



**NHSMUN**

**CRISIS - AU**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Secretary-General**  
**Terry Wang**

**Director-General**  
**Jordan Baker**

**Delegate Experience**  
**Nastasja Vásquez**

**Global Partnerships**  
**Daniela Maciel**  
**Sebastian Jimenez**

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**Nachiketh Anand**  
**Alina Castillo**

**Seonghyun Chang**  
**Naina Dhawan**

**Ximena Faz**  
**Kellie Fernandez**  
**Grace Harb**

**Adiva Ara Khan**  
**Anshul Magal**

**Analucia Tello**  
**Sofia Velasco**  
**Renata Venzor**

Dear Delegates,

I am so excited to welcome you to the African Union committee for NHSMUN 2025! My name is Tess Robinson and I will be your Director for Session 1. Over the last few months Olivia, the Director for Session 2, and I have continuously researched all aspects of piracy within the Gulf of Guinea, from the history of piracy to its impact on its respective countries to attempted and possible solutions. As you begin to delve into the topic yourselves, you will see just how many moving parts contribute to the overall issue of piracy.

I am originally from Manhattan, NY, and am currently a sophomore at Stevens Institute of Technology majoring in Cybersecurity. Some hobbies of mine include reading, watching crime/detective shows (NOT true crime), playing with my cat (his name is Milkshake), and various outdoor activities. I have been doing MUN since I was a sophomore in high school, and since then I have been the crisis director and delegate for my high school MUN club. In 2022 I participated in NHSMUN 2022 as a delegate and was a part of the INTERPOL crisis committee, where you are not only able to have more fun and freedom, but also make some friends along the way. In 2024, I was an Assistant Director in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) committee for NHSMUN 2024. As one of the chairs, I got to see delegates who were genuinely excited to be there learn from their peers and become more confident in their roles. Throughout my time in MUN I have considered it to have been both stressful and amazing, but as a whole it has been a very memorable experience.

Currently, those who live within the areas most affected by piracy are struggling tremendously to make a life for themselves and are stuck in a never ending wheel of piracy. Due to this, more youths have decided to adopt the lifestyle of pirates in order to break this cycle. This results in more attacks on ships which reduces the trade and lowers incoming revenue. Furthermore, because many of the issues are intertwined there is no “one solution fits all.” Throughout the committee sessions, you’ll learn how to collaborate with your fellow delegates and think outside the box regardless of whether your agenda is to create solutions to the problem or to side with the pirates. Your actions and decisions will affect life hereafter for all countries residing in the Gulf of Guinea. My co-Director, Olivia, and I look forward to seeing all the creative ideas you guys will come up with.

If there are any questions, comments, or concerns please feel free to reach out to either Olivia or me and we will respond as soon as possible. I look forward to meeting you all in March for NHSMUN 2025!!

Best,

Tess Robinson

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Crisis: African Union

Session I



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**Renata Venzor**

Dear Delegates,

I am thrilled to welcome you to the African Union for NHSMUN 2025! I am Olivia Woodard (she/her), and I will be your Director for session II. Tess and I are so excited to be your committee directors! Over the past few months, we have researched the ever changing situation in the Gulf of Guinea. With 17 countries stretching from Angola to Senegal, the region is continually faced with threats of piracy and armed robbery, both on the high seas and in territorial waters. As you will come to learn, each country has been impacted by these threats differently and have addressed them in various ways. We look forward to seeing delegates representing these different interests come together for collaborative and meaningful debates.

This will be my fourth year attending NHSMUN and my second year staffing the conference! For NHSMUN 2024, I served as the Assistant Director of the South Korean National Security Council. As Assistant Director, it was incredible to see delegates learn and grow throughout committee after previously attending the conference in high school. I am originally from East Brunswick; New Jersey and I currently attend Northeastern University in Boston. I am studying International Affairs and International Business with a minor in Political Science and hope to pursue a career in international human rights law. Outside of class, I write for our school's newspaper and am involved in our school's International Relations Council where I compete in Model UN, NATO, and Arab League conferences. In my free time, I love spending time kayaking, thrifting, and or tackling a new LEGO set. I am also a huge music lover—my top artists currently consist of Chappell Roan, Queen, and Laufey.

