UNDERSTANDING WEST AFRICA MARITIME SECURITY THREATS: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AT SEA IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

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Abstract

This article explores the prevailing maritime security threats in West Africa. Specifically, it examines the development of piracy and armed robbery at sea as a critical existential threat to maritime domain assets, security and development in the Gulf of Guinea. The disproportionate and geometrically progressive spates of attacks by pirates in the Gulf of Guinea in general and particularly off the coast of Nigeria' Niger Delta region have attracted not just national or regional concerns, but the international community to this emerging threat to global security, prompting this maritime domain to be nabbed a new danger zone. This article argues that these nefarious activities are not just a security issue at sea but symptomatically a product of poor governance and state failure which is land-based. Among other factors responsible for piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea discussed in this paper is political marginalisation, corruption, poverty, unemployment, income inequality, politicisation of institutions and policies, globalisation, lack of coherent justice system and security architecture to mention a few. The article further suggest that what should be done by GoG (Gulf of Guinea) states is to develop the maritime sector and use it as viable instrument for their foreign policy; improve governance performance, enhance the capability and coordination of States and regional maritime security architecture, and the justice system for effective administration of justice.

Keywords: Armed Robbery, Gulf of Guinea, Maritime Security, Piracy and Threat.

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, piracy is a far cry from its cartoonish interpretations in popular culture. More than ever, piracy poses a grave threat to national security and international trade. It forces us to reconsider our conception of sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as the very notion of the inviolability of international

waters. Contemporary pirates stand at par with terrorists, fraudsters, drug lords and organized crime bosses as did their historical ancestors (Tepp, 2012:181).

The Gulf of Guinea maritime domain presents both great opportunities as well as grave challenges on national and regional security, peace and development. Accordingly, the above assertion of Tepp (2012) provides a comprehensive insight into the dynamics of contemporary piracy and armed robbery at sea in the "Gulf of Guinea". No doubt, the disproportionate and geometrically progressive spates of attacks by pirates in the Gulf of Guinea in general and particularly off the coast of Nigeria' Niger delta region have attracted not just national or regional concerns, but the international community to this emerging threat to global security. This is so because recent events and available statistics have proven that there is a shift in the spike of piracy from the once dreaded Gulf of Eden, off the coast of Somalia, towards the Gulf of Guinea with Nigeria coast at its hotspot. Hence this coastal region has recently been nabbed "The New Danger Zone", "High-risk or warning areas" amongst others (ICG, 2012; OBP, 2014).

The activities of these pirates within a decade of its surge, since 2007, have affected the trade of over four hundred and fifty-five million people, as well as the shipment of over five million barrels of oil per day (ICG, 2014). Though scholars have argued that getting an exact number of incidences and cost is not feasible due to the problem of "massive underreporting of attacks" (Jacobsen and Nordby, 2015:7), which may in fact be even higher. However, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea have increasingly gained more concern because of the rampant use of violence to assault vessels and take hostages, for instance in 2013 1,871 seafarers were attacked and 279 of them taken to hostage. The affected number of seafarer in 2016 increased to 1,921 and 1,726 in 2017 respectively, irrespective of naval patrol which often is met with fierce resistance (Osinowo, 2015; OBP, 2018). More recently, the 2018 first quarter ICC-IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Report shows that out of the total number of 66 recorded incidents, Africa has 32 and the GoG has 29 of which Nigeria alone recorded 22 piracy incidents (IMB, 2018). These attacks by armed pirates as the Centre of International Maritime Security observes are usually occasioned by sophisticated weapons, use of violence, and report of crew members being injured (IMB, 2016; Steffen, 2016).

However, it is pertinent to note that the violent and brutal business of piracy and armed robbery at sea as seen in the Gulf of Guinea, among other things, is motivated by economic factors and facilitated by abysmal security and justice architecture in the region occasioned by poor governance and high corruption, which has resulted to a hike in maritime insurance cost, increase price of oil products and development of black market (Tepp, 2012; Fiorelli, 2014). Be that as it may, this paper seeks to critically assess; factors that enhance the development of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea as well as various security, justice and policy architecture design to curb this problem, and evaluate how best they have fared and their possible prospects.

