



EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MATRIX OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

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ABSTRACT

The maritime economy has been and still is the trigger and main catalyst for the realistic development of powerful economies of the world. However, this natural endowment has not been effectively and efficiently managed; and converted into the magic wand for the realistic and people-oriented development of the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea region; that have been in self-rule for the past sixty years. The lackluster performance of the Gulf of Guinea maritime economy; has been blamed on activities of criminal gangs on the high seas of the region. The truth however is that, the GoG region is very unfortunate not have selfless and visionary leaders at the helms of affairs of the individual countries, that should direct all instruments of coercion in stamping out crimes and criminality in the maritime domain. The study focuses on how to make the best out of all the matrix of international collaborations and actions towards ensuring a safe, secure and prosperous GoG maritime domain. The study adopted qualitative method in generating data through secondary sources such as academic journals, books, policy reports, magazines and internet materials. The data was analyzed through descriptive and discourse methods.

KEYWORDS: *Maritime, Matrix, Safety, Security, Empirical, Piracy*

INTRODUCTION

Maritime safety and security is a global concern not just, because the oceans connect many nation states and continents; but because the oceans are very crucial for transportation, trade, commerce, communication and general exchanges. Specifically the increasing tempo of international trade with its concomitant challenges in a globalised world, put maritime safety and security on the front burner of security studies, domestic policies and foreign policy of state actors. This study examines the matrix of international actions towards maintaining sustainable maritime safety and security in the GoG. All these immediate and trans-regional international actions revolve around safety of ocean going vessels and maritime environmental safety. State actors, building on their strong national securities, deploy their foreign policy in collaborations with other countries to ensure the protection of their sea-ports and ocean going vessels, by checkmating terrorism, piracy, criminal gang activities, drug and child trafficking, and other related crimes at sea. All these form the general focus of maritime safety and security management. The empirical analysis is focused more on incidences of attacks, hijack, kidnap, arrest and fatality caused by pirates in the GoG and how the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC); and all EU funded organizations are managing the safety and security of the Gulf region. (Kamal-Deen, 2015; Onuoha, 2013; Denton & Haris, 2022).

MARITIME SAFETY

Maritime space worldwide gives special attention to safety and security. State actors of coastal regions attach so much importance to their maritime space, primarily ensuring that there should be no trespass by other nations, then putting in place adequate legislations needed for administering the maritime space as part of the sovereign territory. Appropriate governmental actions are wont to ensure safe and secure maritime space; minimizing international boundary disputes, promoting trade / commerce and reducing conflicts. This in turn reduces the involvement of international organizations in mediating and resolving disputes and conflicts. However, there is the need for regular communication and collaboration with international organizations and foreign governments in resolving maritime space disputes, as well as ensuring the standardization of safety and security of the international maritime environment (Sartire, 2014; Broohm, et-al, 2020).

Environmental safety also embraces the safety of the Maritime environment. The issue of safety of the Maritime environment covers pollution of the port, the ship and the water. The goal of environmental safety is to ensure safety of navigation, passengers, cargo and



personnel working in the maritime space. Pollution emanating from damages to ships and cargo also call for effective environmental safety. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) are actively involved in ensuring global standard of Maritime Safety (both safety of vessel and that of the environment). The role of IMO and ILO in ensuring standard and effective Maritime Safety and Security are within the guides and scope given by the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Seas (UNCLOS). The environmental safety averts hazardous and noxious cargo, and bunkered oil from damaged ships, that are dangerous to the environment (Akweiteh, 2015; Abubakar, 2016).

MARITIME SECURITY

No matter how safe the maritime space is, it requires a standard security mechanism that will sustain it. Without adequate and sustainable maritime security, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of coastal countries will be undermined. In addition, trade and commercial activities; which are the pillars of the maritime economy, will be slowed down. This has negative ripple effects on general socio-economic lives of their citizens. Hence, maritime security attracts appreciable attention in all academic discourse and public policy prosecutions. This remains the major pre-occupation of countries of the Gulf of Guinea. The International Ship and Port facility Security code (ISPS Code) and Regulation (EC) Number 725/2004; made it mandatory for all shipping companies, operators of port facilities and shipmasters to embark on adequate, result-oriented security assessment. They are also to provide workable and efficient security architecture on the ships and port facilities (Abubakar, 2016; Mansaray, 2017; Denton & Haris, 2022).

Maritime security is also concerned with harmonizing various security organizations at the port and on the sea, as well as the need for them to work in synergy, understand the problem and tackle the problem jointly. This in all cases goes beyond a nation-state; it involves other countries especially the neighbouring states and those where the ships are coming from (Kamal-Deen, 2015).

THE GULF OF GUINEA

The duo of Ukeje & Mvomo (2013), have made several attempts to arrive at an acceptable definition of what constitute the Gulf of Guinea. They describe the Gulf of Guinea as an area located within the coastlines of Central and West Africa states and the Atlantic Ocean waters. The definition given by them captures the area of interest of other scholars. However, even when most of the definitions put forward by scholars are not adequate, they none-the-less made bold attempts to describe what constitute the Gulf of Guinea. Geographically, the Gulf of Guinea according to International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), is multi-nation region with a line running south east ward from 'Cape of Three Points' in western region of Ghana (4.744°N2.0890) to Cape Lopez in Gabon (0°38'58°42E)". Abubakar, while alluding with the position of the IHO, opines that political definition of the Gulf of Guinea is more realistic, workable and acceptable than the geographical expression of what constitutes the Gulf of Guinea. Therefore, he defines the Gulf of Guinea politically as extending from Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa to the coast of Angola in Central Africa. This definition covers islands such as Pagalu, Bobowasi, Bioko Corisco, Elobays, Elobey Grabde, and Elobey Chico and Sao Tome and Principe; including other islands within the area mentioned (Abubakar, 2016; Broohm, et-al, 2020).

In their own definition of what constitutes the Gulf of Guinea, Ukeje & Mvomo (2013) said it is a vast, diverse and highly important region, which is made-up of sixteen nation states strung along 6,000km of unbroken coastline. The duo stated that the countries are Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo and Angola.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF GULF OF GUINEA MARITIME

The strategic position of the Gulf of Guinea as the leading economic hub of the world predates the era of colonialism. Hence, during the colonial era, the colonial masters in their bid to increase western prosperity, maximally exploited maritime activities of the region. This legacy was sustained by the comprador bourgeois neo-colonialists. The Gulf of Guinea is an international trade route and major gateway between Western Europe and Asia. The emergence of oil and other vital mineral resources in the region made all eyes to be on the Gulf of Guinea (Akweiteh, 2015; Denton & Haris, 2022).