Tess and I have spent the summer researching how the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has evolved over recent decades. The Gulf of Guinea's geography has made it a hub for trade and oil production. However, piracy threatens the region's economic potential. With the causes and effects of piracy stemming from high poverty and unemployment rates to environmental damage, solutions must go beyond improving maritime security. While many African Union and regional meetings have been convened to address the issue, passed resolutions have been ineffective and do not benefit the region as a whole. We hope to see new and innovative solutions to prevent future instances of piracy while also addressing its lasting impacts on the region.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or Tess. We are happy to help! Best of luck with your preparations and I look forward to meeting you all in March!

Best Wishes,

Olivia Woodard

[nhsmun.au@imuna.org](mailto:nhsmun.au@imuna.org)

Crisis: African Union

Session II



## **Table of Contents**

A Note on the NHSMUN Difference	5
A Note on Research and Preparation	7
Committee History	8
Simulation	9

## **Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea** **12**

Introduction	13
History and Description of the Issue	14
Current Status	30
Bloc Analysis	39
Committee Mission	43
Committee Representatives	45
Research and Preparation Questions	49
Important Documents	50
Works Cited	51

## A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! We are Terry Wang and Jordan Baker, and we are this year's Secretary-General and Director-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse Model United Nations conference for secondary school students. We are thrilled to welcome you to New York City in March.

As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. Our organization provides a uniquely tailored experience for all through innovative and accessible programming. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience, and this idea permeates throughout numerous aspects of the conference:

**Realism and accuracy:** Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. Each NHSMUN committee is a simulation of a real deliberative body so that delegates can research what their country has said in the committee. Our topics are chosen from the issues currently on the agenda of that committee (except historical committees, which take topics from the appropriate time period). We also strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. Our delegates have the incredible opportunity to conduct first-hand research, asking thought-provoking questions to current UN representatives and experts in their respective fields of study. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

**Educational emphasis, even for awards:** At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN so special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN as an activity. NHSMUN seeks to reward students who excel in the arts of compromise and diplomacy. More importantly, we seek to develop an environment in which delegates can employ their critical thought processes and share ideas with their counterparts from around the world. Given our delegates' plurality of perspectives and experiences, we center our programming around the values of diplomacy and teamwork. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership that strives towards consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

**Debate founded on strong knowledge and accessibility:** With knowledgeable staff members and delegates from over 70 countries, NHSMUN can facilitate an enriching experience reliant on substantively rigorous debate. To ensure this high quality of debate, our staff members produce detailed, accessible, and comprehensive topic guides (like the one below) to prepare delegates for the nuances inherent in each global issue. This process takes over six months, during which the Directors who lead our committees develop their topics with the valuable input of expert contributors. Because these topics are always changing and evolving, NHSMUN also produces update papers intended to bridge the gap of time between when the background guides are published and when committee starts in March. As such, this guide is designed to be a launching point from which delegates should delve further into their topics. The detailed knowledge that our Directors provide in this background guide through diligent research aims to increase critical thinking within delegates at NHSMUN.

**Extremely engaged staff:** At NHSMUN, our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Before the conference, our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained rigorously through hours of workshops and exercises both virtual and in-person to provide the best conference experience possible. At the conference,

delegates will have the opportunity to meet their dais members prior to the first committee session, where they may engage one-on-one to discuss their committees and topics. Our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained and empowered to be experts on their topics and they are always available to rapidly answer any questions delegates may have prior to the conference. Our Directors and Assistant Directors read every position paper submitted to NHSMUN and provide thoughtful comments on those submitted by the feedback deadline. Our staff aims not only to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

**Empowering participation:** The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions most likely to make a meaningful impact on the world. That is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. We believe that to properly delve into an issue and produce fruitful debate, it is crucial to focus the entire energy and attention of the room on the topic at hand. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of each delegate's country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. MUN delegates are well researched and aware of the UN's priorities, and they can serve as the vanguard for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are proud to connect students with other action-oriented organizations to encourage further work on the topics.

**Focused committee time:** We feel strongly that face-to-face interpersonal connections during debate are critical to producing superior committee experiences and allow for the free flow of ideas. Ensuring policies based on equality and inclusion is one way in which NHSMUN guarantees that every delegate has an equal opportunity to succeed in committee. In order to allow communication and collaboration to be maximized during committee, we have a very dedicated administrative team who work throughout the conference to type up, format, and print draft resolutions and working papers.

