by the fact that very few African countries have established training institutions that focus on maritime geography, history or even the development of technologies that can support sustainable exploitation of the opportunities in the continent's territorial waters (Manu, 2022).

Maritime security policies in the West Pacific are focused on territorial disputes or disagreements at sea, while non-traditional security threats are the main concern along the Indian Ocean Rim. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was established in 1997 with the primary goal of enhancing ocean governance and management. Initially, IORA prioritized enhancing economic cooperation over maritime security. However, in 2011, the forum identified maritime safety and security as a key focus area. This necessitated the development of a multi-agency framework that brings together defence and civil maritime security actors in order to leverage the capabilities of each and shore up security within the rim's jurisdiction.

The multiagency approach to maritime security has prioritized creation of maritime domain awareness as one of the strategies in reversing the sea blindness that has beset the continent for decades (Sergi & Morabito, 2016). Among the opportunities are fishing, hydrocarbons, marine tourism, shipping, to name but a few, while the challenges militating against exploitation of these opportunities range from piracy, terrorism, human trafficking to illegal fishing. Giacomo (2016) and Bueger (2015) assert that while countries have always gathered information about the maritime environment, in order to detect potential threats from different sources such as aircraft, drones, coastal radars, ships, and satellites, such information is hardly shared with partners. Thus, creation of awareness on both the opportunities and challenges is crucial to the sustainable use of the resources and growth of the blue economy. This reality underscores the centrality of multiagency cooperation to leverage the opportunities while acting in concert to contain the challenges that transcend the territorial waters of any one state. An appreciation of the essence of multiagency cooperation notwithstanding, socio-political challenges such as willingness to share data, engage in collaborative interpretation, and act on the interpretation have hindered efficacy of this novel approach.

Another important security strategy employed at sea is security simulation exercises and drills. Drills are a series of managed events that involve simulating procedures and personnel in the performance of specific activities with the goal of meeting a specific operating requirement. They must be performed on a regular basis, in the same environment as the actual object, in order to maintain or improve proficiency. Joint exercises and drills are significant because partners gain more awareness of safety and security measures and a deeper comprehension of various international techniques and procedures pertaining to maritime space (Johnson, 2014). The exercises and drills further increase complementarities between actors, by ensuring each actor

implements their mandate and focuses on their comparative advantages to collectively deliver a secure maritime environment supportive of commerce and sustainable resource exploitation. However, this strategy has largely focused on the naval forces of cooperating states, leaving out civil maritime security actors, who are essentially supposed to complement the Navy. This study concurs with Coelho (2013) that lack of coordination amongst stakeholders leads to operational deficiencies. This poses a knowledge gap as to exactly how the civil maritime security actors are supposed to deliver on their mandate when they are not operationally at par with the Navy, whose efforts they seek to augment.

Owing to the rise in marine crime in the oceans, states have enacted maritime laws and regulations to address the vice. Because these threats are transnational, actors must work together across borders in order to succeed. To guarantee this, a number of regional organisations have created agreements and protocols that regulate maritime cooperation. For instance, in order to better coordinate, cooperate, and interoperate community resources in the fight against piracy and other maritime criminal activity, African states in the Gulf of Guinea signed the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in 2017. For states interested in the security of the Gulf of Aden, a comparable framework is established in Africa through the Djibouti Code of Conduct, which was created in 2009 and updated in 2017. The two frameworks promote intelligence sharing, the definition of maritime offenses, and the coordination of regional operations.

However, the aforementioned positive efforts have been hampered by a lack of national political will, disagreement over issue prioritization, and under-resourcing, all of which have slowed the implementation of some aspects of these accords. Furthermore, competing interests from international actors who are constantly present in the region have occasionally complicated this space. Djibouti, for example, has eight foreign bases, and other countries are reportedly interested in establishing military presence there as well. Mozambique also has at least four foreign actors actively involved in the maritime space, including the United States and the European Union, which train the country's maritime forces. The presence of conflicting interests of foreign players in the African waters frustrates the smooth operationalization of the joint maritime security cooperation frameworks.

