**HISTORICAL CONTINUITY OF “MARITIME PIRACY” IN THE GULF OF GUINEA;**

**A REVIEW**

**Isibhebhen, E. Michael**

Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin

mckayconcept@gmail.com

09032335253

**Abstract**

This research is conducted to present a review of the historical continuity of maritime piracy in Gulf of Guinea. The research aims to show that Piracy in Gulf of Guinea dates back into history and continue into the modern times as well as examine whether there is any progress thus far in the effort put in place by states and other stakeholders to combat the menace in the region. Using the historical method of data analysis, the study analyzed information from secondary sources which include books, journals, internet materials, and presents historical record of pirates’ activities as far back as 2000 years ago as evident within the early civilization of Greeks and Romans. Evidence in the Persian Gulf, Island of Pharmaensa, and those from Portuguese show that piracy in Gulf of Guinea is a mere modern manifestation with historical roots.

The research found that several factors like oil exploration, unemployment, marginalization, bad government, and corruption are well known cause of piracy. It was found that piracy in Gulf of Guinea reached a high record level between 2010 to 2019 accounting for 80percent pirates attack reported globally. However, between 2021 and 2024, there came a 70 percent reduction of piracy in the region due to several policies initiated in Cameroon and Nigeria. It was concluded that though piracy has drastically reduced, the battle is far from over as few incidences are still recorded, for example the Hana 1 attack of 1st January 2024. On this ground, the research recommended that the working policies and programs must be sustained, anti-piracy agents should be trained and properly equipped, causal factors should also be addressed rather than focusing on attacking the pirates directly.

**Introduction**

Piracy is one of the oldest crimes known to human history, it has continued even into the modern era as well as have a strong effect on the globalized system with great consequences; these effects run across the political, social, environmental and economic structure of not just the national state but also on the international society. There are no clear records as to when piracy began but evidence shows that it was already noticeable as far as **1350 BCE.** Michael J. Struett and Mark T. Nance asserted that “The very first time something valuable was known to be leaving a beach on a raft, the first Pirate was around to steal it”.1 This goes to show that piracy is not a novel problem to human existence neither is it a modern construct. In recent years particularly from 2007, Piracy has shifted to Gulf of Guinea in West African Coast and has since remain a major problem to the African states and global system at large. The fact that Gulf of Guinea is our area of focus does not disapprove that there are other areas of Piracy in the world; some of these areas include Gulf of Aden, Strait of Malacca, and the Coast of Somalia etc. the common denominator of these is that they all constitute a threat to the Security of the State at all levels, this security according to the realist school of thought is State-centric in consideration.2 Eric Shea Nelson Likened the acts of Piracy to that of Terrorism but made the clear remark that in order to properly implement a counter measure to Maritime Piracy, policymakers must be able to distinguish between Maritime Piracy and Maritime Terrorism.3 This statement is sufficient enough to state that Maritime Piracy and Maritime Terrorism are two different crimes and concepts.

Gulf of Guinea is a very vital region to the World Oil Market which cannot be over emphasized, the United States had long regarded a steady supply of oil as a vital national security matter, in fact as at 1970 the U.S was in the lead of World oil production, its production accounting for 40 percent of the total World oil production,4 this leading role only collapsed in 1986,5 resulting in a shift on the United States Oil demand to the Middle East. With the crisis that characterized the Middle East Politics leaving a negative impact for the demand of the region’s Oil and with the new discovery of Oil reserve at Gulf of Guinea, the U.S as well as the European Union again shifted attention, and became a great beneficiary of Gulf of Guinea natural endowment. As at 2015, out of the 500million liters, that is, three million barrels of oil produced per day by Gulf of Guinea states, Europe buys about 40 percent of this production and the United States about 30 percent, this alone stand to prove that the Gulf of Guinea is of great significance to the world oil market, little should we then wonder why the region has attracted so many activities both legitimate and illegitimate in nature, and why a research beam light is needed to shine on this region revealing the historical continuity, nature, causes, and impactof piracy in the region. This justifies why this research is conducted to examine a review of historical continuity of maritime piracy in Gulf of Guinea.

