

Evolution of Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea

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Abstract

Maritime Security in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea is an emerging issue that will dominate global conversations in the years to come. Despite the immense importance this region holds both historically and in contemporary times in global trade and economy, little scholarly attention have been paid to the maritime environment of the Gulf of Guinea, which therefore has led to a neglect of most of the maritime crimes and insecurity in this region, leading to a loss of revenue and economic stability in the region. This study will therefore focus on a historical analysis of the maritime environment of West Africa from the earliest times to the contemporary times, with more attention paid to the huge economic prospect this region holds, as well as the challenges to maritime security in the region. This study consulted predominantly secondary sources from Journals, website articles and various reports from the United Nations official publication and Maritime Agencies to arrive at its findings. This study will therefore examine in- depth the maritime environment of the Gulf of Guinea with emphasis on the importance this region holds in the global economy.

Keywords: Maritime, Security, Gulf of Guinea, Blue Economy, Piracy.

Liu Shaojie, was awarded scholarship by the State Scholarship Fund to study in Nigeria as a Visiting Master Student.

Introduction

In the 21st century, maritime security is fast becoming an emerging issue in international relations. Many countries are increasingly investing a great deal in securing their international waters and protecting it from external threats and the activities of criminals and pirates. Maritime security means different things to different people and actors on a global scale. In West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, maritime crimes and insecurity is one of the growing concerns and emerging threats confronting the countries of the said region. This is due to the porosity and vastness of this region and difficulty in monitoring activities in the high seas and the low level of security of the international Waters of each country in this region.

Maritime security generally refers to threats that occur in the international waters of countries. Some of the maritime security issues include maritime disputes between two or more states, trafficking, piracy, terrorism, human trafficking, arms, proliferation, etc. which will be analyzed in this paper. Maritime security also entails how law and order can be enforced at sea. As of now, no globally acceptable conception of maritime security has emerged. Every country, as well as divergent political and economic interests globally have their own understanding and different definition of maritime security. Bueger (2015) believes that maritime security can be viewed from the lens of the blue economy which encompasses everything that has to do with the international economy on the seas and global waters. Some other Scholars see maritime security under two categorizations namely; hard security which sees the oceans as a potential source of power, dominion and the territorial sphere of influence of a country and soft security which deals with the natural resources, maritime trade and transportation. Other schools of thought believe that maritime security can be defined in both a negative and positive sense. The negative definition sees maritime security as the absence of threats such as piracy,

terrorism, smuggling, IUU fishing (Illegal unreported and unregulated fishing) or maritime boundary conflicts, etc. however, this definition appears to be insufficient as its focus on the mere absence of threats alone, which is not encompassing. In the second sense, maritime security treats the issues of the territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone of a country as an area where the rule of law must be maintained and imposed to ensure that the marine space of countries does not become ungovernable. In this sense, maritime security has many benefits for Countries and Nation states; it ensures environmental protection and economic development, thereby leading to economic growth and prosperity. Maritime security is also viewed as the key aspect of a country's blue economy, it is not purely a security issue, it is most importantly an economic issue.

Countries have not given maritime security the attention it deserves, it has received little or no attention in both the academic and political domain. Maritime security and the safety of the international waterways has not been seen as a threat worth interrogating over the years. Siebels (2020) is of the opinion that the result of this is that many crimes have been perpetrated on the international waterways which has gone unnoticed. It was only after the 9/11 attack in the United States that maritime security became recognized as a vital aspect of national and international security. This led to the introduction of the ISPS code (International Shipping and Port Facility Security) which served as a means to protect ports and merchant vessels from terrorist attacks.

However, terrorist attacks against merchant vessels and port facilities is limited and on a low scale, but is nevertheless a recurring threat in the Gulf of Guinea and the Coast of East Africa where piracy is on a high rate, most especially in Somalia. However, the focus of this study will be on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, and its implications for the West/Central African and global economy. The issue of piracy became an emerging marine threat from 2007 onwards, this became a common trend off the coastline of Somalia and West Africa. Hence, piracy as will be seen in this paper became one of the key maritime security challenge confronting East, Central and West Africa. This paper will therefore examine the history of maritime security in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, some of the core aspects of the blue economy in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea and some of the crimes and threats to maritime security that has occurred on the international waterways. The paper will pay specific attention to maritime security issues in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea.