Figure 1 shows the map of attacks within the Gulf of Guinea in the first quarter of 2018
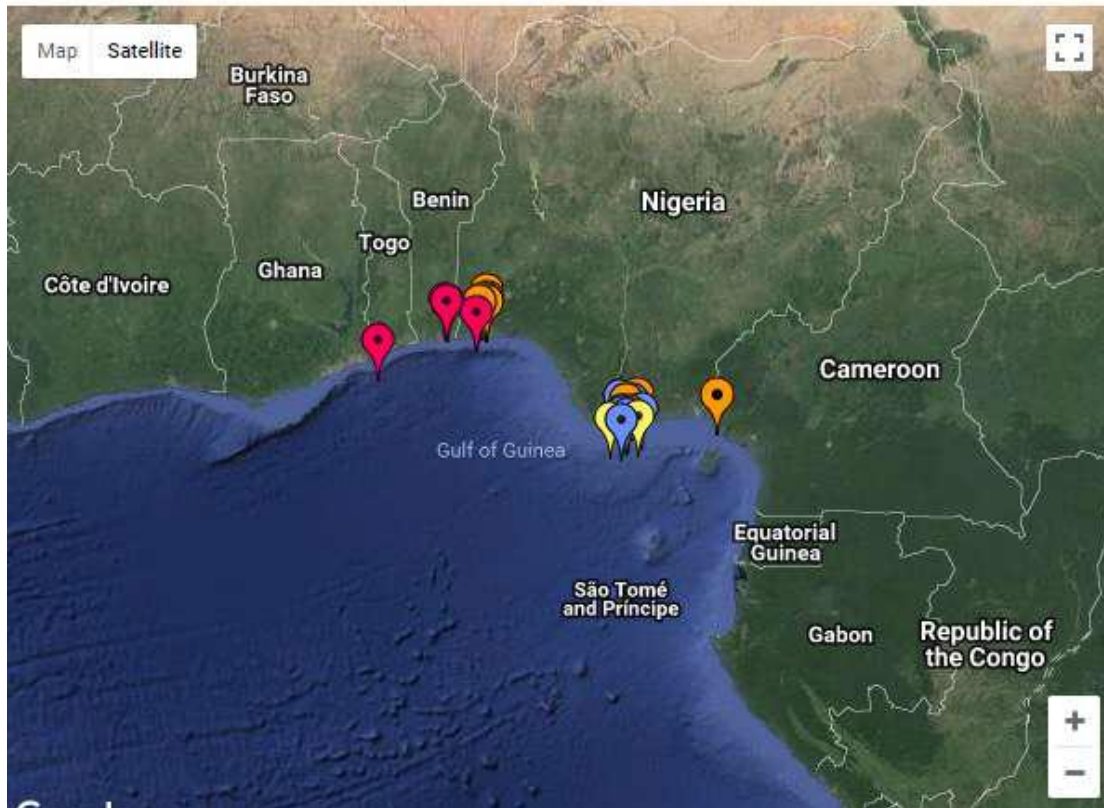
IMB Piracy Report –January to March 2018; Total attacks GoG- 29
Source: By author adopted from IMB

Maritime Piracy: A Conceptual Discourse

Piracy just like several other concepts in the social sciences and humanities do not enjoy a ubiquitous definition. This is so because what constitutes piracy in one State may not be piracy in the other. This as a matter of fact makes the administration of criminal justice for suspected pirates difficult. However, the conception of who is a pirates is without doubt agreed upon as they have a distinct status as international criminals in extant laws. As they are regarded as *hostis humani generis* meaning enemies of the human race or mankind, not distinctively to a particular state where they operate (Tepp, 2012; Fiorelli, 2014). Be that as it may, however, definitions provided by significant institutional role-players such as the International Maritime organization (IMO), and the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), as well as the definition by the United Nations Law of the Sea (Art. 101) of 1982 (UNCLOS) form a bases of discourse.

The UNCLOS (1982) define Piracy to constitute: *"a) any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a*

*private ship or a private aircraft, and directed; (i) on the high sea, against another ship or aircraft,
or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft"* (Jacobsen and Nordby, 2015:7).
Commendable as this effort to clearly state what constitutes piracy, this definition is flawed
in various ways. As Jacobsen and Nordby (2015), Tepp (2012) have argued, the distinction
of same acts in regards territorial jurisdiction; i.e. referring to piracy as act conducted in
the high sea and same acts conducted within territorial waters as armed robbery begs for
discrepancies in legality and prosecution. Since both acts are committed by the same
people with the same effect on society. Also, going by this definition, we are faced with the
challenge of reconciling acts of piracy committed not just by a ship against the other or
vessel in the high sea, but most significantly those land-based attacks on either Steaming,
Anchored, "berthed ships and cases of internal hijacking by offenders posing as passenger
or crew members" (Tepp, 2012:184) as the case with most attacks in the Gulf of Guinea
(OBP 2014). Furthermore, it is also argued that this definition precludes political motivated
and state-sponsored acts of piracy.