**Historical Overview of Maritime Piracy**

For every phenomenon there is an origin, for every practice there is a root, and for every occurrence there is a cause. The concept of Piracy did not succeed in creating an exception to this assertion. In some cases, some practices date beyond when they are acclaimed to have begun, the significance of this is that it is usually difficult to state definitely when an issue began most especially those that have a long trace into history. Piracy as it were is not a novel practice or concept, historical records shows that it goes far into antiquity, in fact, more than 2000 year ago early civilization such as the Greeks and Romans dealt with Piracy. Sumerian recors reveal that Sumer was raided by pirates from Persian Gulf over 4,000 years ago,6 Historical records also shows that the popular Hammurabi code included laws against Maritime Piracy.7 This is evidential enough to prove that Maritime Piracy was not only established in the ancient period but was also of a great significance. The year 78 B.C also witnessed the pirate’s attack from the Island of Pharmaensa which inavded a vessel off the coast of Ceria which is now modern Turkey.8 During the reign of Julius Caesar, he at one time fell a Victim of Pirate attack, furthermore the ancient Egyptian record reveals that Cyprus was attacked by the Lukkan Pirates and the consequences were grave. In the work of Raffack in trying to expose the root of Piracy in History, he noted that Alexander the great battled in vain against numerous pirates in the Meditterranean.9

In the opinion of Heller–Roazen and Daniel, it is true to conclude that piracy has existed even from the time oceans were plied for commerce.10 The city of Anatolia also experienced the heat and pressure from pirates particularly the attack on Olympos in the 3rdcentury B.C. The activities of the pirates from Illyria and its consequence on the western Balkan Peninsula and the Adriatic Sea cannot be denied. It was only in 169 B.C that the Roman republic was able to dislodge the Pirates and made IIlyria its Province. The Frankish and Saxon Pirates were also reported to have raided the coast of Armorica and Belogie Gaul which manifested in Kidnapping, stealing of goods as well as taking Hostages. Also, in the province of Britannia - a province with Roman influence and control, Saint Patrick was captured and enslave by Irish Pirates.

These incidents hold strong evidence for the fact that Piracy is rooted in history and its nature and manifestation is also historical in dimension. In the Medieval Europe, the activities of Pirates like the “Vickings” had far reaching effect. Between 8th and 12th century B.C looters from Scandinavia operated in the order of Pirates, the activities of these pirates became very significant that the early years of the middle age became known and the “Vicking age”.11 By the close of the Middle Ages, another set of Pirates known as the “Frisian Pirates” emerged and operated with great dominance, this group fought in opposition with the troops of Emperor Charles V. Another point that can be drawn from the events cited above is that even in the ancient time Piracy was not the problem of a particular region but was totally universal; In fact, the Westphalia treaty included within its Provisions laws of Piracy,12 which had hitherto existed in Customary International Law.

In the ancient period, piracy was usually authorized by government, though this became known by another concept called “privateering” to distinguish it from the total unlawful act of piracy done without any backing by a government. In 2002, reports from the Royal Naval Museum Library revealed that the period between 1620 and 1720 was known as the “Golden age of Piracy” when as stated above Piracy was often authorized by government and ships were allowed and encouraged to attack and plunder Ships from other nations and the resulting profits were shared with their governments.13 One of such attack was that of Edward Teach who was authorized by the Queen of England – Anne, to attack French and Spanish vessel during the war of Spanish succession of 1701-1714. Jean Fleury a French Pirate operating from Honfleur seized two of the three ships transporting Corte’s treasury to Spain off Azores in 1523, the capture involved 600 marks of pears, 62,000 ducats of gold, and several tons of Sugar.14 Though this was considered an act of war as it fell under the auspices of Privateering, Spain regarded it as an act of Piracy and Fleury was executed in 1527 when he was captured.15 The distinction between Piracy and Privateering became a matter of great concern and generated much confusion on whether Privateering falls under Piracy. This emanates from the fact that Piracy is a criminal violence at Sea, or an act of robbery and usually unauthorized by a government as distinct from Privateering which is authorized by the government and could not be properly considered as stealing. In an attempt to address this confusion through a universal approach, the Westphalia Treaty of 1648 totally outlawed acts of Privateering,16 in other words it became an illegal act and a punishable crime.