Maritime Security in West Africa: A Historical Overview

Over the years, the insecurity in the waters off Africa's western coast is a growing concern. The coast of West Africa/The Gulf of Guinea is the economic lifeline for most African economies both at the coast and the landlocked interior. This region is of strategic importance to the global economy. This is because this region is vital for global energy production, through Nigeria and Angola which are among the top ten biggest crude oil producers in the world, it is also vital for West Africa's fishing industry and the trafficking of narcotics and arms/munitions. It is also a hub of international trade with a high traffic of vessels plying this route on a daily basis either for the importation of manufactured goods from Europe and North America or for the export of oil, gas, energy and other mineral resources, food produce, etc.

Anyimadu (2013) while tracing the historical origin of maritime security opined that In the Pre-colonial era, in the period of the trans-Atlantic slavery, the West African waterways was notorious for been the hub of human trafficking and the trade in African slaves, opium, arms, etc. Therefore, the West African coastline have always been a vital aspect of global economy. The West and East African waterways was the sea route where countless ships from Europe and Asia respectively engaged in various forms of trade, both in commodities and humans.

From the early 14th century, it was established that many ships and voyages of expeditions sailed through the West African waterways, reaching as far as the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa in order to engage in trade with West Africa.

In this early periods, most of the trade and sea voyages were controlled by state Actors and independent/Private Firms that received state backing. One of the famous voyages that plied the West African waterways was that of Prince Henry the Navigator who sailed across the West African waterways in his voyages to explore the virgin lands of Africa. It must be noted that the noticeable absence of maritime strategy and sea power in Africa allowed the Transatlantic slave trade to thrive, giving room for the slave traders to cross through the West African waterways largely unmolested, unrestrained, unregulated and unstopped. In the long run, the Trans-Atlantic slave destabilized both the economies and polity of the various West African coastal communities and societies.

The European domination over the international waters of West Africa commercially and militarily beginning from the sixteenth century paved the way for the eventual colonization of the continent from the nineteenth century. Africa's failure to effectively control its sea and international waters in this early period made it to lose control of its blue economy, ceding this to the Europeans and foreign powers who capitalized on the porous waterways of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea to proliferate the slave trade and human trafficking. Even when the Trans-Atlantic slavery was officially abolished by the British Empire in the early 1800s, this did little or nothing to deter the trafficking in humans and Africans across the Atlantic to the new world. Despite the level of maritime control imposed by the British naval force, many West African Kings and European Merchants who profited immensely from the Atlantic economy continued to engage in trafficking and smuggling of humans across the Atlantic Ocean.

The triangular trade went on for many years despite the official abolition, until the late 1800s when the legitimate trade became the new form of trade and commodity exchange between West African Societies and European merchants. Lekunze (2022) asserted that historically, the West African waterway and the Gulf of Guinea has remained a pivotal part of the Global blue economy. It is also vital to note that the struggle among the European Powers to control West Africa's international waters, its trade network, as well as its resources on land and seas was one of the causal factors that precipitated the scramble for African territories in the years that led to the Berlin conference of 1884/1885. The end result of this conference was that the various European Powers gained control of several spheres of influence across Africa.

Siebels (2020) further commented that in the colonial period, the maritime situation in West Africa was such that all the major ports that were built by the Colonialists during this period and were geared towards facilitating the shipment of raw materials from West Africa to the various Factories and Industries in Europe and America. In this period, the issue of piracy and many maritime security threats were minimal, the various European powers made it a policy to maintain law and order in their various spheres of influence, West Africa's international waters in this period saw the rise of many ships loaded with raw materials which were shipped continuously to Europe and the Americas. As earlier stated, the British Naval Squadron in this period served as the international Police man at sea. Therefore, Africa's colonial legacy forced the countries to look inward and neglect their international waters, this has undermined the importance of the oceans to the development of the continent. Debrie (2012) dominance in maritime sector was the means through which the European Empires maintained continuity in their imperialist schemes and in the growth and prosperity of their empires. The Port infrastructures, coupled with the railway system served to facilitate the exploitation of resources from the Hinterland. Drawing from this colonial heritage, the Post-independent

African states used the Ports as a means to facilitate export of their products, especially crude oil which has been one of the greatest and most exported natural resources from the Gulf of Guinea since the oil boom in the 1970s.