Apart from the coastal countries of the region, the Gulf of Guinea is also very important to the economy of some land-locked nations like Burkina Faso, Central Africa Republic, and Mali. These countries depend on the maritime services of Gulf of Guinea through their contagious coastal neighbours. The increasing insecurity in the Middle East and North Africa made Gulf of Guinea a better alternative to the Arab Gulf. Not less than 90% of global freight is by sea, and the Gulf of Guinea provides a better alternative route for ocean-going vessels. The presence of aquatic resources such as fish and rich bio-diversity resources such as timber added to the positive economic feathers of the region (Abubakar, 2016; Ofosu-Baoteng, 2018; Kamal-Deen, 2015)



As a potential source of economic empowerment and employment generation for citizens of countries of the region, the Gulf of Guinea is endowed with resources that can transform the region to a major economic hub of the world. With visionary and selfless political leadership, envisioned with proper management of these resources, it will turn the poverty-ridden region to an economic haven where full and gainful employment would flourish. Under this positive direction, it will turn the Gulf of Guinea into a hub of commerce and a favourable global destination for raw materials and foreign direct investment (Morse & Stenvoll, 2007; Samuelson, 2008; Jacobsen, 2017; Broohm, et-al, 2020).

The underutilization and misapplication of these natural endowments has turned the region into a theater of conflicts, vices, insecurity, economic retrogression and general underdevelopment. The upsurge of more criminal activities such as; ransom abduction, hijack of foreign nationals, sea piracy and armed robbery have combined to constitute unsecure and turbulent political and socio-economic conditions in the region. These negative activities of the lawless have turned these rich and abundant resources into curse rather than blessings to citizens of the region. As the result, the indigenous population who were engaged in maritime business; were pushed to the periphery by advanced technology brought about by globalization. As they could not meet the new standard of operation, they were compelled to resort to what became illegal operations. Those involved in robbery in the hinterland, discovered that robbery on the sea is more lucrative, hence the shift in their illegal operations to the maritime clime (Mansaray, 2017; Akweiteh, 2015; Hassan & Hassan, 2016; Ofose-Baoteng, 2018).

Lack of stronger security collaboration and synergy among member countries of the Gulf of Guinea region and with international maritime partners became a source of major concerns to the maritime world. As one of the largest ocean-going vessels route in the world, stakeholders are more concerned; where they embarked on series of strategies to curb crimes and criminality in the Gulf of Guinea. Therefore, the United Nations, the European Union and the International Maritime Organization (IMO); have expended serious efforts to curb these challenges and ensure peaceful and gainful socio-economic maritime activities in the region (Onuoha, 2013; Jacobsen, 2017).

Apart from the communication obstacles, each of the member states still pays allegiance to their former colonial masters. Most of their policies are to satisfy the interests of their masters in Europe. This accounted for inter-governmental disagreements and challenges to regional collective goal of tackling the loss of economic value in the gulf. Lack of stable political system and continuity in governance made it difficult for the stakeholders to speak with one voice on many issues of common concerns (Kamal-Deen, 2015; Denton & Haris, 2022).

SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH THE MARITIME CLIME OF THE GULF OF GUINEA

Many domestic and international organizations have varied interests in the Gulf of Guinea. The focus of this study is the empirical analysis of the matrix of all international actions towards maintaining safe and secure Gulf of Guinea. Among the immediate international organizations are: the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC). Twenty-two (22) member-states of the GoG initiated the Yaounde agenda for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. The outcome of the meeting held in June 2013 was a proclamation by the Heads of State, and Government Memorandum establishing the 'Yaounde Code of Conduct', stating inter-regional cooperation between the three regional organizations and the Code of Conduct. These three actions legitimized the three organizations as the legitimate stakeholders of GoG that also serve as the foundation of collective action against piracy, kidnapping, robbery and all forms of maritime crimes in the Gulf of Guinea. Thereafter, it got the full backing of European Union (EU) in 2014 that adopted a strategy on GoG with the objective of Securing the Gulf of Guinea to promote a 'Blue Economy'. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) was involved in technical cooperation projects relating to maritime domain awareness in the West and Central Africa region for many years and established a regional presence in West Africa (Sartire, 2014; Broohm, et-al, 2020).

THE EMERGING SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

The Gulf of Guinea is a lucrative region of numerous advantages to both the member- states and the maritime world in general. The abundant resources, if diligently harnessed and managed, would get citizens of most of the Gulf of Guinea countries out of poverty and underdevelopment statuses. Increasing illegal activities, criminalities and other vices turned the Gulf of Guinea to one of the most dangerous gulfs in the world. Hence, the need for consistent international actions in ridding the region of these vices (Mansaray, 2017).

In addition to the general maritime security challenges, the Gulf of Guinea has some peculiarities such as oil bunkering, human trafficking, illegal fishing, illegal transportation of logs and cross boarder criminalities within the region. Piracy, which stands out as



the main and general maritime security challenges across all international waters; has a very serious negative impact on the security and socio-economic development of the Gulf of Guinea region. Piracy as a syndicated activity, is connected to hijacking, kidnapping for ransom and stealing of oil cargo and other valuable essential commodities. Statistics from the international maritime bureau Oceans Beyond Piracy and the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (IMO-OBPMHRP), disclosed that in 2012, the West African sub-region of the Gulf of Guinea had 50% of vessels attacked by pirates in the whole of Gulf of Guinea; and 966 seafarers were also attacked (Ofosu-Baoteng, 2018; Broohm, et-al, 2020).

The story is not different in 2013 when about 150 attempts of hijacking were recorded. The kidnapers, who usually demand and collect ransom, do take advantage of smaller and fast moving boats used by the oil companies in the Gulf of Guinea. The pirates have expanded the frontiers of their operations to include hijacking of fishing vessels. When they steal petroleum products, they sell it in the black market at very low prices. Buyers of stolen oil are sustaining this illegal act with ready market. This has accounted for the increase of attacks in the region, which recorded 427 of the 1434 of the total attacks in Africa between 2003 and 2011 (Ukeje & Mvomo, 2013; Ofosu-Baoteng, 2018; Terry, 1997; Bot, 2019).