The incidence of 1701 leading to the trial and execution of the famous Scottish Pirates – William Kidd, help us to appreciate the fact that piracy even from History has always been a crime and never tolerated, In 1820 and 1850, Piracy was successfully eliminated in Central America and the Asian waters respectively, what we can draw from the above explanation is that though piracy has become used to the movies and film industry, its origin and appropriate manifestations is primarily associated with activities on the high sea. As Privateering became outlawed as a tool of national government there began a shift from ancient to modern piracy,17 the height of Piracy came in the late 17th and early 18th centuries when it flourished in the sea adjacent to European and North America, this may be in reference to ancient Piracy as James Wombell noted that modern piracy took course in the 19thand 20th century, as maritime trade grew, new opportunities were opened for Pirates to plunder.18 Among other things, this was an attempt to state the shift from ancient piracy to modern piracy. According to James Wombell, it was the rising number of practical attack in straits of Malacca that eventually initiated the problem of modern day Piracy.19

**Gulf of Guinea in Perspective**

Presenting a geographical definition of the Gulf of Guinea has always been difficult and problematic, more difficult than an economic description. Gulf of Guinea conveys different meaning to different scholars, In fact the definition ascribed depend greatly on the view from which the geographical entity is been looked at as well as those attempting to define it. Ogwu added that the area is a strategic region from ancient time.20 In this discourse, attempt is made to present a mixture of a geographical and economic description of the region where definition is impossible, this would serve as a pointer to understanding the relevance and importance of the region to the immediate neighbors and the global system at large. In the course of this research, it was discovered that some scholarships on piracy usually fail to include Gulf of Guinea as a major point of pirate activities, the sole reason for this is not unconnected to the fact that a lot of writers sees piracy in Gulf of Guinea as a recent phenomenon without available and sufficient data, this is not to suggest that there is no available work on the region. However, most description presented about the region are usually imprecise and inaccurate. The Gulf of Guinea is off the Western African coast as part of the Atlantic Ocean. It is believed to be the geographic Centre of the earth due to its longitude and latitude positioned at zero degrees.21

In Encyclopedia Britannica of 2011, the Gulf of Guinea is said to extends westward from Cape Lopez close to the equator, to Cape Palmas at longitude 70 West, the Volta and Niger rivers form part its major tributaries. In a brief description of the region, Professor Theo Neethling of the University of Free State referred to Gulf of Guinea as the westward coast of Africa,22 Damian Ondo Maine added through his opinion that description would be appropriate over definition when discussing Gulf of Guinea, he therefore presented a mixture of geographical and economic description of the region; according to him, Gulf of Guinea has a market capacity of about 300 consumers, it encompassed a number of countries in central and West Africa which include, Cameroon, central African Republic (CAR), Angola, Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Togo Liberia, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Senegal, Sierre-Leorne, and Cote d’Ivoire, these countries enjoys a wide range of diversity inherent in their culture, language, and geography. In overall Gulf of Guinea generates a GDP of 112 billion dollars, export of 45.5 billion dollars and import of 31.63 billion dollars. Its ecosystem is a source of global interest and its countries enjoys a rich bio network made of diverse fauna and flora.23

The Collins Online dictionary refers to the region as an inlet of the south Atlantic on the west side of Africa, reaching from Cape Palmas in Liberia to Cape Lopez in Gabon and containing two bays which are bight of Bonny and bight of Benin segregated by the Nigeria Delta.24 Anene, added that the Gulf is the at the equator and maintain latitude and longitude at zero degrees, and numerous island such as the Annobon Island, Boboswati Island, Bioko island, and Carisco island are all present in the Gulf.25 The region is blessed with large natural resources which can serve global prosperity, these resources include Diamond, Gold, Oil, Gas etc. The position of region in terms of geography is of immense comparative advantage for oil supply and transportation, the region is also a great supply of energy. The transit from which oil and other goods/products are transported to and from the region are in the words of Maine called checkpoints, Piracy becomes rampant and successful as a result of the narrowness of these checkpoints which Pirates take advantage of in creating blockade,26 with great consequences. Let me state here that the act of piracy does not only involve stealing of oil and tankers but also fish and poaching which is also evident in the region thereby causing great loss and damage to fishermen who plough the region.

Several reasons also abound for the attraction of nations as well as pirates to the Gulf of Guinea, prime among this reason is the fact that the resources in the region contain special quality, the oil from the Gulf is of high quality than those of Latin America. It possesses above 300 and runs close to 400 mark which exceeds that of Latin America and other regions that falls less than 300 mark, This superiority is an added advantage. Another factor is that the region’s oil contains little Sulphur, by global standard this is a good characteristics needed by the U.S oil company. The Gulf of Guinea is also important when it comes to shipping, it provide for lower transportation cost and environmental Hazards, also added to this is that the region’s oil is mostly extracted from offshore field and is protected from turmoil.27 In the idea of Ukeje and Mvomo, Gulf of Guinea is the new frontier for what is discussed as the second scramble for Africa, this time the focus is not territories but access to and control of newly discovered vast resources.28 Pirates have also taken advantage of the Boundary disputes among Gulf of Guinea States; the inability to collectively tackle the issue of insecurity caused by Maritime Piracy has continued to give strength to it. The importance of Gulf of Guinea can be appreciated when we discover that the economic life of most countries including European and other countries are dependent on the region, hence the Gulf of Guinea issue has now become the concern of other states. In fact, in 2004, CSIS task force on Gulf of Guinea Security was launched and one of its principal recommendations was that the United States should make security and governance in the region an explicit priority in the its foreign policy; this is not unconnected to the fact that the economic life of the United States greatly depend on the region, at least in its demand for Oil.