To address some of this insufficiencies however, the IMO in its Resolution A.1025 (26)
define armed robbery against ships as "*any illegal act of violence or detention or an act of
depredation, or threat thereof, other than an act of piracy, committed for private ends and directed
against a ship or against persons or property on board such a ship, within a state's internal waters,
archipelagic waters and territorial sea*" (IMB, 2016:3). This definition again lacks consistency
and coverage as it only attempt to further distinguish piracy and armed robbery at sea.
Though it implies that any such violent acts conducted on anchored, off ports or ships
underway coastal states territorial waters is clearly not specified and can be categorized as
piracy (Neethling, 2010). With this insufficiencies in mind, Neethling (2010), Tepp (20102),
and Jacobsen and Nordby (2015) agree that a definition that best fit the description and
analysis of the Gulf of Guinea Piracy and which this article will utilize is that provided by
the IMB which define Piracy inclusively, taking into cognisance the inseparability of piracy
and armed robbery as acts with the same purpose irrespective of the place it is executed,
as "*an act of boarding or attempting to board any ship with the intent to commit theft or any other
crime and with the attempt to or capability to use force in the furtherance of that act*" (Neethling,
2010:92).

Dynamics and Peculiarities of the Gulf of Guinea Piracy
With over five oil producing or potentially endowed States, the Gulf of Guinea piracy have
distinct peculiarities though with few similar circumstances in relation to piracy in the Gulf
of Eden, or off the coast of Somalia. It has within the decade emerged as the epicentre of
maritime crime much worst as compared to that in the Horn. So dreadful has it become
that in August 2011 it was classified as "a war risk zone for shipping" (Fiorelli, 2014:6), and
in the first quarterly report of IMB PRC January-March 2018, shippers and seafarers are
warns "to be vigilant and adhere to the industry and IMO recommendations on anti-
piracy. As far as possible ships should try to berth directly…" (IMB, 2018:24). The Bureau
went further to emphasis the increasing frequency of attacks in the Gulf of Guinea and
Nigeria in particular which dominate figures, with 22 out of a total 29 incidents in terms

of attacks and severity. This is evident because as Ocean Beyond Piracy' the state of maritime piracy 2013 report observes;

> Maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea is a regional problem that encompasses many transnational organized crimes, including piracy and armed robbery at sea, money laundering, illegal arms and drugs trafficking, illegal oil bunkering, crude oil theft, human trafficking and smuggling, maritime pollution, illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, illegal dumping of toxic waste, maritime terrorism and hostage-taking, and vandalization of offshore oil infrastructure. West Africa's strategic location as a route between the Americas and Europe, coupled with its natural resources and lack of full governance capacity in the maritime domain, create an environment in which these maritime crimes can flourish (OBP, 2014:65)

Indeed, it can also be argued that unlike the Somalia Piracy, the Gulf of Guinea Pirates activities are carried out both in the territorial waters and international waters. This is so because the region has many active ports involve in both regional and international trade, and most often than not vessels not only transit through the region but sail into the ports to either load or unload products. Therefore, this provide a wider opportunity for the Pirates to attack ships that are either on transit, or berthed or anchored and waiting to berth (OBP, 2014). One other significant dynamics of Gulf of Guinea Pirates as opine by Beardsley (2014) is the accessibility of intelligent information from ashore as ships engage in profiling their products and rout to maritime regimes. It is also pertinent to note that unlike their counterparts in Somalia and elsewhere who mostly engage in kidnappings and ransom taking, the West African Pirates operate in three dynamic models of armed robbery, Kidnapping and ransom taking, and oil theft. Though most recent piracy attacks have shifted from and concentrated more on kidnap and ransom (OBP, 2014; Ben-Ari, 2013), which is not unconnected to the global energy crisis of the crash in the international oil market. Also, evidence abound that the level of sophistication of pirates in the Gulf of Guinea further explains knitted relationship between them and other transnational organised criminal networks. More deadly than the Somalian pirates, the Gulf of Guinea pirates often brandish high calibre automatic rifles-AK47s and Rocket Propel Grenades (RPGs) and never will hesitate to use same in the face of resistance or confrontation with the coast guards. The proliferation of these light arms further suggest the complex dynamics of piracy as epidemic (Fiorelli, 2014; Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013). This reemphasis the argument that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea do not only result in killing and injuring victims, but also damage the economy. For instance, Benin whose government revenue is derived from taxes, 80% of which is gotten from the port of Cotonou was drastically affected by a reduction of 28% in 2013 (Ben-Ari, 2013).