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

The international response in combating security challenges in the Gulf of Guinea has been two-pronged – i.e. inter-state cooperation among GoG member countries and trans-regional maritime boundary cooperation. These are as enumerated and treated below:

1. ECCAS, ECOWAS and GOGC Response to Challenges

The economic viability of the Gulf of Guinea in international trade has made it to play prominent role in global politics. Countries of the region have failed to turn this economic fortune for up-scaling the standard of living of their citizens. The vast maritime prospects of the region have been greatly under-utilized. This underperformance created ripples of unsafe, insecure and crime-infested maritime domain. In view of this underperformance, developed countries with strategic interests in the region have been in the forefront of providing resources to the GoG with active technical collaboration towards solving myriads of problems confronting maritime climate of the region (Denton & Haris, 2022).

Hence, international governmental and non-governmental organizations have been rendering support to ECCAS, ECOWAS and GOGC towards combating the growing challenges of crimes and general insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. The salient efforts of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), United Nations Organization (UNO), European Union (EU), Oil and Gas Companies stand out as another row of the matrix. They have been active in giving technical support for the enhancement of safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea to ensure smooth socio-economic maritime activities and unobstructed maritime navigation and voyages. The three regional organizations of the GoG (ECCAS, ECOWAS, and GOGC) as the first row of the matrix, had to play down on their differences by adopting inter-regional agreements towards combating security challenges in the maritime climate of the region. Information sharing is one of the key instruments adopted by the three sub-regional organizations in tracing and tracking the activities of criminals in maritime borders of the region. The essence is to provide credible intelligence that will nip in the bud maritime crimes such as – armed robberies, piracy, hijack and abduction for ransom. In furtherance of this intelligence sharing to ensure effective checks on the challenges, the ECCAS, ECOWAS and GOGC developed an operational code of conduct known as the ‘2013 Code of Conduct’. The Code of Conduct is on the repression of piracy, armed robbery against ships, and illicit maritime activity. This was drafted with the technical support of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), in line with the United Nations Security Council resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012), which condemned the increasing threat that piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea pose to international navigation, security and the economic development of states in the region. The idea of code of conduct was discussed at the Benin Ministerial meeting of March 2013; which was later approved by the Heads of State and Government Forum on 25 June, 2013 in Yaoundé Cameroun (Onuoha, 2013; Ofosu-Baoteng, 2018; Broohm, et-al, 2020).

Mansaray (2017) alluded with Sartire (2014), and observed that the Code of Conduct complements and builds on the relevant security related provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Establishment of a Sub-regional Integrated Coast Guard Function Network in West and Central Africa. It incorporates many elements of the Djibouti Code of Conduct, adopted in January 2009 as a framework for countries in and around the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden to counter piracy in that region. He further stated that this code of conduct is an improvement on the earlier one of Djibouti. The Djibouti Code of Conduct is solely on piracy. While this has wider frontiers that addresses the main challenges in the Gulf of Guinea maritime including Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, human trafficking, drug smuggling, etc. The code of conduct covers the interests of the region and those of the international partners doing business in the region (Mansaray, 2017).



Member states agreed to the document and give full endorsement to it in their resolve to restore safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea through collaboration and teamwork. The sharing and reporting of relevant information is of essence towards helping the region to act on professional hindsight in dealing with cases of obstructions of ocean-going vessels by fast moving light ships and aircrafts suspected of engaging in piracy and other maritime crimes. It ensures that criminals in the maritime clime; are promptly apprehended and prosecuted. This will provide safety for - fishermen, seafarers, shipboard personnel and passengers; who have hitherto been subjected to harassment and violence by criminals in the maritime clime (Buzan & Waever, 2003; Ofosu-Baoteng, 2018; Jacobsen, et-al, 2017).

The regional stakeholders were able to tackle the traditional clashes between their security organizations. A well-trained and better-equipped Coast Guard has been put in place. This was sealed with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of July 2008 on the Establishment of a Sub-regional Integrated Coast Guard Function Network (the IMO/MOWCA MoU). This action created initial fear and suspicion among member states, but most of the countries have seen the benefits of collective Coastal guards. The technical support of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) helped in fostering security in the Gulf of Guinea (Terry, 1997; Abubakar, 2016).

The goal of the Network is to initiate joint efforts to safeguard human life, enforce laws and improve the security, safety and protection of the environment, otherwise referred to as 'coastguard functions'. Being responsible for implementing these coastguard functions, national agencies are required to coordinate their efforts effectively in order to strengthen law enforcement activities vis-à-vis, among other things, the suppression of piracy and armed robbery against ships, the prevention of IUU fishing and countering the trafficking of drugs, weapons and people (Broohm, et-al, 2020).

THE EUROPEAN UNION GULF OF GUINEA PLAN

This is another trans-regional organization that serves as a critical stakeholder towards mitigating crimes and criminality in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). The EU Gulf of Guinea Action Plan (EU-GGAP) was set up to support the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Gulf of Guinea (EU-SGG). Both the EU-GGAP and the EU-SGG are to support regional efforts in tackling myriads of security problems in the maritime clime of the GoG. Through the Action Plan, the EU raises awareness and understanding of maritime security threats, enforces the capacities of the immediate and other trans-regional organizations collaborating to ensure sustainable security and buoyant economies of the countries of the GoG (Jacobsen, 2017; Denton & Haris, 2022).