The Gulf of Guinea and the Prospects of the Blue Economy

Many countries in Africa are finding it difficult to transition into the blue economy. The blue economy historically prospered many Empires and Kingdoms that traded via the ocean and sea. The blue economy as stated above, contributed to the growth of the Atlantic and Indian ocean trade in humans and commodities, it was a thriving industry and sector that opened up many parts of the world and led to various voyages of discovery across the world. In this way, the marine environment of the world contributed to the spread of globalization across the world. Many Empires from the Mongol, to Ottoman, to the Roman, Greek, British, French, Abyssinia, Spanish, Portugese etc. sponsored various voyages of expeditions and trade across the world to discover new lands and also facilitate trade and economic integration globally.

In contemporary times, the blue economy holds vast potentials for the world. With specific focus on West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. Studies have shown that the West Africa and Gulf of Guinea international waters account for about 10% of Global GDP. The Gulf of Guinea has the most economically dynamic countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and this is evidenced by the average 3% annual GDP growth rate. The major players in the Gulf of Guinea are; Nigeria, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo which are all actively involved in the oil and gas sector. Other countries that are found within the Gulf of Guinea and West African waterways are; Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra-Leone, Senegal, Cote D'Ivoire, The Gambia, Benin Republic and Central African Republic.

Popoola & Olajuyigbe (2023) asserted that the coastline of the Gulf of Guinea which spans over 6000 km from Angola to Senegal have a market size of over 300 million consumers, the countries in this region also have a multilingual diversity which comprise of Anglophone, Lusophone and Francophone countries. They also stated that in recent times, it is estimated that the Gulf of Guinea accounts for a huge volume of the Global oil and gas industry, many crude oil exploration and offshore drilling are ongoing at the Gulf of Guinea. This region of the West and Central African marine environment is also susceptible to various forms of illegal oil drilling and oil spillage. The oil and gas sector, as well as the onshore and offshore drilling account for the major share of the national revenues in Nigeria and Angola.

However, the impact of oil drilling and extraction has been declining since 2020s due to the attempts at diversification of their economies and internal markets. In respect to the prospect in the oil and gas sector, due to the prevailing political instability in the Middle East which has had negative effects on oil prices and demand/supply of oil in the region, the Gulf of Guinea will come to become an alternative to the Middle East for European, American and Asian markets. The United States, European Union and China are paying more attention to the Gulf of Guinea. The United States has committed to invest more in oil activities and oceanic deep-sea research offshore the countries in the Gulf of Guinea such as Equatorial Guinea, Angola and Nigeria. This is so because the United States and the European Union seek to limit their over-dependence on the Middle East which is war-torn and politically unstable. Therefore, oil production and drilling in the Gulf of Guinea has the capacity to meet American and European demand for oil, gas and energy. The Gulf of Guinea is also beneficial to the Global economy because most of the oil drilling in the Gulf is done offshore which is far away from political instability and Conflicts in the hinterland. Oil drilled from the Gulf of Guinea is known to be of better quality than that from Latin America and the Middle East.

Mane (2005) while also emphasizing on the importance of this region stated that one quarter of Africa's natural gas reserves is located in the Gulf of Guinea, with Nigeria been the leading gas producer, as well as holding the largest gas reserves in Sub-Saharan Africa. Other countries with large amount of gas reserve in the Gulf of Guinea include; Cameroon, The Republic of Congo, Angola and Equatorial Guinea. The natural gas potential of the Gulf of Guinea will be another factor for the increasing interest of the World's major energy consumers. With increasing American interest in the Gulf of Guinea, the United States Export-Import Bank financed an African onshore and offshore natural gas pipeline (WAGP) West African Gas Pipeline which is 1000km long and is intended to transport natural gas from Nigeria passing through Togo, Benin Republic and Ghana. At the initial stage, an investment of \$500 million was committed to the project. This will also promote trade within the region. In similar vein, Chevron-Texaco has invested in oil infrastructures in Angola and the Equatorial Guinea.