At the crux of the surge of piracy within the region is the prominent role of Nigerian Pirates and their fusion with rebel agenda. For instance, rebels like MEND, Bakassi Strike Force (self-acclaimed freedom fighters), or even the recent deadly AVENGERS explore the maritime domain, first, as a lucrative business and also an extension of their political

agendas offshore, driven by a combination of greed and grievance (Neethling, 2010; Ebuzor, 2016). This have further compounded the already dynamic nature of piracy manifestation in this region. Coupled with the fact that most of these States are believed to be failing states with unparalleled incidences of instability, underdevelopment, intractable conflicts, weak and corrupt government officials, incapacitated security architectures to mention a few. As a matter of fact, prior to the surge of piracy within the region it was only Nigeria and Angola that had a semblance of maritime security regimes, albeit ineffective (Fiorelli, 2014; Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2015). Scholars have agreed unequivocally that piracy within this region have affected oil and price of shipping, and premiums insurance ("the total cost of additional premiums incurred by ships transiting the Gulf of Guinea Listed in 2017 was $18.5 million" and additional protection insurance at a cost totalling $20.7 million), as well as fuel or benefited other criminal networks like Boko Haram, the Islamic extremist group in Nigeria. And as other regions are witnessing a drop in incidents, the GoG has constantly reflected a worrying growing pattern which is illustrated in figure 2&3 below (ICG, 2012; Fiorelli, 2014; OBP, 2018). In 2017 alone the total economic cost of Piracy and Armed Robbery at sea in the GoG was estimated at $818.1million by Ocean Beyond Piracy 2017 Report.

FIGURE 2&3 SHOWS INCIDENTS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2018 AND 2015-2017 INCIDENTS RESPECTIVELY.

CHART C: Total incidents as per regions of the world January – March 2018
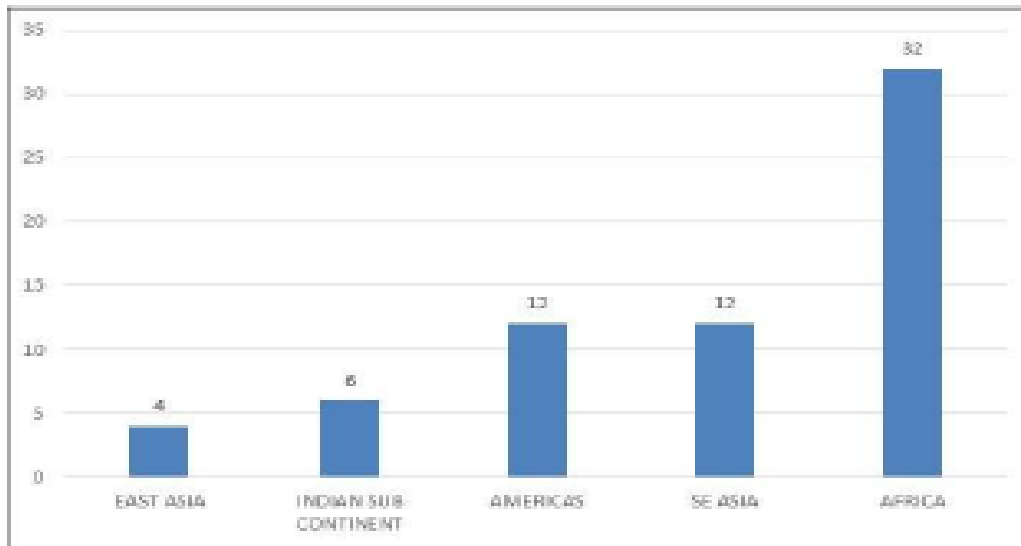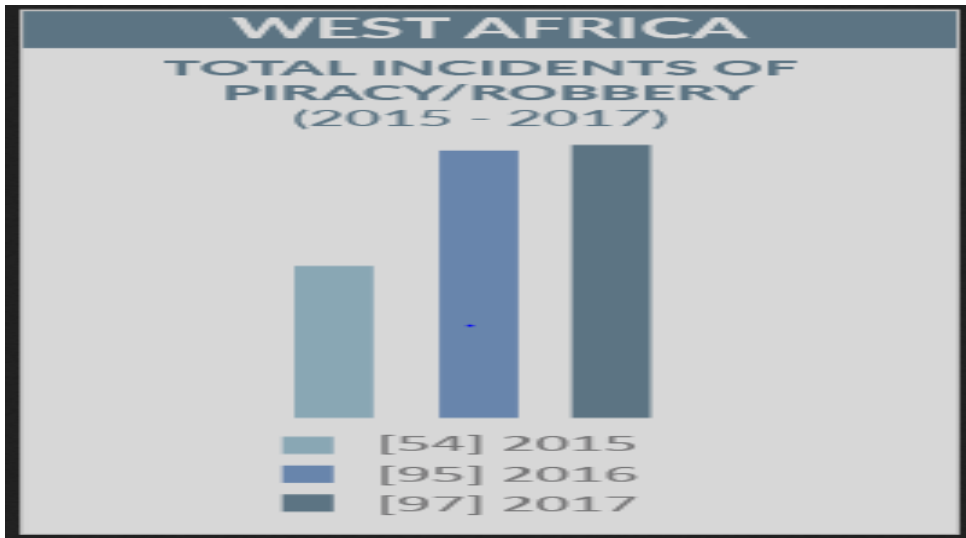
Source: By author adopted from ICC-IMB Piracy and Armed robbery Against Shis Report –First Quarter 2018 and OBP Report 2018