The EU has in addition adopted strategies and assisted in financing organizations that are set up to ensure a crime-free, safe, secure and economically buoyant maritime domain of the Gulf of Guinea and by extension the Atlantic/Indian Oceans. The Seaport Cooperation Project (SEACOP) was set up in 2015 with take-off funds of €6million for capacity building and strengthening cooperation against maritime crimes such as illicit trafficking, criminal networks and trans-Atlantic drug cartels. The EU also set up the Gulf of Guinea Inter-Regional Network (GOGIN) in 2016 with an initial funding of €9.3million to improve safety and security in nineteen (19) countries of the region with more focus on strengthening the Younde Architecture for Regional Information Sharing (YARIS). With additional funding of €1.88million from Denmark, the GOGIN and YARIS are meant to bolster security awareness in the GoG maritime domain. In the same 2016, the EU in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drug Control (UNODC) set up the Criminal Investigation and Criminal Justice Cooperation (CRIMJUST) with a take-off funding of €12million. It is a project for enhancing the capacities and integrity of criminal justice institutions for regional and inter-regional cooperation for combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crimes in West Africa and other maritime clime contiguous to it. Another EU funded-project is the Critical Maritime Routes Monitoring, Support and Evaluation Mechanism (CRIMSON) with an initial funding of €2million meant for ensuring synergy, coherence and effective communication for monitoring and evaluation in this regard. In 2018 the EU assisted in setting up of Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in West Africa (PESCAO) with a budget of €15million to ensure smooth and orderly fishing activities in the region. As an additional row of the matrix of international actions for tackling security challenges in the GoG, the EU in 2019, aided in setting up of four other maritime-related organizations. The first to be set-up is Support to West African Integrated Maritime Security (SWAMS) with funding of €28million. The Support Programme to the Maritime Security Strategy in Central Africa (PASSMAR) with funding of €10million is the second to be set-up by the EU. The West and Central African Port Security (WeCAPS) with funding of €8.5million is the third to be set-up. While, the Support of Ports Customs and Operational efficiency in African Ports (IPCOEA) was the fourth to be set-up by the EU (Hassan & Hassan, 2016; Broohm, et-al, 2020; Denton & Ginger, 2022).



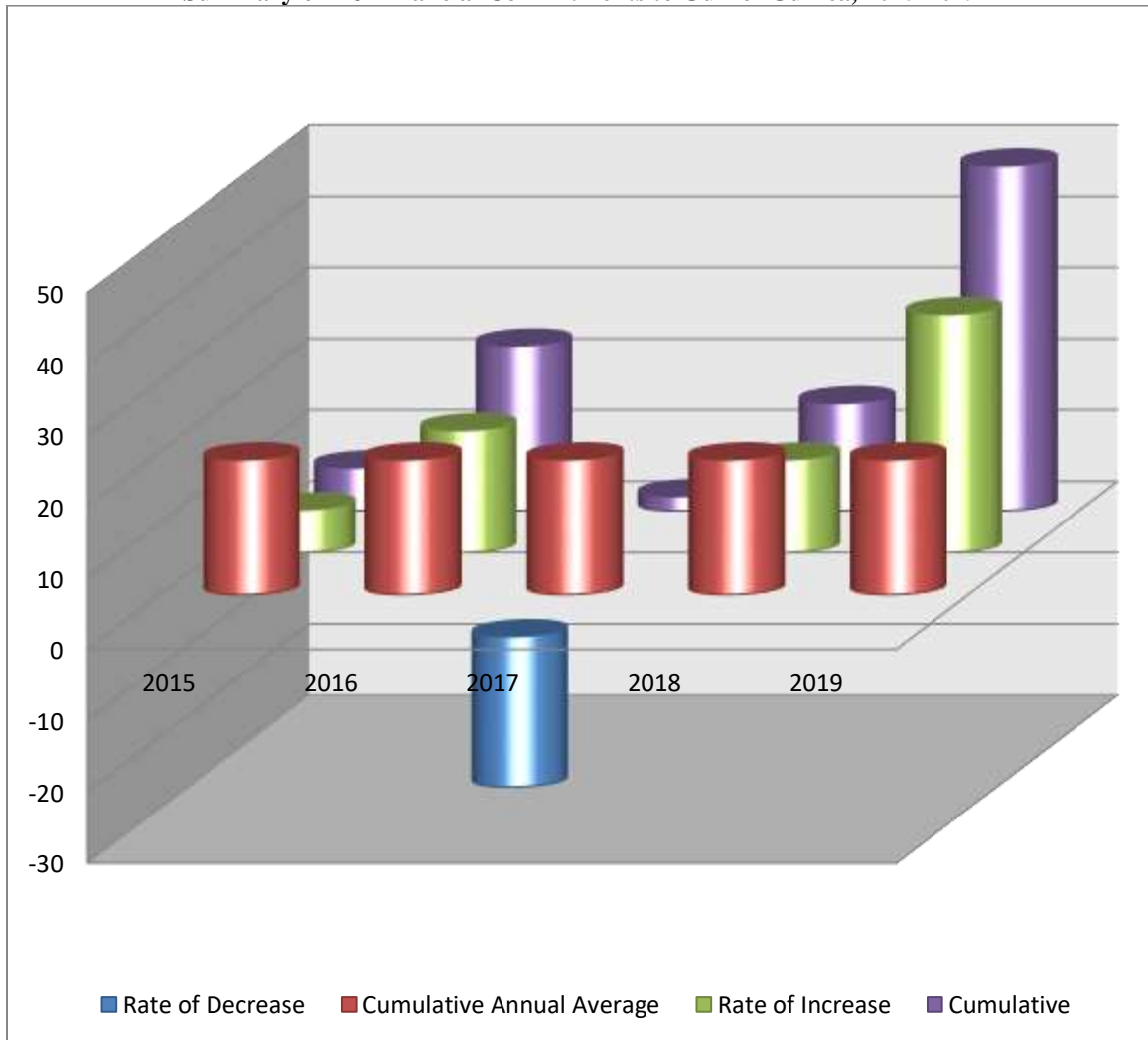
The summary of these EU financial assistance is as presented in Table 1 and Figures 1, 2, & 3 below:

Table 1: Summary of EU Financial Commitments to Gulf of Guinea, 2015-2019

Year	Cumulative	Cumulative Annual Average	Rate of Increase	Rate of Decrease	Percentage
2015	€6.00million	€18.9million	€6.00million	-	6%
2016	€23.1million	€18.9million	€17.1million	-	25%
2017	€2.00million	€18.9million	-	-€21.1million	2%
2018	€15.00million	€18.9million	€13.00million	-	16%
2019	€48.38million	€18.9million	€33.4million	-	51%
Total	€94.48million	€94.48million	€69.5million	-€21.1million	100%