It was also discovered that the events in the surrounding countries have a great impact on the outcomes in Gulf of Guinea, the decrease or increase of vices in the respective Gulf of Guinea countries, can led to increase or decrease of the same in Gulf of Guinea. An example is the Niger Delta issue in Nigeria. Niger Delta experienced conflict in the early 1990s as a result of the tensions between foreign oil companies and minority groups who felt they were exploited, especially the Ogoni and Ijaw people. This tension culminated into a movement known as Niger Delta militants which later brought displeasure to the Nigerian Society, and this group only ceased operation in 2009 when the Nigeria government of President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua granted its members Amnesty. Records have it that these members migrated and resumed operation in countries like Angola, Chad, and Benin etc.29

**Maritime Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea from earliest times to modern era**

The emergence of piracy in Gulf of Guinea is an offshoot of several illegal activities that laid the foundation of what became known as piracy in Gulf of Guinea. While modern organized piracy took shape in thew 1970s during the oil surge, its roots dates back to antiquity and especially the precolonial era during the slave trade business. There are no sufficient and formal records to substantiate the occurrence of piracy in Gulf of Guineaprior to 1980. In fact, piracy in Gulf of Guinea became a major concern in the agenda of International Maritime Organization only in the 1980s,30 it is believed that, it was from this period that relevant and valid reports on piracy began to emerge. However, to properly understand the nature of operations of pirates in Gulf of Guinea, it is necessary to look into and historical assessment of the activities that preceded the rise of pirates in Gulf of Guinea.

The earliest activities that looked like a pirate raiding began with the activities of the slaves raiding by the Portuguese which followed the maritime exploration of the 1440s.31 the nature of this operations was that the Portuguese supported the powerful Africans who gathered number of various indigenes and send to the Portuguese. These captured Africans were forcibly sent to the America continent to work as laborers in sugar plantations and mines. It was this continuous act that initiated what became known as the **Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade where millions of people were reportedly to have left the African continent forcefully.32 Apart from slaves, the Portuguese was also known for engaging in trade of other items like** spices, gold, and other goods, this became an attracting concern for people who saw the opportunity to hijack the ship carrying these items and steal much goods as possible from the ship. As the pirate’s business began to grow, those who have had good knowledge and experience about the sea and ship began to engage in maritime piracy for survival. Some of these people included former sailors, freed slaves, and other classes of persons.

As this operation became organized, rival countries began to support piracy groups to attack the ship of their enemy country in order to weaken their power, dominance, and control of the trade routes.33 The result of this was a more sophisticated pirates’ network and operations that led to several incidence of ship hijack recorded. In 1615, the Dutch pirates hijacked Portuguese slave ship “Sao Joao Baptista” along the coast of West African. In 1622, the Dutch intercepted and diverted the Portuguese merchant ship Santa Catarina along the Strait of Malacca which was carrying slaves and other valuable goods. In 1937, the Dutch West India Company also seized the Elmina Castle located in Ghana which was a Portuguese slave trading stronghold. Records also has it that Henry Mainwaring hijacked several ships which belong to the Spanish and Portuguese along West Africa coast in the early 17th century.34 This evidence clearly demonstrates a strong connection between the activities of pirates and a strong economic maritime zone as in the case of Gulf of Guinea.

In the 1970s, with the rise and dependence on oil as major source of income for the states, pirates shifted their attention to activities revolving around oil. This became more pronounced in the 1990s as a result of the activities in Niger Delta which was connected to militants’ operations. This group claimed to be fighting for their right and the oil exploration in the region which according to them resulted in environmental degradation. They also claim that the oil exploration companies where not giving back to the environment as they were taking from it. This led to what they termed the underdevelopment of the region. In October 2002, the Niger Delta militants hijacked a French oil tanker called the MT Limburg.35 In April 2006, the militants also hijacked the oil tanker **MT Nigeria along** Bonny Island. In June 2012, the militant kidnapped the **MT Enyong** and its 14 crew members. In 2013, the militants attacked an oil tanker - **MV Albedo**, transporting crude oil in Gulf of Guinea. In October 2016, the **MV Stolt Valor – a** chemical tanker was also adopted. It is necessary to state here that, though the Amnesty program came in 2009 under the regime of President Musa Yar’Adua, the activities of the Niger Delta militant only shifted ground to a new region in Gulf of Guinea. It means that while some militants surrendered their weapons to the government, others moved and relocated their activities to new zones in the Gulf of Guinea.36