Causes and Development of Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

Piracy as a phenomenon is neither recent, nor ahistorical. There is no disputing the fact that no maritime nation has not at one point in history suffered from piracy. In the 16th and 17th centuries it had flourish with a significant record of the capture of Julius Caesar (Tepp, 2012). The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) is no exception, but only that these nefarious activities have taken a dimension highly detrimental to the prosperity not just of its coastal states but also poses a threat to global trade and security. The increase in piracy in GoG and Nigeria in particular was occasioned with the 1970s and 1980s oil boom where export of oil and import of others goods where at all-time high. This was met with lack of capacity of the port regimes to clear products on time, as vessels stay longer in the harbor local gangs saw in it an opportunity to perpetrate criminal acts on vessels (Uadiale, 2012). However, the fundamental question remains; what are the factor(s) responsible for the development of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea? Why has all effort towards curbing piracy proven abortive? Within this paradigm piracy is argued to be a symptom or manifestation of unattended conundrums.

To answer these questions, it is pertinent to note that *Pirates are not born at sea but a product of onshore issues*. Therefore, Biziouras (2013) opines that similar to the case of Somalia, overfishing by European fleets in the West African coast stimulate the evolution of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. As a result of this phenomenon occasion by underreporting, the depletion of fishing stock within the region impoverished local fishermen. Subsequently the local fishermen started attacking and robbing vessel in return. However, it should be noted that the act of fishing itself by the European fleets was in agreement with coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea. Though the overfishing made it illegal

and was occasioned by lack of effective monitoring, compliance and surveillance system. Biziouras further argues that the high rate of unemployment among youths in this region has made the economic mobility of piracy especially in the Niger delta and Bakassi peninsula prosperous. Also the lack of subsidies as well as support from the states, couple with environmental degradation occasioned by oil exploration have made a breeding ground for the recruitment youths to this criminal networks. Since these activities requires low capital and technical knowledge. Whereas monies gotten from piracy can be reinvested into legal businesses in local economies (Biziouras, 2013). This obviously is the case in Nigeria where a formal militant warlord, Government Ekpemupolo, notoriously know for insurgency and malicious businesses at sea was, after the amnesty programme, his company "Global West Specialist Vessels Limited was awarded a contract of $326 million for countering maritime crime (OBP, 2014). This scenario explains the last factor as argued by Biziouras as the persistence of corruption among state officials in these countries has crippled the credibility of state enforcement as a deterrence to piracy (2010:119).