As always, we welcome any questions or concerns about the substantive program at NHSMUN 2025 and would be happy to discuss NHSMUN pedagogy with faculty or delegates.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Terry Wang  
Secretary-General

Jordan Baker  
Director-General

## A Note on Research and Preparation

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to NHSMUN in March.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#) and [Advanced Delegate Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are prepared to debate no matter which topic is selected first. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the NHSMUN Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections:

**I: Topic Background** – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

**II: Country Policy** – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

**III. Proposed Solutions** – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and font size. **We recommend 3–5 pages per topic as a suitable length.** The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for sending a copy of its papers to their committee Directors via [myDais](#) on or before **February 21, 2025**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 31, 2025**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at [info@imuna.org](mailto:info@imuna.org).

**Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.**

## Committee History

The African Union was established in 2002. However, its origins date back much further. On May 25, 1963, leaders of 32 African states came together to create the Organization of African Unity (OAU) after gaining independence from European powers.<sup>1</sup> Similar to the UN, the OAU was dedicated to promoting solidarity, improving the lives of the African people, eradicating colonialism, and fostering international cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately for these countries, the OAU proved to be ineffective.<sup>3</sup> One of the most prominent issues was the lack of progress made towards Africa's debt crisis. Sponsored by the World Bank, Africa sought to create unions, central banking, and trade areas. However, the debt only grew and the OAU leaders began demanding the World Bank clear it due to it being from the exploitation of colonial powers. Another challenge faced by the committee was that their view of state sovereignty hindered their ability to productively handle conflict within the member states. The lack of intervention led to the rise of dictatorships, political instability, and coups. One example being, OAU founders (Haile Selassie, Kwame Nkrumah, Abubakar Balewa and Sekou Toure) being overthrown as the committee did nothing.<sup>4</sup> With little action being done by the committee, the OAU was seen as pointless.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, in 2002, the OAU debuted as a newly improved version of itself: the African Union (AU) With its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the AU consists of 55 member states, with South Sudan being the most recent addition.<sup>6</sup> Their principles and objectives are guided by the Constitutive Act, which includes respect for human life, promotion of democratic ideals, and protection of African culture. The AU is known to have several committees, each with a chair, and vice-chair. While some committees are permanent, others are formed to address specific conflicts as they arise.<sup>7</sup> The main organ of the African Union is the Assembly, composed of heads of state who meet once a year. For policies to pass, two-thirds of the Assembly's approval is needed.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the OAU, the AU believes that conflicts must be settled to secure prosperity, they practice a policy of "non-indifference", giving the AU the right to intervene in its member states to protect people from a humanitarian crisis. The Peace and Security Council of the AU has the power to deploy military forces and authorize peacekeeping missions. AU peacekeepers have aided in crafting ceasefires in Burundi, Somalia, and Sudan.<sup>9</sup> Along with maintaining political peace, the AU also encourages economic progress and innovation. Promoting Agenda 2063 is one of the Union's main initiatives, aiming to transform Africa into a global powerhouse.<sup>10</sup> Working with states outside of the African Union, the United Nations has developed partnerships with AU committees that seek to combat terrorism and solve humanitarian crises.<sup>11</sup>

1 "History: African Union." U.S. Agency for International Development, March 3, 2023. <https://www.usaid.gov/african-union/history>.

2 Organization of African Unity (OAU), Charter of the Organization of African Unity, -, 25 May 1963, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/constinstr/oua/1963/en/20810> [accessed 28 September 2024]

3 Rechner, Jonathan D. "From the OAU to the Au: A Normative Shift with Implications for Peacekeeping and Conflict Management, or Just a Name Change?" Scholarship@Vanderbilt Law, 2006. <https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/vjtl/vol39/iss2/7/>.

4 "Organisation of African Unity (OAU)." South African History Online, November 2023. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/organisation-african-unity-oua>.

5 "Africa | Latest News & Updates." BBC News, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world/africa>.

6 "African Union Mission to the UN: New York." African union. Accessed September 21, 2024. <https://www.africanunion-un.org/>.

7 United Nations. (n.d.). *Stronger United Nations-African Union Partnership Vital to tackle increasing terrorism, governance gaps, humanitarian plight in Africa, speakers tell Security Council | Meetings Coverage and press releases*. United Nations. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc15058.doc.htm>

8 United Nations. (n.d.). *Stronger United Nations-African Union Partnership Vital to tackle increasing terrorism, governance gaps, humanitarian plight in Africa, speakers tell Security Council | Meetings Coverage and press releases*.