Source: IMO, 2023; Denton & Ginger, 2022

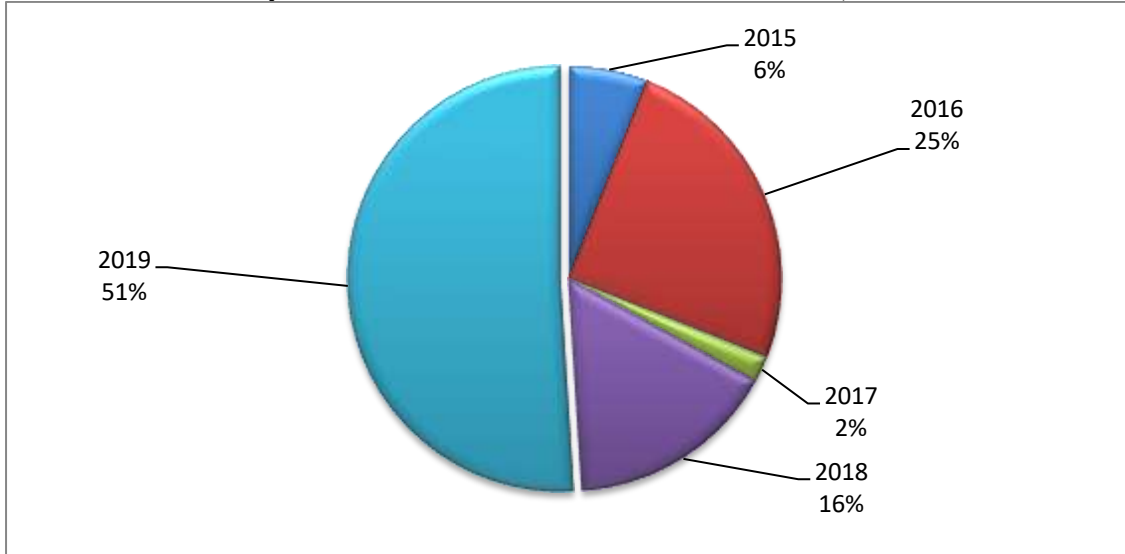
**Fig 1:
Summary of EU Financial Commitments to Gulf of Guinea, 2015-2019**



Source: IMO, 2023; Denton & Ginger, 2022

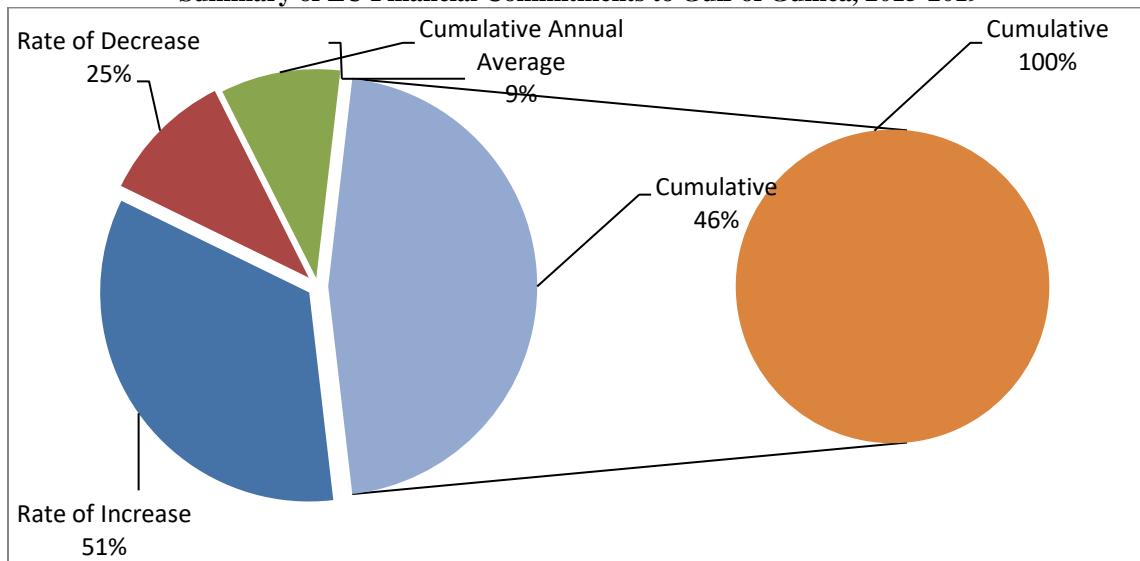


Fig 2:
Summary of EU Financial Commitments to Gulf of Guinea, 2015-2019



Source: IMO, 2023; Denton & Ginger, 2022

Fig 3:
Summary of EU Financial Commitments to Gulf of Guinea, 2015-2019



Source: IMO, 2023; Denton & Ginger, 2022

Summary of Incidences of Attacks by Sea Pirates in the Gulf of Guinea, 2009-2023

Though incidences of sea pirates attacks in the Gulf of Guinea has been on the increase where it reached its peak in 2012 with 526 (18%), there is however a gradual decline with its lowest ebb in 2023 that recorded 23 incidences (1%). The total rate of increase is put at +655, while the total rate of decrease is put at -840 between 2009 and 2023. The annual average of incidences is put at 190. The highest rate of decrease was recorded in 2013 with -426 (Denton & Haris, 2022).