Murphy (2010), Tepp (2010), proposed a number of causes ranging from "legal and jurisdictional weakness; favorable geography; conflict and disorder, underfunded law enforcement/ inadequate security; permissive political environments; cultural acceptability; and promise of reward" (2010:28; 2010:188). On their part, Jacobsen and Nordby (2015) identify, Sea Blindness; Youth Unemployment and poverty; Political Disputes; Corruption and weak Governance; Legal Challenges. And this paper also argues that the eminent influence of globalization has added a new dimension and sophistication to the piracy in the Gulf of Guinea which has far reaching impact on the success of these criminal activities. The above enumerated causes of piracy are evident in almost all the countries within the Gulf, most especially Nigeria the country that account for over 90% of piracy in the GoG. This obviously points to the fact that against extant arguments, piracy is clearly a land-based crime manifesting in the sea (Murphy, 2013). Hence it is difficult to disentangle the inextricable link between piracy within the coastal areas of these countries and in-land socio-politics and governance conundrums (Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013).

According to Trelawny (2013), the factor of "sea blindness" among States and policy makers within the Gulf of Guinea region hinges on the lack of realization that the sea is and should be an integral part of development plan on land, and its opportunities must be harnessed. Most Coastal States have failed to understand that the development of maritime sector world over has been a strategic national interest just like its land components (Jacobsen and Norby, 2015). Whereas, ironically, most of these states national earnings are often than not accruing from the maritime sector, e.g. Nigeria and Benin Republic. On the other hand, the pirates have seen this opportunity within these exclusive economic zones which states ignores and are utilizing it with impunity. The colossal lack of maritime knowledge by the political class which informs the long history of policy blindness towards coastal water within this region has not just undermine maritime security alone but also security on land, a typical example is the incidence of insecurity posed by the dislodged militant group AVENGERS who engage in maritime terrorism and piracy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria with an increasing record of attacks on vessels, a total of 40 vessels attacked and 74 individuals kidnapped as at 21st April 2016, at present is an

intractability to national security (Osi-Tutu, 2013; Jacobsen and Nordby, 2015; Osinowo 2015; Steffen, 2016).

Another factor which fuels piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is the patterns of political interjections and permissive environment. Most of the states are faced with political instability and fraught political processes at one hand. And the sub-culture of corruption which have permeated virtually all facets of governmental authorities on the other (Tepp, 2012; Neethling, 2010). No doubt, incidences of political marginalization and gross corruption has been seen not just as the bane of these coastal states' development, but a stimulating and sustaining factor for piracy especially in Nigeria coastal area (Ben-Ari, 2013). A situation where perceived marginalized community often conduct and support piracy, or 'illegal bunkering' as well as condone maritime terrorism within their terrain and are often ready to provide safe haven for wanted pirates and criminals. This is so because irrespective of the fact that these criminal are their wards or indigene; they often contribute to the economic survival of the locals through proceeds from piracy. They also pose as freedom fighters against political marginalization of the commons or these indigent communities. This argument buttresses the position of Neethling who succinctly opine that;

> although pirates in Nigeria waters often claim to be fighting for a fairer distribution of Nigeria's vast oil wealth and as a protest against the damage caused by oil production in the Delta, observers just as often point out that the lines between political grievances and criminality in the Gulf of Guinea are blurred (2010:100).

This gives credence in part to the paradigm of MEND activities in Niger Delta and the resurgence of a militant group, AVENGERS, and other issues surrounding the mass man-hunt of ex militant war lord "Tompolo" by the federal government of Nigeria and counter protest by the locals against security forces abuses of their rights (Fiorelli, 2014; Ali, 2015; Idowu, 2016). However, it can be plausibly argued that irrespective of the political guises these criminals utilize, piracy and armed robbery at sea are largely motivated by financial and not political gain (Tepp, 2012).

Still on the dynamics of political interjections, Okoronkwo et al. (2014) have presented an apt narrative of how public corruption and flawed political processes in Nigeria have further exacerbated the growth of the piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, and Nigeria in particular. They believe as did other scholars that political corruption during electioneering and in governance remain the root cause of piracy and maritime terrorism in the GoG. Within this framework political thuggery during electioneering, it is argued that politicians often resort to the use of streets gangster and structurally related mafia-cultist who most often than not are unemployed youth to rig elections. By doing so, politician arm these groups with all sort of weaponry to get themselves elected into public offices. At the end of the elections these youths are left with these weapon and being unemployed, used and abandoned they resort into various forms of criminality, piracy being the best option since most of them are indigenes of these coastal areas. Okoronkwo