Writers like Adjoa Anyimadu believed that Piracy at Gulf of Guinea is different from those of other regions due to its intense manifestation, for example, the Somalia pirates as well as those in the Indian Ocean focused on kidnapping, holding Cargo, capturing vessels, in order to extract money from a Ship owner, but in Gulf of Guinea, pirates launch attacks primarily to steal Cargoes, valuables from a vessel or its crew. Majority of such attacks have been proven to come from Countries like Angola, Nigeria, Benin, and Togo who are also at the greatest risk of this criminality.37 Apart from cargoes and ships who are victims of piracy, fishermen in the Gulf of Guinea are also and truly the first victims of Piracy in the region by act of Poaching. This also establishes the fact that Piracy in the region is complex and multi-facet. According to the reports of International Maritime Bureau (IMB), numbers of Pirate attacks in areas such as the Coast of Somalia has fallen drastically; in 2011 there were 199 incidents, by the close of 2012 the score had fallen to 70 incidents, but the Gulf of Guinea became the recipient for this decrease as its activities came on the increase. The Fishing Industry was so often attacked by Pirates that it operated with only 150 registered travelers in 2010 against 250 in 2003,38 this without doubt leaves a direct implication for employment. In 2013, the International Maritime Bureau report that in Gulf of Guinea region, there were more than 40 piracy attacks, 802 crew kidnapped, 7 vessels hijacked. This accounted for about 30percent of the total number of pirates incidence in African seas.39

In January 2014, MT Kerala owned by the Greek Vanished in Angola Waters before re-appearing in Nigeria waters approximately 57 miles southwest of a Nigerian oil terminal, with nearly 13,000 tons of diesel missing from its cargo. To facilitate the theft, the pirates disabled the Kerala’s identifications and communication system, they used paint to cover any sign that will lead to detection.40 The operation in the Gulf of Guinea is more deadly than those in other regions as the human costs of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea are immense, about 1,871 sea farers were victims of attacks and in 2013, 279 were taken hostage, fierce resistance to Naval patrols also increased; in March 2014, two Britons employees of a UK based maritime security firm were arrested with twelve Nigerians for attempting to offload crude from a vessel that itself had been seized for stealing oil.41 According to the Oceans Beyond Piracy report, in 2015, a total of 54 piracy incidences were recorded in the Gulf of Guinea, this involved attack on 1225 seafarers, 44 seafarers kidnapped, and 23 people killed. The report revealed that 2015 witnessed a more violent attack of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea than in the previous year. The effect was also massive, resulting in 50% increase in the cost of fuel, and a total of $349.1 million was spent on Contracted Maritime Security.42

In 2017, a total of **97 piracy and robbery incidents** included 21 kidnappings and 100 seafarers taken hostage, with a total estimated cost of US$818 million due to stolen goods, security, and insurance expenses. Oceans Beyond Piracy report that in 2017, there was a decrease in the act of piracy and armed robbery attack in the Gulf of Guinea compared to that of 2016, a total of 1,726 seafarers were affected in the attack recorded in the Gulf of Guinea as against the 1,921 of the previous year.43 Between **2018 and 2019**, there was a **50%** increase in crew kidnappings with the Gulf of Guinea accounting for **90% of global kidnappings at sea.** Reports in Africa shows that 92% of the hostage taking and 73% of kidnappings that happened in that period in and around Africa are happened in Gulf of Guinea.44 According to the International Maritime Bureau, the Gulf of Guinea accounted for 80% of crew kidnappings by pirates, the report revealed that 130 seafarers were kidnapped in 22 separate incidents in 2020, which was more than the 2019 record of 121 kidnappings.45 In February 2021, 10 foreigners were abducted by pirates in the coast of Gabon and only released after the payment of $300,000 demanded for ransom. In 2024, a chemical tanker known as Hana I sailing from Abidjan in Ivory Coast to Douala in Cameroon was attacked by Nigerian pirates in the Gulf of Guinea, near Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. A total of nine crew members were kidnapped but later released on **January 29–30, 2024.46** Freedom Onouha identified that the stages of Pirates operation in the Gulf of Guinea involves; Target selection, Planning, Deployment, Attack, Transshipment, Transportation.47 Tim Hart added that Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is not simply about cargo theft from tankers but more broadly relates to Robbery, Kidnapping and Hijacking of various vessel, this shows that the operation of Gulf of Guinea Pirates is multi-dimensional; these pirates are usually the power house behind oil black market.48 Malaquais added that They steal oil, increase black market, and then deposit it back into the global supply.49