Guilini (2021) similarly pointed out that countries in the coastal waters of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea have over the years focused on supplying abundance of fish to distribute to European markets. Many West African Societies were historically fishing communities before the discovery of oil. This has thereby made the region one of the main suppliers of sea products worldwide. With many coastal communities from the Niger-Delta of Nigeria to Togo, Benin, Ghana, Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Senegal, etc. earning sizeable revenue from fishing activities. Fishing and the supply of sea products is one of the major and thriving industry in the West African international waters and it accounts for both internal trade and external trade in these countries mentioned. Some of the challenges associated with fishing over the years as earlier mentioned is the issue of Illegal Unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU).

The Gulf of Guinea also holds many potentials in mining activities in the Congo, Cameroon and North East/North Central of Nigeria, agricultural production in Cote D'Ivoire, Togo, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, etc. The Gulf of Guinea has immense natural and mineral resources, as well as human resources which will make it a favourable destination and important region for world trade and the global economy additionally, the Gulf of Guinea has grown for over five centuries to be a global hub for commerce and international trade. This will further make the region a prospective and favourable destination for global trade and the growth of the global economy in the years to come.

Challenges to Maritime Security in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea

There are myriads of challenges confronting maritime security in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. Despite the increasing global attention on the maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, which is to be achieved through various international conventions and treaties, such as the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2018 and 2039, as well as the United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement on the Security issues in the Gulf of Guinea in April, 2016, the challenges confronting the Gulf of Guinea are numerous. These efforts hardly address the rising state of insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. In other instances, the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) and the Maritime Organization for West and Central Africa (MOWCA) which were foreseen to facilitate and be suitable avenues for security and cooperation in the region face fundamental structural and geopolitical challenges which prevent them from facilitating maritime security in the region. Also, Institutional accountability and governance concerns do not feature prominently in the maritime security dialogue which has become a challenge to ensuring maritime security in the region.

The Centre for Maritime Law and Security (2023) categorized the challenges confronting maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea into three namely; structural, geopolitical and

governance related. Tackling these challenges also requires broader security and justice in the Gulf of Guinea.

Furthermore, the ineffectiveness of the States therein to effectively combat the challenges in the region is a major problem. No State in the region has been able to prevent or effectively combat maritime crimes in its naval space. Despite Nigeria's investment of \$195 million in the Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure (INSWPI), nevertheless, Nigeria's waterway/maritime space have most times been the platform where organized crimes are launched and proliferated. Nigeria and the Angolan Navy occupy 22nd and 61st positions respectively in the 2023 Navy Fleet strength list. However, none of the countries in the Gulf of Guinea possess the adequate capacities to singlehandedly suppress the organized crimes within the region. This is so because the international laws governing the maritime states prevent states from trespassing the international waters of other states.

In similar vein, other challenges in the maritime security of the Gulf of Guinea is the low defence budget of the Gulf of Guinea States which is directed towards maritime security. This low budget limits the abilities of the States in the Gulf to tackle the diverse crimes in their international waters. Other similar challenges is the prevalent competition among states in the region towards tackling maritime crimes. This lack of collaborative efforts between the naval forces and coastal guards of the region have served as an obstacle to ensuring maritime security in the Gulf. This is also related to the issue of suspicions and mistrust among the states in the Gulf, as well as bickering, clashes and Conflicts over control and maritime jurisdiction in the Gulf. One exception is the cooperation between Nigeria and Cameroon which has helped in combating piracy and banditry in the Gulf of Guinea. These collaborative efforts between the two countries led to a reduction in the number of hijackings in the region.

Adesanya (2023) believes that the jurisdiction and sovereignty of every country over its marine environment serves as an impediment to maritime security in the region because no State can go beyond its territorial limits. For instance, while international laws permit hot pursuit of criminal and pirate vessels in the Gulf, but once those criminal vessels enter the territorial space of its home country, the pursuit of such criminal vessels ceases. Chasing criminals in the water space of another state would go against sections of the United Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on coastal states sovereignty over their territorial waters. Similarly, due to the unending maritime boundary disputes in the region, those involved in organized crimes in the Gulf of Guinea exploit these perpetual disputes to propagate their activities.