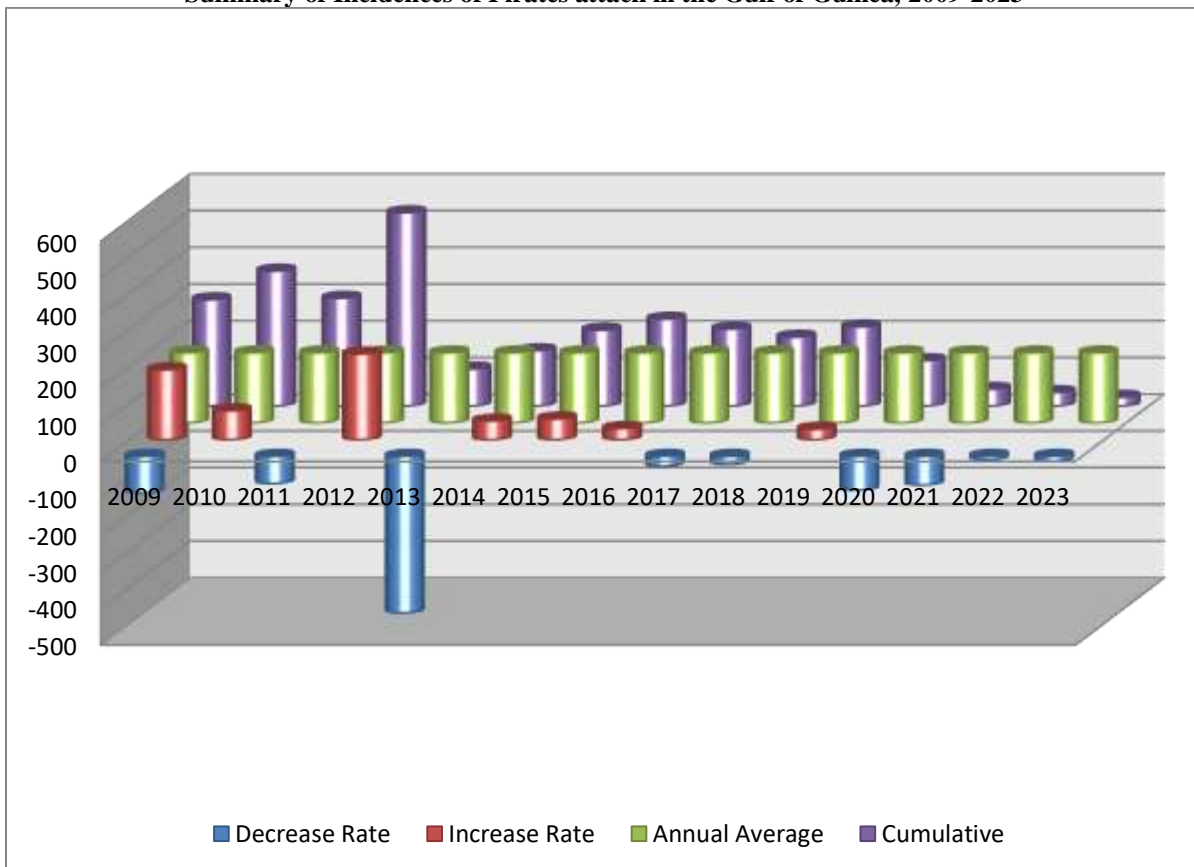
This is as presented in Tables 2 & 3 and Figures 4, 5, 6 & 7 below:

Table 1: Summary of Incidences of Pirates attack in the Gulf of Guinea, 2009-2023

Year	Cumulative	Annual Average	Increase Rate	Decrease Rate	Percentage
2009	289	190	+190	-99	10%
2010	367	190	+78	-	12%
2011	293	190	-	-74	10%
2012	526	190	+233	-	18%
2013	100	190	-	-426	4%
2014	150	190	+50	-	5%
2015	206	190	+56	-	8%
2016	236	190	+30	-	8%
2017	209	190	-	-27	7%
2018	187	190	-	-22	6%
2019	215	190	+28	-	8%
2020	123	190	-	-92	4%
2021	45	190	-	-78	2%
2022	36	190	-	-9	2%
2023	23	190	-	-13	1%
Total	2,855	2,855	+ 655	-840	100

Source: IMO, 2022; Denton & Haris, 2022; IMB, 2023

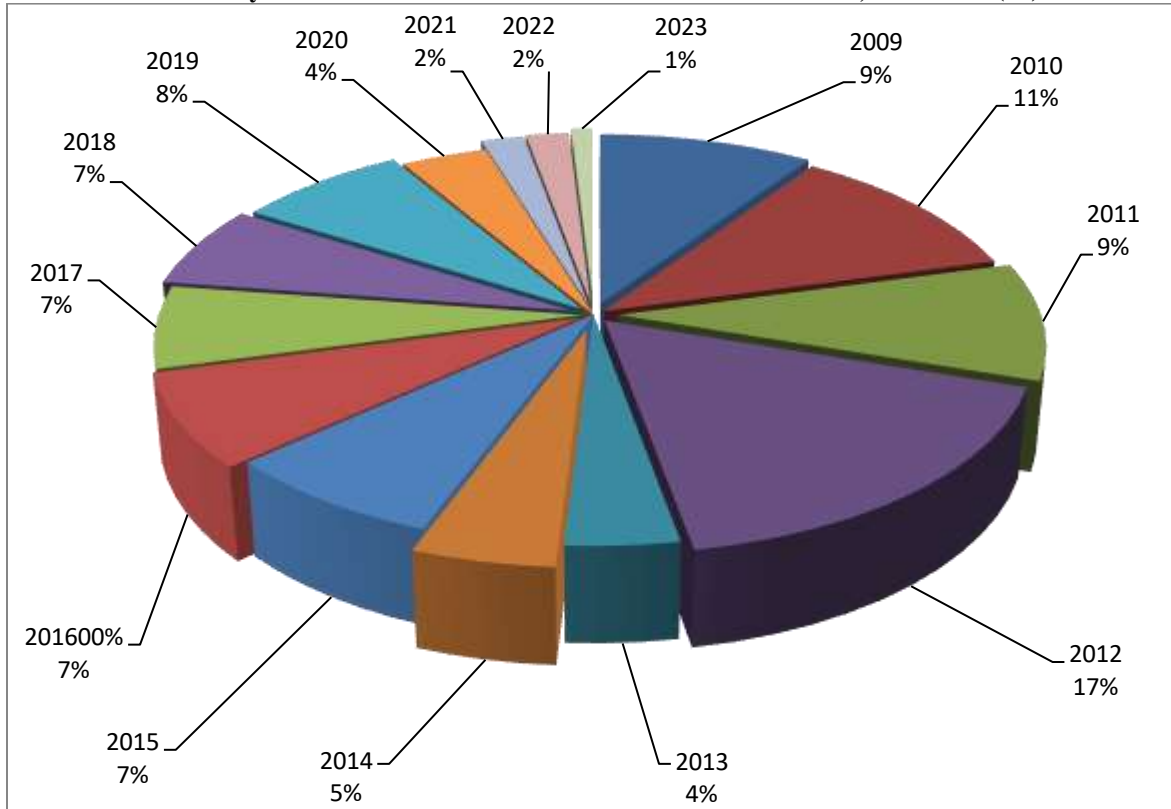
**Fig 4:
Summary of Incidences of Pirates attack in the Gulf of Guinea, 2009-2023**