Kenya faces major challenges in maritime security due to its large stake in the Indian Ocean. It is imperative that she enhances her maritime security and engages in the Indian Ocean security discourse as an equal partner. While this may seem apparent, in reality it might not be so simple to accomplish because many African nations lack maritime capacity and landward security concerns are typically more pressing in African IOR states. Moreover, the focus on the defence forces, while justified given their capabilities, must not ignore the place and potential contribution of well-coordinated civil maritime security actors. Their understanding of and capacity to secure the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has the potential to ground sustainable exploitation of the country's blue economy resources.

Theoretical Basis

This study is anchored on the Structural Functionalism theory attributed to the English philosopher and biologist Hebert Spencer (1820–1903), who saw similarities between society and the human body. He argued that the different components of society or an organisation work together to keep the society functioning, just as the various organs of the body cooperate to keep the body functioning (Spencer, 1898). The functionality of the whole as seen in its parts was further given impetus by Émile Durkheim, a sociologist, who argued that society is a complex system of interdependent and interconnected parts that work together to maintain stability. The theory was further developed by Merton who argued that functions were either manifest or latent, with the former being the desired or expected results of a social process and the latter being the unintended effects of a social process.

In the context of this study, the security space is occupied by different players, each with a role to play therein. Training individuals for security risk, protecting life and property, and maintaining a conducive environment for business are all manifest functions of security services. Latent functions for security actors on the other hand may include earning money, travelling to different regions, and other activities. These underlying roles could be advantageous, indifferent, or detrimental. Merton also introduced the concept of dysfunction which he characterized as social processes that have detrimental effects on a society's ability to function. Looking beyond the defence forces will thus enable us appreciate the place of civil maritime security actors and accord each one of them the facilitation required so that they can collectively deliver a safe and secure operating environment for players in the blue economy sector.

Methodology

The study was anchored on a pragmatic research paradigm, executed using a descriptive research design. The target population comprised of the five main civil maritime security actors in Kenya namely: The Fisheries department, Kenya Maritime Authority (KMA), Border Patrol Police, Kenya Coast Guard and Kenya Ports Authority. A sample of 188 respondents was obtained from the target population using two sampling procedures: Firstly, purposive sampling was used to select the senior most leaders in each institution or their representatives for key informant interviews. This was intended to ensure that the study benefitted optimally from the insights of respondents who were well versed with the issues under examination. Secondly, a mix of stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to obtain a representative sample from which data was collected using a questionnaire comprising both closed and open-ended questions. These sampling techniques ensured each stratum of the target population was proportionately represented and that each member of the stratum had an equal chance of selection into the study. The resulting quantitative data was analysed using a mix of descriptive and inferential statistics while the qualitative data was analysed using content analysis.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The study sought to determine whether technical support had been offered in the implementation of security strategies, particularly those related to maritime domain awareness and drills/exercises. The findings were as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Implementation of Security Strategies

	YES	NO
Technical support received in implementation security strategies	78%	22%
There is a culture of continuous improvement in the implementation of security strategies	64%	36%
There is a department charged with monitoring and evaluation of the security strategies employed	76%	24%

Source: Field data (2024)

A cross tabulation of the various security strategies and a chi-square test for the same were as presented in Tables 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 2

Cross-Tabulation of Security Strategies

		Drills and exercises			
		Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
					Total
Maritime Domain Awareness	No	4	7	18	4
	Yes	12	22	49	34
Total		16	29	67	38
		Total			
		150			

Source: Field data (2024)

Table 3

Chi-Square Test of Security Strategies

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.001 ^a	3	.261
Likelihood Ratio	4.472	3	.215
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.602	1	.206
N of Valid Cases	150		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.52.
Source: Field data (2024)

In terms of the research question relating to the nature and forms of civil maritime security strategies aimed at facilitating exploitation of blue economy resources in Kenya, the study established that maritime domain awareness coupled with drills and exercises were the major strategies. In implementing these strategies, technical support and monitoring and evaluation were found to be supportive of positive results. These findings are consistent with those of Brück, Schneider, and Karaisl (2007) who proposed that measures to improve security should include investments in cutting-edge security technologies and training for security personnel, among others. The findings are also corroborated by Johnson (2014) who suggested that drills are generally limited to specific procedures and that they must be performed on a regular basis in order to maintain or improve proficiency, provided they are conducted within the same environment as the actual object. In determining the effectiveness of the security strategies, the variable was indicated by collaboration and joint policy in matters maritime security. The findings in this regard were as presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Cross-Tabulation on Effectiveness of Strategies

		Collaboration and data sharing				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Joint Policy	No	8	19	19	5	4
	Yes	1	7	15	43	29
Total		9	26	34	48	33

Source: Field data (2024)

Table 5*Chi-Square Tests on Effectiveness of strategies*

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	53.623 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	57.463	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	46.428	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	150		

a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.30.