Walker (2015) in a publication on the World Economic Forum's website believes that there has been an increment in the degree of maritime crime in West Africa's international waters and the Gulf of Guinea over the years which has led to the loss of substantial revenues in West Africa. This is due in part to the lack of policies for ocean governance.

In the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea which stretches from Angola to Ghana, maritime crimes have been persistent over the years. This section will therefore examine some of the maritime crimes that has constantly affected the prosperity, growth, stability and the security in the West Africa's international waters and the Gulf of Guinea. Generally, Africa's marine space is globally significant, as a great number of international shipping passes through Africa's seas. This reality has further worsened the implications of maritime crimes on West Africa's international waters. Therefore, some of the maritime crimes that has continuously plagued West Africa's marine space include; piracy, smuggling, people and arms trafficking, armed robbery, vessel hijacking, etc. They will be analyzed in full details below.

Piracy

Siebels (2020) continued in his analysis of the maritime security in West Africa by highlighting piracy and armed robbery as recurring issues that has affected West African Waterways and the Gulf of Guinea. Piracy entails robbing, vandalizing and hijacking of ships at sea. Piracy is a common threat in Somalia and some parts of the Niger-Delta of Nigeria, the coastline of Benin Republic, Angola and Togo. It has developed into a lucrative business. However, these Pirates have a different agenda in mind, their piracy is seen by them as self-defense against IUU fishing and toxic waste dumping at sea. Just like the Niger-Delta Militants of Nigeria who fight against and defend their waters and coastline from incessant pollution through the activities of Foreign Corporations who engage in mining and offshore drilling of Crude oil and natural gas. These Pirates and Militants who see themselves as Freedom Fighters do so as a means to fight against Merchant Vessels coming into their lands. For instance, out of the 68 incidents of piracy that occurred in 2021, the Gulf of Guinea witnessed 32%. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is a common occurrence because it is the coastal highway that links West Africa with markets in Europe and America. However, some Scholars believe that the issue of piracy is as a result of the lack of effective means by the states within the domain to effectively monitor their territorial waters.

Armed Robbery

This is another major issue that affects the security of the Gulf of Guinea. It has been accounted that in 2020, Sea Armed Robbers operated in at least eight countries in the Gulf of Guinea namely; Nigeria, Benin Republic, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo and Gabon. Their main targets are Vessels, tankers, Container ships, general cargo vessels, fishing Sculpture vessels, passenger vessels, and oil drilling/production vessels. The effect of this is that it has served as a major challenge to the vast economic benefits that the Gulf of Guinea offers. Sea Armed Robbery is also related to piracy and they belong to the same category of Maritime crimes in this region. For example, the International Maritime Bureau, a division of the International Chamber of Commerce reported that in 2017, the Gulf of Guinea had the highest number of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

Kidnapping

Adesanya (2023) while drawing a correlation between piracy and kidnapping, defines kidnapping as the illegal detention of people for monetary purposes. These People taken as hostages are released only when ransoms are paid. This issue is a common one in the Niger-Delta of Nigeria, with news of Niger-Delta Militants kidnapping civilians and Workers with big oil Corporations who are domiciled in the region. Kidnapping is generally a common crime in all littoral countries in the Gulf of Guinea.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018), Kidnapping has been one of the most prominently featured news in the Gulf of Guinea. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime further reported that in 2018, 41 kidnappings were recorded in waters off Nigeria's Shore alone. In many international reports, the issue of kidnapping at sea is linked with piracy. Most of these Pirates at sea also operate as Sea Armed Robbers and Kidnappers for ransom. The UNODC also stated that the Kidnappers/Pirates at sea target a wide variety of ships ranging from bulk carriers to container vessels, general cargo ships in addition to attacks on local tankers, oil industry support vessels and fishing vessels. The estimated economic cost of piracy in West Africa is valued at \$777.1 million annually between 2015 and 2017, this is also in addition to the human costs, as well as the economic effects it has had on the countries in the Gulf of Guinea. In essence, in recent years, the Gulf of Guinea has experienced an

escalation of piracy, kidnapping and armed robbery at sea. Attacks at the Gulf in 2018 accounted for all six hijackings worldwide.