Source: IMO, 2022; Denton & Haris, 2022; IMB, 2023



Fig 5:
Summary of Incidences of Pirates attack in the Gulf of Guinea, 2009-2023 (%)



Source: IMO, 2022; Denton & Haris, 2022; IMB, 2023

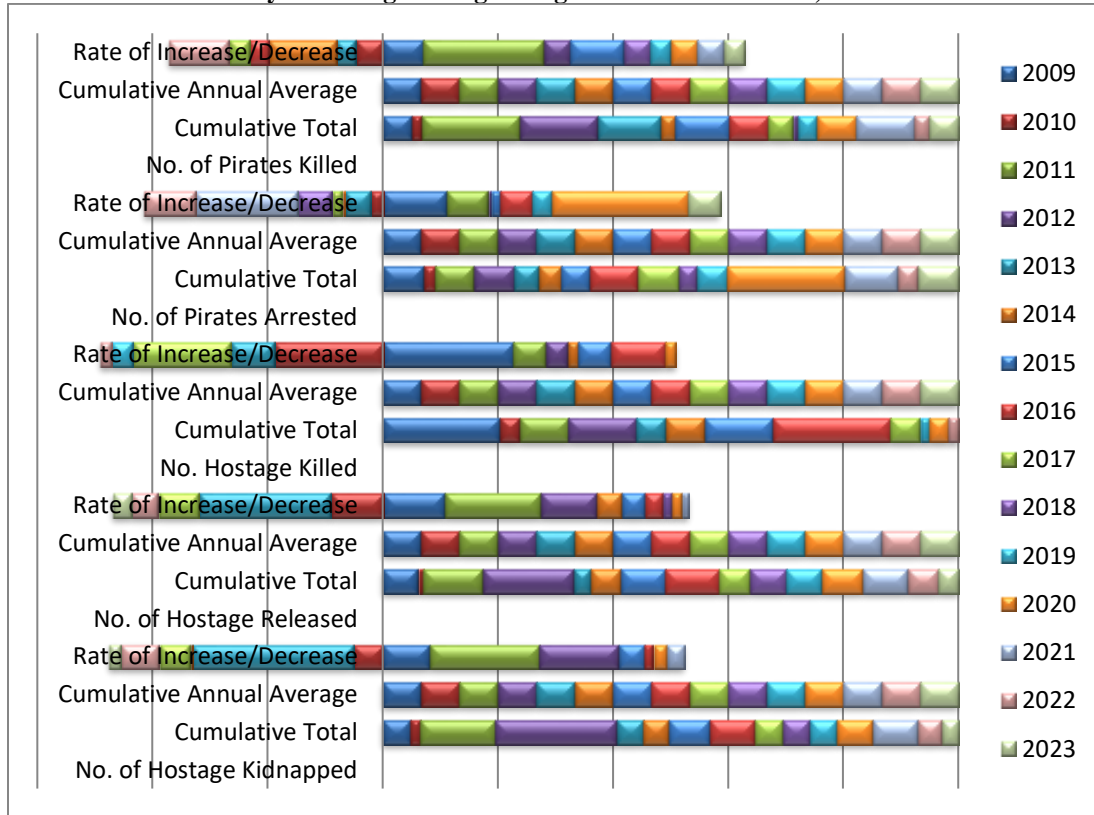
Table 2: Summary of Hostage taking/killing in the Gulf of Guinea, 2009-2023

Year	No of Hostage kidnapped			No of Hostage Released			No of Hostage Killed			No of Pirates Arrested			No of Pirates Killed		
	CT	CAA	RID	CT	CAA	RID	CT	CAA	RID	CT	CAA	RID	CT	CAA	RID
2009	108	151	108	98	108	98	12	4	12	20	19	20	6	8	6
2010	39	151	-69	16	108	-82	2	4	-10	6	19	-4	2	8	-4
2011	294	151	+255	168	108	+152	5	4	+3	19	19	+13	20	8	+18
2012	478	151	+184	256	108	+88	7	4	+2	20	19	+1	16	8	-4
2013	105	151	-373	48	108	-208	3	4	-4	12	19	-8	13	8	-3
2014	101	151	-4	87	108	+39	4	4	+1	11	19	-1	3	8	-10
2015	160	151	+59	124	108	+37	7	4	+3	14	19	+3	11	8	+8
2016	179	151	+19	152	108	+28	12	4	+5	24	19	+10	8	8	-3
2017	109	151	-70	88	108	-64	3	4	-9	20	19	-4	5	8	-3
2018	106	151	-3	102	108	+14	-	4	-	9	19	-11	1	8	-4
2019	108	151	+2	100	108	-2	1	4	-2	15	19	+6	4	8	+3
2020	139	151	+31	116	108	+16	2	4	+1	58	19	+43	8	8	+4
2021	180	151	+41	127	108	+11	-	4	-	26	19	-32	12	8	+4
2022	92	151	-88	86	108	-41	1	4	-1	10	19	-16	3	8	-9
2023	66	151	-26	57	108	-29	-	4	-	20	19	+10	6	8	+3
Total	2,264			1,625			59			284			118		