**Conclusion**

Maritime piracy is an aged long phenomenon and continue to pose challenges to the national and international security, it is an ancient risk with modern faces. The wide spread popularity of the act has made it a global crime which must not be condoned. Historical evidence shows that the act of piracy began to manifest in areas of economic interest and trade routes. Greeks, Romans, Island of Pharmaensa, coast of Ceria, Cyprus, and the Meditterranean region are earliest zones for pirates attacks. There have also been ancient laws such as Hammurabi code, and the Westphalia treaty which contained provisions enacted to curb this problem. This attention given to maritime piracy shows that it is an aged long problem with a serious implication. The idea and operations of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is not a modern innovation but only a mere historical chain of connection and continuity. In a more recent sense, The Gulf of Guinea have become the home of pirates attack due to its vast natural endowment of crude oil, Gold, and natural which are highly sought after by countries all around the world. The strategic positioning of the Gulf of Guinea and its economic relevance has made it a central point of attraction both for states and writers. As already noted in the earlier part of this research, many states both from Africa and other continent greatly depend on the region for oil, this is only possible due to the vast oil deposits in the region. While this serves as a fortune for States it also encourages the breeding of Piracy. The ambitions of the people and the government often times conflict due to the large number of resources and money a country’s government amass for their own luxuries rather than for the benefit of the people. It is regrettably the fact that the African States of the Gulf of Guinea are still listed among the poorest countries of the world in spite of the resources present at the region; this is so due to failure of the government, Poverty, Lack of Economic Opportunities, Political Instability, Lack of Naval Presence, Strategic Shipping Lanes, and the inability to properly harness the resources for the proper development of the State. We must not always shy away from the fact that some States usually supports these Pirates to keep on perpetrating criminal acts for their own selfish benefit. An approach to exterminate Piracy from the Gulf of Guinea should also include dealing with those States that supports the Pirates operating at the region rather than with the direct pirates alone.

The re-emergence of Maritime Piracy in its modern sense can be attributed to first, the end of the cold war which reduced political control of States previously supported by Superpower, the second factor is however an offshoot of the first which is the increase of international business and trade. The link between ancient and modern piracy is justified on the ground that the manifestation and operations of modern Pirates which involves Kidnapping, Stealing, and Killing in some cases, is akin to those of the ancient Pirates. The symbol of Piracy which is the skull of the human head placed on top two crossed sword or bone gotten in the ancient period still remains the symbol of Piracy in the Modern era and does not signify safety or friendliness but danger or death which usually intimidates victims. Maritime piracy continues to persist also due to the fact that Maritime transports is a very important element of international trade, it supports globalization and affects the global economy. It is proven that over 90% of the world trade is carried by Sea.Until the alarming increase in attacks and hijacking in Somalia waters in recent years, few people were actually aware that Maritime Piracy has continued into the modern era. One of the most difficulties in discussing the history of the law of piracy is the lack of consistency in the use of the term,for the fact that the Gulf of Guinea Piracy is mainly driven by the combination of economic opportunism and the lack of governmental capacity to prevent the hardened criminal gangs that operates ashore while carrying attacks at sea, States as well as the International Community should be quick to harness resources for the benefit of all rather than for a few.

This research exposed the fact that Gulf of Guinea is an incubator for Piracy due to its enormous resources and also acts as a safe haven for criminals. However, there have been several responses adopted by states and the international community in addressing the problem of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Two major initiative that have proved helpful is the **Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security which was adopted by** 25 West and Central African states **in** June 2013, and the **Nigeria** Deep Blue Project which was a Nigeria’s pioneering maritime security initiative launched in 2021. These efforts coupled with other efforts to tackle maritime piracy, accounted for a 70percent reduction in pirates’ cases and incidence in 2024. Between the period of 2010 to 2019, Gulf of Guinea accounted for about 80percent of the pirate’s attack reported in the world, but between 2021 and 2024 the numbers of pirates’ attack reduce by 70percent in the Gulf of Guinea. This goes to show that the efforts adopted by Gulf of Guinea states as well as the international community in curbing maritime piracy in the region has significantly paid off and proved impactful.