Drug Trafficking

Due to the high consumption and demand for cocaine in Europe, drug trafficking emerged as a potential threat to the maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Adeleye (2023) asserted that the issue of drug trafficking in the West African coastline has been increasing steadily over the past three decades, largely due to the fact that in the 1990s when many Drug Traffickers from South America suffered crackdowns from European Laws and Drug Enforcement Officials, they turned their attention to the weak, infamous South American-West Africa sea route so as to build a link to Europe for cocaine supply. West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea has become a global hotspot for piracy and drug smuggling. It is also believed that Nigeria is becoming one of the main routes for cocaine in the Gulf of Guinea, with growing partnerships with South and Central American Drug Trafficking Syndicates. In a 2006 report, the UNODC estimated that about 40 tonnes of cocaine which is worth \$1.8 billion passed through the West African Waters to Europe.

This South American-West African route has been famous from the 16th to the 17th centuries during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade as "Highway 10" in which many Africans were shipped as slaves to South America. This is so because the sea route between West Africa and South America is the shortest route for a ship to take. The drug trafficking business along the West African route boomed from the 1970s, Countries such as Nigeria, Mali and Senegal were the major Players in the small scale intercontinental shipment of illicit drugs such as heroine and cocaine. Drug trafficking across the West African Waterways attract huge financial benefits, and the drugs are usually trafficked through various channels, including through bulk carriers vessels and cargoes at major West African seaports. Drug Traffickers are also known to pay protection fees to ensure their consignments are not seized.

Ebo'o (2019) further asserted that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes report suggested that drug trafficking has evolved to become a transnational criminal activity, controlled by West African Networks. These networks use small fishing vessels from Togo, Ghana, Benin and Nigeria as decoys to smuggle drugs that came from Latin America. Other crimes related to drug trafficking include money laundering, illegal arms smuggling, maritime pollution, and theft of crude oil, piracy, human trafficking/smuggling and illegal dumping of toxic waste.

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU)

According to a Blue Justice Report (2020) IUU fishing accounts for a loss of approximately \$2.3 billion annually. Ghana alone registered about 180 of such cases in 2019. For example, in many cases, fines for breaking the laws governing the sea are not paid, yet fishing licenses for offending vessels are renewed. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2019) also reported that the IUU fishing remains one of the greatest threats to the marine ecosystems due to its ability to undermine efforts in ensuring order in fishing, as well as the sustainability of the marine biodiversity. This therefore points to the lack of capacity and effective monitoring of the maritime activities going on in the Gulf of Guinea. IUU occurs both on the high seas and in areas within national jurisdiction. IUU focuses on all stages of fish capture and processing. IUU is also believed to lead to illegal export, capture and supply of fishes, thereby disrupting stability in local markets, threatening livelihoods and augmenting food insecurity. Sometimes fishing boats/vessels are used to smuggle drugs and facilitate money laundering. IUU fishing remains one of the biggest threats to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it becomes apparent that maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea is an emerging threat to global economic stability. This is so because of the high rate of crimes in the region due to the volatility of the Waters in the region. As highlighted in this study, apart from the maritime crimes perpetuated in the Gulf, there are also many challenges confronting the region which includes the pollution caused by the activities of Multinational companies who are mining resources and engaging in offshore oil drilling, there is also the perpetual issue of the neglect of the communities affected by the activities going on in the Gulf. Many of these communities with oil and natural gas reserves most times are in dilapidated conditions despite having billions of wealth buried in their territory. This has been the fight of the Niger-Delta Militants and many more Freedom fighters across the shore of West Africa.

Historically, the Gulf of Guinea and the coastline of West and Central Africa was the hub of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Millions of Africans and their resources were shipped across this sea route to Europe and the new world. The Gulf of Guinea therefore is vital in the global economy. With the persisting wars and political instability in the Middle East and Central Asia, the gaze of world Powers and Economic Powers will turn to the Gulf of Guinea as an alternative option for global oil, gas and energy supply, this is also coupled with the abundant human and natural resources in the hinterland. West and Central Africa are also the largest markets for many foreign imported goods such as phones and electronic gadgets. The vast Gulf of Guinea is predicted to be the major driver of international trade in the years to come, once the right maritime laws and enforcement mechanisms are put in place, the Gulf will be the safest and most secure destination for global trade.

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