Source: IMO, 2022; Denton & Haris, 2022; IMB, 2023

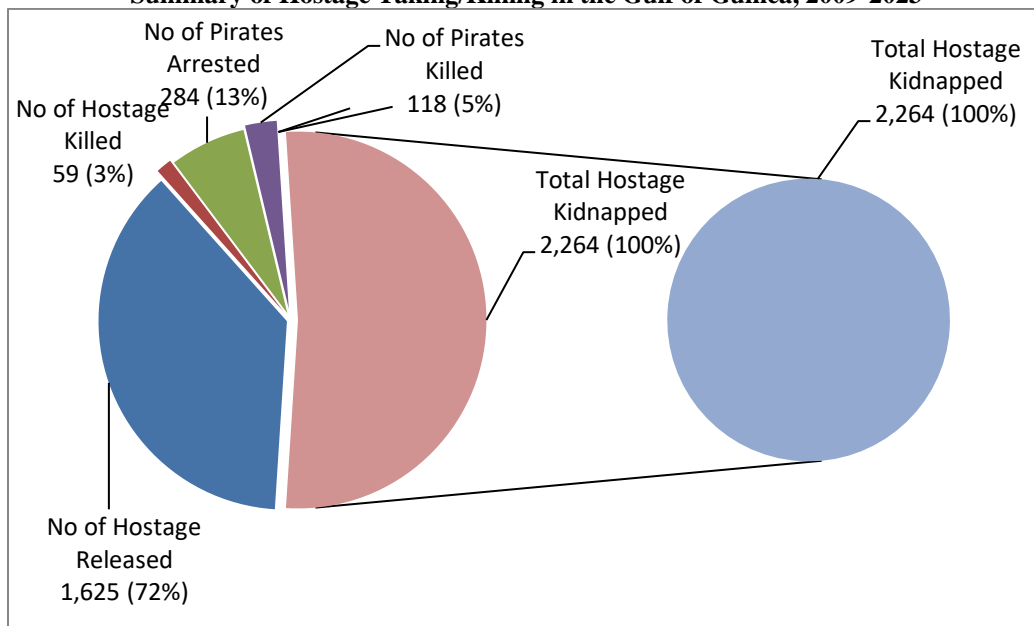


Fig 6:
Summary of Hostage taking/killing in the Gulf of Guinea, 2009-2023



Source: IMO, 2022; Denton & Haris, 2022; IMB, 2023

Fig 7:
Summary of Hostage Taking/Killing in the Gulf of Guinea, 2009-2023



Source: IMO, 2022; Denton & Haris, 2022; IMB, 2023



IMPEDIMENTS BEFORE THE STAKEHOLDERS

The leading impediment is that financial and logistic contributions of member countries for tackling security challenges in the GoG are grossly inadequate. Some of them hardly pay their dues. This serves as a big clock in the wheels of progress of the stakeholders. Political instability is another major impediment towards a crime-free maritime environment of the Gulf of Guinea. The consistent disruption of governments and change of regimes, which creates political instability in the region, doesn't allow for continuity of efforts towards strengthening the activities of sub-regional organizations saddled with the responsibility of ensuring safety and security in the maritime domain of the region. In addition, lack of trust and confidence among member-countries of the region has eroded the bases of synergy and commitment in combating these maritime crimes (Knawp, 2011; Onuoha, 2013; Jacobsen, et-al, 2017).

The code of conduct for the sharing of information has not fared better either. Member states are required to domesticate the relevant laws on this, so as to sensitize citizens of coastal areas towards prompt reporting of suspected criminals. The code should be, well explained to all security operatives charge with that responsibility; where it will effectively guide their operations. Both print and electronic media tabloids should embark on awareness campaigns to create security consciousness among citizens of the coastal regions. This should be carried out with the aim of promoting harmonious living among citizens where they will in the long run appreciate the importance of these sub-regional groups. The role of the media in this regard, has been hampered by myriads of problems as follows:

- i. **Reportage** – The attainment of common understanding of the problems in the Gulf of Guinea is handicapped by ambiguity across reporting agencies of statistics, definitions and severity of crimes. There are also unclear lines of responsibility for reporting and response coordination for incidents in the Gulf of Guinea. This does not take advantage of early warning signals on probable attacks by pirates (Broohm, et-al, 2020).
- ii. **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)** - Agencies responsible for participation in MDA schemes through national and international reporting centers appear to be lagging behind other maritime geographic regions. This participation remains below 40%; where incidents and threat reporting is still shared across a variety of agencies without clear lines of responsibility (Sartire, 2014).
- iii. **Yaoundé Framework for Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea** – Another impediment acknowledged by scholars and practitioners is that many parts of the reporting framework are still not operational due to challenges encountered in obtaining necessary equipments and personnel, funding and inter-operability across communication systems (Ofosu-Baoteng, 2018).
- iv. **Lack of Regional Capability to Respond** - Even where coastal states may be extremely motivated to respond to incidences of piracy, many lack response capabilities. While some states appear to have modern equipments, it may not be able to cover long distance of territorial waters (Kamal-Deen, 2015).
- v. **Challenges with Privatized Security** – Most countries of this region including Nigeria have developed different forms of contracted private security to escort vessels in cooperation with their naval personnel. Some coastal states signed MoUs that allow for Private Maritime Logistics Companies. This has prompted some ships to have their private security forces as armed guards (Ukeje & Mvomo, 2013; Jacobsen, 2017; Abubakar, 2016, Broohm, et-al, 2020).

The need to have functional inter-agency coordination centre (ICC) must not be overemphasized. It will provide means for establishing cooperation, coordination and communication between member-States of the three regional organizations at the strategic level, including exchange of information on a range of issues such as best practices and collaboration on capacity building, as well as contributing to countering piracy, armed robbery and other illicit activities at sea (Sartire, 2014; Broohm, et-al, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The study has established that the Gulf of Guinea is not only a natural blessing to member countries, but it is also very strategic, as well as very lucrative. However, it is a highly dreaded maritime corridor. The discovery of offshore hydrocarbon deposits in the region has enhanced its status as a geo-strategic region in the world. The study has established that 2,264 incidences of pirate attacks have been recorded in the Gulf of Guinea for the period covered by this analysis. The study has further established that over €98.48million have been expended by international organizations set-up and funded by the European Union for combating crimes and criminality in the Gulf of Guinea for the period covered by this analysis. The study has also established that the United Nations through the UNSC has been active in prompting countries and organizations to rise up and curb the dangerous activities of pirates and other criminal-gang groups in the Gulf of Guinea. The invaluable roles of the IMO and other Western international organizations in ensuring safe and secure GoG maritime domains have been deciphered by the study. The frequency of occurrences of incidences of hijack, Kidnappings and hostage-taking have greatly dropped to its lowest in the second quarter of 2023. In spite of all these matrix of international actions in curbing security challenges in the GoG maritime region, some of the malignant problems such as piracy still subsist.



RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis and discussion so far, the following alternatives and strategies are proffered towards minimizing maritime security threats and for the sustenance of stable trans-national ocean-going vessels and other economic activities in the GoG:

1. Political leaderships of member states of the GoG region should muster the political will to work in the national interests; and by extension resolve all inter-state differences and forge in unison towards ensuring a safe, secure and crime-free maritime domain.
2. More sincere active collaboration with international partners should be encouraged. This will make it easy for tracing and tracking of criminals on international waters.
3. Budgetary allocation to the security sectors should be scaled-up with effective monitoring to ensure that there are no diversion of resources.

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