**Recommendation**

This research work has been able to trace maritime piracy from ancient times to modern era in the Gulf of Guinea. It has revealed that piracy is a serious threat to states and the global system. Based on the findings in this research, it is recommended that affected states as well as the international community should continue to employ workable policies that will continue to reduce the occurrence of piracy in the region. States and the International Community must continue to adopt both military and non-military means to respond to Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The problem of Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is connected to several factors like domestic factors like unemployment, economic exclusion or marginalization, bad government and corruption, therefore, effort of address piracy should also capture addressing the factors. The very strength of Pirates in the Gulf of Guinea cannot be totally destroyed by the government without the full cooperation of the citizens; therefore, the citizens must cooperate with the government by providing necessary information that would assist the operation of anti-piracy agents in curbing the problem. The resistance to Piracy in places like Somalia and the Gulf of Asian had been a great success; therefore, the operational tactics, strategies and model used in these areas should be adopted and implemented in the Gulf of Guinea. It is necessary to note that no country can all by itself address Piracy, therefore it is important for state to collaborate and cooperate on the issue. This form of cooperation had proved successful in place like Somalia and Gulf of Aden, this cooperation should be properly supervised for effective output. Finally, sophisticated weapons of higher quality and standard be given to anti-piracy agents to enable them repel any piracy threats. This is more important when we consider the fact that if the weapons of the Pirates are more sophisticated, the effort to repel them might become unattainable.

**Endnotes**

1. Stuett M.J. and Nance M.T, *Maritime Piracy and the Construction of Global Governance***.** (New York: Rourtledge, 2013), pp.1-2.
2. Gilbert J.D, Uzodike U.O and Isike C, “The United States Africa Command: Security for Whom”*, The Journal of Pan African Studies,* Vol.2(9), 2009, p.266.
3. Nelson, E.S, “Maritime Terrorism and Piracy; Existing and Potential Threat” *Global Security Studies.* Vol. 3(1), 2012, pp.15-28.
4. Gilbert J.D, Uzodike U.O and Isike C, “The United States Africa Command: Security for Whom”*, The Journal of Pan African Studies,* Vol.2(9), 2009, p.266.
5. *Ibid., p.269*
6. Johnson Charles, *The History of the Lives and Actions of the most Famous Highwaymen*