Source: Field data (2024)

From the foregoing findings, it is evident that joint policy framework and collaboration in various matters pertaining to maritime security, including free sharing of data and information, is a significant predictor of sustainable exploitation of blue economy resources.

The same was corroborated during the key informant interviews where it emerged that a significant number of East African countries rely on Kenya for their import and export business. A key informant noted thus:

About 30 percent of the port's throughput is transit cargo to and from a vast hinterland of nearly 120 million people in Uganda, Burundi, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Northern Tanzania. Kenya's maritime comprises mainly of seaports, commercial shipping services among others. Kenyan waters are a vital transit route for oil tanker route connecting the oil producing countries of the Middle East with and Europe via the Cape.

(KII1, 2024)

A different interviewee further lends credence to this finding, noting as follows:

Different maritime security actors responsible for either external or internal security regularly talk to each other in combined meetings and security briefs. Dynamic security concerns, for example drug trafficking, piracy, terrorism and other crimes, are more and more taken on board when launching and conducting operations.

(KII2, 2024)

Based on these findings, it can be argued that team work and collaborations through pooling of efforts is key to ensuring the success of the maritime security strategies. They further resonate with the work of Abe (2012) who argued that a joint strategy improves a country's potential and the aspirations of regional partners who depend on each other, further adding that the collaboration and coordination among the various actors can be done at different levels. The essence of collaboration among the various actors is in sync with Bruno & Giacomo's (2016) assertion that

limited or incomplete information impedes the making of real-time, meaningful decisions which is manifested in duplication of effort and wastage of scarce resources.

While underscoring the essence of collaboration among actors in addressing security challenges to create a safe environment supportive of sustainable exploitation of blue economy resources, a key informant noted thus:

The current fragmented decision making on maritime affairs needs a more collaborative and integrated approach for the effective management of the maritime transport and trade. The focus should therefore be on providing information to assist in formulating a national maritime strategy, and possibly more importantly, to provide a discussion forum that would include collective consideration of maritime security on a national level. Since maritime security capabilities are slow to build and develop, the time is ripe to start developing partnerships in order to share the responsibility to increase capability, capacity, and infrastructure. Establishing national partnerships with the goal of enhancing national and ultimately regional collective security will address all of our concerns.

(KII3, 2024)

This study is persuaded by the interviewee's insights and therefore roots for sharing of data and information to enhance awareness of threats and the various actionable steps that can be adopted to effectively address the bottlenecks. It further reiterates the need for deliberate efforts to increase complementarities between actors, by ensuring each actor implements their mandate and focuses on their comparative advantages, without prohibiting others from doing so.

Rethinking and Aligning Exploitation of Blue Economy Resources in Kenya

An open-ended question posed in the interview sought to know, from the respondents, the future prospects of exploitation of blue economy resources in Kenya. The results were varied and they all pointed towards a promising future in the blue economy sector of the country. Among the key insights from the respondents were:

The need to optimize conservation and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture resources use while at the same time reducing instances of conflicts with other blue economy sub-sets. Efforts, roadmaps and resources must continuously be aligned so as to achieve a full wealth-generating potential for fisheries and aquaculture sectors.

(KIIs, 2024)

From the discussions, it was proposed that small-scale and inclusive blue value chains that include fisheries, sustainable aquaculture, ornamental fisheries, and the tourism sector can be better invested in. Among the actors in that space should be civil maritime security players, given their critical role in creating man enabling environment for commerce.

Secondly, it also emerged that while the Mombasa Information Sharing Centre (ICS) received and responded to piracy alerts and requests for information or assistance at all times, there was a need

to ensure that ships comply with laws regarding, among other things, load line, marine environment protection, life safety, and safe manning. This calls for better and deliberate investment in the centre as well as its modernization for it to effectively serve all maritime players. This may include innovation in blue technology and use of modern surveillance equipment to drive security and consequently a stable environment for sustainable resource exploitation. A closer working framework with the core security agencies was further suggested to ensure synergy and leveraging of existing capabilities.