et al. argue that this subculture of political maneuvering has fuel the rise of piracy in Niger Delta and by extension the GoG. A case in point is the records of unwarranted use of violence in the 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections in Nigeria. And recent rerun election seen in Bayelsa and Rivers States of Nigeria which was marked with massive violence. Evidently, the suppose rerun elections for some Assembly seats in Rivers State which is one of the most strategic point of coastal terrain of the GoG in Nigeria was postponed on July 27th 2016 over the spate of insecurity and violence perpetrated by thugs and militants (Okoronkwo, 2014; Thisday, 2016). These dynamics have become common place within the region. For instance, persistent conflicts and political instability within GoG states, as seen in the Niger Delta, or interstates disputes over maritime boundaries as the case with Bakassi Peninsula plausibly exacerbates piracy and armed robbery at sea (Tepp, 2012; Uadiale, 2012).

It is further argued that the massive resurgence of piracy in the GoG since 2015 can be attributed to the outcome of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria and the Buhari led government' commitment to the fight against corruption. For instance, the indictment of former militant war lord, "Tompolo" for corruption and fraudulent collaboration with NIMASA using his Global West Specialist Vessels Limited, a company he operated and was awarded frivolous contract for maritime security within Nigeria territorial waters of the GoG (OBP, 2015) has arguably created mix feelings on the spike of piracy in recent years.

Nigeria and most of the States in the GoG have remains a paradox of extreme wealth alongside poverty, increase income inequality and lack of infrastructure. Scholars have argued in the "oil curse" paradigm that the mythology behind massive wealth of oil and other mineral resources in the region and the high rate of poverty experience by people and communities whose resources are exploited have remain an intractable puzzle. No doubt, most of the countries of GoG are classified as failed or failing states in the 2017 Global Development Index or the Fail States Index. Amidst plenty and endurance of degradation of the environment occasioned by exploration activities of oil multinationals, people whose lives ab initio were predominantly dependent on subsistence agriculture and fishery have been face with more severe poverty and gross absent and or lack of infrastructure. Hence piracy is condoned or encourage as opportunity for livelihood, as evident in Niger delta region of Nigeria. Also, to understand the economics of piracy it is obvious that it has emerged as a lucrative venture. As poor and unemployed youths see opportunity in the "easy-money making trade" where 'role model rich pirates' live in flamboyance within the poor communities (ICG, 2012; Murphy, 2012; Tepp, 2012; Neethling, 2010; Biziouras, 2013; Fiorelli, 2014; Jacobsen and Nordby, 2015).

At the strategic institutional levels, various dynamic factors come to play. First, the maritime security architecture within this region has been deemed incapable in handling emerging maritime piracy. Until recently it was just Nigeria and Angola that had a semblance of coast guards dedicated to anti-piracy. Though as Tepp (2012) observes, the failure to train and fund maritime security regimes is responsible for insecurity. This means lacks of equipment like radars and communication gear, specialize ships and aircraft for maritime aerial surveillance and response which are obviously lacking gives

pirates a free hand for operation with impunity. Though experts have estimated that with about $100 million most of the required equipment need for effective maritime security will be acquired. Irrespective of the fact that some of these states may lack the capability for such resources as argued by experts, Nigeria has what it takes to equip the Navy to secure its territorial water and by extension the GoG, but for incessant politicization and corruption in the security sector (Tepp, 2012; Jacobsen and Nordby 2015; Osinowo, 2015; Ukeje and Mvomo Ela, 2013; Kamal-Deen, 2015). For instance, the $326 million given to Tompolo's Global West Specialist Vessels Limited as contract by NIMASA to secure territorial waters from piracy, that yielded insignificant results should have been invested in the traditional maritime security architecture of the state. Secondly, the internal politics and squabbles between the traditional securities on who controls the command in operation in Coastal area, like the former Operation PULO Shield in the Niger Delta which since its inception until recent was headed by command of the land forces. Okoronkwo et al. (2014), Fiorelli (2014) have also argued that the corruption within the security forces has also given momentum to the sustenance of piracy and maritime terrorism in the GoG and Nigeria in particular. Several investigations and indictment of military officers as cohorts and facilitators of either arms deals or oil bunkering at sea, as well as corrupt staff of oil multinationals at exploration fields, officials of port authorities and NIMASA detailing intelligence and briefs of vessels reports with pirates and militants has been an issue (Beardsley, 2014). It is however a complex dynamics of interconnection of networks of organised criminal groups, which makes the GoG piracy very unique.