*and Street Robbers,* (London: Longman: 1813), p.529

1. Early Peter, *The Pirates Wars*, (New York: Saint Martin Press, 2005), p.92
2. Gosse Phillip. *The History of Piracy*, (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1932), p.5
3. *Ibid., p.8*
4. Roazen and Daniel, *The Enemy of All; Piracy and the Law of Nations*, Available at en.m.wiki pedia.org/wiki/piracy
5. Simek Rudolf, “The Emergence of the Viking age; Circumstances and conditions”, The New discoveries of Archeology, available at en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viking-age, accessed on 12th August 2025
6. Westphalia Treaty, *Article 2, Article 4 and Article 11,* signed at Germany: Osnabruck and Munter, from 15 May to 24 October, 1648.
7. Barry, L. and Staver, B. “A Study In Maritime Piracy” A Report submitted to the Faculty of Worcester Polyphonic Institute, 7th May, 2009. p.2.
8. Lane kris, p*illaging the Empire; Piracy in the Americas 1500 – 1750*, (New York: M.E Sharp, 1998), p.18.
9. Cordingly David, *Terror on the High sea from the Caribbean to the South China Sea*, (Atlanta: Turner Publisher 1996), p.17
10. Westphalia Treaty, *Article 2, Article 4 and Article 11,* signed at Germany: Osnabruck and Munter, from 15 May to 24 October, 1648.
11. Wombell Jane, *The Long War against Piracy - Historical trends*, (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), p.6.
12. *Ibid*., p.2.
13. *Ibid*., p.57.
14. Enor, Frank N and Ellah, “Resource Conflict, Security and Crisis of Socio-Economic Development in the Gulf of Guinea 1990-2010”, *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, Vol. 14(1), 2014, p.56.
15. Kennedy K, Mbekeani and Mthuli Ncube, ‘Economic Impact of Maritime Piracy’, African Development, Bank, 2011, p.5. available at <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Maritime%20Piracy_Maritime%20Piracy.pdf>.), accessed on23rd July 2025
16. Neethling Theo, “Piracy around Africa’s West and East Coast; A comparative Political Perspective”, *South Africa Journal of Military Studies,* Vol. 38(2), 2010.
17. Maine D.O, *Emergence of the Gulf of Guinea in the Global Economy; Prospect and Challenges,* IMF Working Paper, Vol. 235 No5, December 2005, p.3.
18. Collins Online Dictionary *Gulf of Guinea*, Available at www.collinsolinedictionary.com/dictionary/english/gulf of guinea = examples\_box. pg. Assessed on May 25, 2015.
19. Anene L, “*Gulf of Guinea” Growing Strategic Profile*, Nigeria Army Quarter Journal, Vol. 2, No 1, 2006, pp. 39-51.
20. Maine D.O. *Emergence of the Gulf of Guinea in the Global Economy; Prospects and Challenges,* December 2005, p.3.
21. This Daylive, “Strengthening Security in the Gulf of Guinea”, December 6, 2010 p.2.
22. Charles Ukeje and Wullson Mvomo Ela, Africa approaches to Maritime Security-Gulf of Guinea, (Abuja: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013), p.9.
23. Wombell Jane, *The Long War against Piracy - Historical trends*, (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010), p.6.
24. Henrique Portela Guedes, “Maritime Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea” *Policy Brief*, 4(1), 2020
25. John Thornton – *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800,* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.23
26. Nuno Tristão, available at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuno_Trist%C3%A3o?utm>, accessed 20th August 2025
27. John Thornton – *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800,* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.23
28. John B. Hattendorf, “HM 30: Reflections on Naval Hist al History: Collected Essay” *Historical Monographs Special Collections,* 34(1), 2023
29. Enor, Frank N and Ellah, “Resource Conflict, Security and Crisis of Socio-Economic Development in the Gulf of Guinea 1990-2010”, *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, Vol. 14(1), 2014, p.56
30. Wombell Jane, *The Long War against Piracy - Historical trends*, (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010, p.6.
31. Adjoa Ayimadu, *Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea; Lessons Learned From the Indian Ocean,* (London: Chatham House, 2013), p.2.
32. *Ibid., p.7*
33. Olu Olofin, Idris Usman, Dan Ihiabe, and Ali Jaja, *Piracy In The Gulf Of Guinea: Root Causes, Effects And Priority Intervention Measures,* (Jaji-Kaduna: Martin Luther Agwai International Leadership and Peacekeeping Centre, 2021), p.12
34. Mark Doyle, “Nigeria Piracy; Another form of Oil Theft” The Guardian, June 18, 2013.
35. *Ibid*
36. Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) “The State of Maritime Piracy; Gulf of Guinea Key Findings” 2015, available at <https://www.oneearthfuture.org/sites/default/files/State_of_Maritime_Piracy_2015>, accessed on 14th August 2025
37. George, Libby, "Gulf of Guinea pirate kidnappings hit record in 2020". Available at msn.com, accessed on 16th August 2025
38. Temitope Francis and Yakubu Mohammed. “Maritime Insecurity in The Gulf Of Guinea (Gog) And The Quest For Security Intelligence Deployment In Combating The Menace” *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research / Social and Management Sciences*. Vol. 6(4), 2020
39. Nicoloso, Giulia "Stark increase in kidnapping at sea in the Gulf of Guinea". 2021, available at [web.archive.org/web/20210602214609/https://criticalmaritimeroutes.eu/2020/07/17/stark-increase-in-kidnapping-at-sea-in-the-gulf-of-guinea](https://web.archive.org/web/20210602214609/https%3A//criticalmaritimeroutes.eu/2020/07/17/stark-increase-in-kidnapping-at-sea-in-the-gulf-of-guinea), accessed on 11th August 2025
40. Max Williams, Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security: Lessons, Latency, and Law Enforcement, May 15, 2024, available at <https://warontherocks.com/2024/05/gulf-of-guinea-maritime-security-lessons-latency-and-law-enforcement>, accessed 20th August 2025
41. Onuoha, freedom; “Piracy and Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea: Trends, Concerns, and Propositions”*, The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol.4(3), 2013, p. 282. Available at; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2013.862767>.
42. Keith Johnson, “Oil Pirates and the Mystery Ship” *Foreign Policy*, January 29, 2014.
43. Malaquais, Assis “Ask the expert: The growing threat of oil pirates in West Africa’s Gulf of Guinea” ACSS News Spotlight, March 29, 2012, accessed July 25, 2025, at <http://africacenter>.org/2012/03/ask-the-expert-the-growing-threat-of-oil-pirates-in-west-africa%E2%80% 99s-gulf-of-guinea/.