Furthermore, it emerged that piracy was adversely impacting maritime security, endangering seafarers, disrupting trade routes, and increasing insurance costs for shipping companies, a view that was found to be consistent with that of Smith (2020). A key informant argued in favour of increasing naval patrols and embedding civil maritime actors such as the police on board vessels, as well as renewed and committed international cooperation to combat the threats. The effect of this suggestion is enhanced government, business partners, and civil society organisations collaboration to address maritime security issues and advance sustainable blue economy projects, as argued by Clark and White (2019). In essence, public-private partnerships in the blue economy sector would provide some relief, even if short-to-medium term in nature. Among the critical areas of cooperation could be development of maritime infrastructure and blue technology innovation, both of which are critical linchpins for the nascent blue economy sector.

A key informant interviewee also argued about the effect of geopolitical tensions in the Indian Ocean, relating to territorial disputes such as the one between Kenya and Somalia. The study argues in favour of promoting diplomatic communication and conflict resolution mechanisms that can help lower tensions which undermine optimal development of the blue economy.

Conclusion

Kenya's strategic location in the Horn of Africa, as well as its large stake in the Indian Ocean are a major blessing for her, despite the numerous significant maritime security issues. The operationalization of the Kenya Coast Guard Service, among other civil maritime security actors, is a positive step in enhancing the nation's maritime security. Kenya has an advantage in the discussion of Indian Ocean security because of its strategic location, which makes the Port of Mombasa a major and essential link in the transportation network connecting the country to, not only six other countries, but also to the larger East and Central Africa region. According to the study's findings, Kenya's maritime area is vital to the country's economy and must be secured in order to successfully exploit its resources. The current civil security players have been tasked to deal with emerging security challenges, and, so far, they are complementing the Kenya Navy in limiting the cases of piracy, illegal fishing and pollution.

In a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous maritime security environment, maritime operations should be interspersed with maritime domain awareness creation in a world underpinned by information technology that is being taken advantage of by criminal elements as well as official security actors. The study argues for relevant authorities and stakeholders to raise public awareness of the strategic significance of Kenya's maritime resources, as this will increase awareness of maritime security and improve resource protection. The country should also take a more deliberate interest in advocating for a regional forum with the goal of fostering economic cooperation amongst representatives of business, government, and academia in order to increase awareness of the marine environment. Through a consensus based on an evolutionary and non-intrusive approach, this should aim to develop and expand mutual understanding and beneficial cooperation in the spirit of open regionalism. In a nutshell, the study roots for rethinking among interested parties in improving maritime capability through purposeful and specialized training, as well as stepping up capacity building for maritime diplomacy among the naval powers by encouraging cooperative exercises or maritime security operations that fortify ties between allies, harmonize strategies, and foster confidence in maritime security among nations-states. Programs for economic cooperation such as trade, tourism, direct investment, scientific and technological exchanges, and human resource development in maritime diplomacy, should also be developed and implemented by the involved parties.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the study recommends:

1. Creation of regional partnerships - the cooperating nations should work to defend their maritime domains from threats related to the ocean, including pollution, terrorism, criminal activity, and piracy, as a single regional bloc. The most effective way to accomplish these goals is to combine public and private maritime security initiatives and address maritime threats by coordinating regional efforts, ideally inside a defined legal framework.
2. Conduct of joint drills and training - with civil maritime security actors to enhance complementarity of effort and usher in synergy within the sector. The lessons learnt from the exercises should be integrated into the standard operating procedures and policy frameworks for these organisations.
3. Deliberate protection of Blue Economy resources by increasing security agencies' patrols that monitor and assess activities within the maritime space.

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Lieutenant Colonel Faith Mwagandi is a dedicated officer in the Kenya Defence Forces with over ten years of service. Currently, at the Kenya Navy Headquarters, she oversees Personnel Administration. She holds a Master's Degree in Project Planning and Management, a Post Graduate Diploma in Defence and Strategic Studies, and a degree in Military Science. Notably, she was the first woman in East Africa to command a warship and is passionate about empowering girls and women.

Joseph M. Mutungi, PhD is a Lecturer at the National Defence University – Kenya, domiciled at the Joint Command and Staff College. He holds a Master of Arts and a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies. He has taught and mentored graduate students, trained and consulted for various organisations locally and in the East Africa region. His research interests are in conflict management, security studies and identity politics.