Other issues involve the lack or inconsistency, as earlier discussed in conceptual framework, of the legal and jurisdictional mechanisms as well the capacity to prosecute has posed a serious problem in attempt to curbing piracy. As pirates are often arrested, in the case with NIMASA, and are freed from lack of prosecutorial mandates (OBP, 2014, Tepp, 2012; Jacobsen and Nordby, 2015). In Nigeria for instance, the anti-piracy legislation/bill which would have provided succinct administration of justice to cases of piracy has been left in abeyance in the national assembly. And also the total absence of or flawed legal standard for local market operations, nabbed "black market", for petroleum products makes it easily convenient for pirates to sell their stolen product with impunity (Ben-Ari 2013).

There is no gain saying the fact that the advent of globalization has also have it share in the continuous development and sophistication of piracy in the GoG. As Uadiale (2012), Osei-Tutu (2011) opines, that with easy access to weapons and new communication systems, connivance with other criminal network pirates can conveniently navigate and or track/override protocols of communication signals of vessels then launch attacks when it deemed secure for them. This is quite easy because they can navigate better in the difficult terrain as aborigines.

Responses
According to Osinowo (2015) various attacks within the GoG in recent years have reaffirms the incapacity of extant security architecture and expose the vulnerability of GoG maritime' landscape. Initially, it was just Nigeria and Angola that had reserve coast guards

albeit ineffective. As these nefarious business became more epidemically endemic, a shift from its Gulf of Eden prominence towards the West of Africa. Effort have been made at national, regional and international levels to curb this menace. According to Barrios (2013) the EU started addressing this problem through joint research on maritime awareness and risk project. The European Development Fund also supported ECCAS project on harmonization of safety regulations, port efficiency and emergency response towards developing maritime security strategy for the GoG. As well as Critical Maritime Routes Programme (CRIMGO), which is geared towards developing legal framework and cooperation, and sharing of information among maritime regimes and states in the region. As well as activities of the INTERPOL, and International Maritime Organization.

At a pan-regional level, ECOWAS, ECCAS and the GoG Commission (GGC) assented to the Code of Conduct. No doubt various institutions and maritime architectures have been established- namely, Maritime organization for West and Central Africa; Maritime Universities; ECWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy; G7 Friends of the Gulf of Guinea Group; Maritime Trade Information Sharing Centre Gulf of Guinea etc. have all been tailored towards having a free and safe maritime space in the GoG (Jacobsen and Nordby, 2015; OBP, 2014). At a national level, Nigeria for instance has saddled the Navy to carry out its constitutional mandate of securing the country's maritime domain, and supplemented its efforts with operations of NIMASA, which often carryout joint operations.

Be that as it may, however, the spate of piracy attacks in the GoG and Nigeria in particular have consistently being on the increase in recent times. This beg to question the effectiveness and appropriateness of not just strategic response which will not in any way address the root causes of piracy-namely, political marginalization, corruption, poverty, unemployment, income inequality, politicization of institutions and policies, lack of coherent justice system and security architecture among others which are land-based issues, that fuel piracy exponential development.

Conclusion

The GoG is of great importance to global trade and security, not just because it has numerous resources but also as it is strategically located to connect most of other continents especially America and Europe that needs these resources to sustain their development. That is why increasing acts of piracy in this region not only pose a threat to the wellbeing of its States but the World. Unlike others, GoG piracy and armed robbery at sea is compounded with its inextricable link to other criminal networks. As the loss of various opportunities incurred by Africans through the failure of its Leaders to realize the strategic importance of maritime assets as an extension of development on land, piracy has emerged as one revolting symptom of negligence of assets and failure to enhance and protect human security dynamics. Employing strategic security mechanisms alone to combat piracy, which is just a symptom, is and will continue to be counter-product. Whereas what should be done by GoG states is to develop the maritime sector just like most advance nation does, and even use it as viable instrument for their foreign policy. In addition to this realization, mechanisms which addresses the root cause of piracy as

mentioned in the paper should be considered. Thus, there should be improvement in the quality of governance at all levels in these states, accountability, responsibility and transparency should be ethos of politics and administration so that grievances of marginalization will not be manifested in piracy and other crimes. States should enhance their capability and coordination of maritime security architecture; there should concerted efforts among nations and within individual States to define and strengthen the effectiveness of justice systems; as well as robust and viable cooperation within the region and internationally be instituted as piracy by its generic meaning is an enemy of humanity not a single State(s).

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