9 BBC. (2017, August 24). *Profile: African union*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16910745>

10 Home. Home | African Union. (2024, September 19). <https://au.int/>

11 United Nations. (n.d.). *Stronger United Nations-African Union Partnership Vital to tackle increasing terrorism, governance gaps, humanitarian plight in Africa, speakers tell Security Council | Meetings Coverage and press releases*.



## Simulation

This committee will be operating with some modified procedural aspects because of the unique way that delegates will be able to change the flow of the committee. There will be less of an emphasis on formal debate and, because of the nature of a crisis simulation, the committee will encourage fast and detailed debate. Because delegates represent individuals tied to areas of government as opposed to the countries in general, roles are more specific, while also giving delegates the task of ensuring that their actions are appropriate for both who they represent and the governing body as a whole.

Because this crisis simulation has specific responsibilities and mandates, delegates must be aware that each action taken must follow their representative's unique policy while also falling in line with actions prescribed in the governing body's mandate. If an action is taken outside of its mandate, it will be ruled improper and removed from consideration. The aforementioned responsibilities require different procedural mechanisms; thus, this committee will use heavily modified procedural rules during both the mandate review and crisis management portions of debate. Due to the complex nature of this committee, we encourage delegates to read the following pages thoroughly.

### Individual and Committee Mandates

The committee will be called upon to resolve any crises that may take place under the purview of the committee. Delegates should be acutely aware of the actors and interests surrounding the issues, the possible causes, and barriers to solutions.

Delegates must become absolute experts on the background, politics, and past actions of their assigned positions. This exceptional knowledge is needed to prepare for updates that will be presented to delegates at an extremely rapid rate. New crises will emerge throughout committee sessions, and delegates must call upon past actions attempted by the committee as well as the current situation to formulate a response that is in line with their assigned character's policy. If delegates are not aware of their standing on an issue of their own policy platforms, contradictory and unfeasible policies may arise, slowing down committee and halting debate. With informed delegates, the committee will make informed decisions. For a more detailed account of the various roles, their duties, and functions, please refer to the Committee Representatives section of the paper.

Similarly, delegates must be well informed of the powers of the committee and the types of decisions it is empowered to make. Anything outside the mandate of the body will not be accepted. The committee will be tasked with a variety of issues that will encompass many parts of its mandate, and so prioritizing will be key to ensuring that crises are responded to efficiently. Various actors will have access to information or resources which the whole committee does not have access to. As a result, individuals will have to make decisions on whether they want to respond to issues unilaterally, work with other actors, or through the committee as a whole. Delegates will also have their own agendas, and delegates must consider what they can gain for their countries by approaching a situation in a certain way.

### Special Parliamentary Procedures

To better control the unique powers of this committee, special rules and procedures will be adopted. Three forms of debate will be used in this crisis simulation: round robin, roundtable, and moderated caucus. When a standard committee ends a caucus with no further motions, debate automatically returns to the speakers list. This is called the "default debate format." In our simulation, once another form of debate is exhausted, such as a moderated or unmoderated caucus, the committee will revert to a non-exhaustible moderated caucus with a speaking time to be decided at the chair's discretion. This will be this committee's new default debate format. The speaking time can be adjusted by the delegates via a motion.

To modify the default debate style, delegates will have a new procedural motion available to them during debate being a “motion to change the default debate style.” The motion will require a simple majority to pass and will not require any speakers for or against. At the start of committee, the chair will accept motions to set the debate style, generally a moderated caucus with speaking time selected by simple majority; however, the dais understands that it may become necessary from time to time for the committee to create a speakers list or enter a round robin of speeches to have each delegate elaborate on their respective policies.

If the committee reaches a portion of debate where delegates feel that a more fluid form of procedure is needed, such as a time elapsing crisis in which delegates will be forced to solve a specific issue in a controlled period, a new form of debate is necessary. Debate during these segments will need to move much faster than the crisis debate before this period to meet the time requirements set by the dais at which the crisis shall be solved. During these situations, the committee can vote for a roundtable discussion. Thus, delegates will openly discuss the crisis at hand without a structured speaking time. This form of debate resembles an unmoderated caucus that is held at the table to help delegates hear all points of view on the present without a time limit. Of course, if delegates find that the crisis requires a lot of writing, an unmoderated caucus can be motioned for as well.

The last form of debate style is called “round robin.” During this form of debate, each delegate will be allotted a time to speak on the topic. Each time this form of debate is used, a different person will start a speech and then move clockwise or counterclockwise from that delegate. If a delegate wishes to not speak on the issue, they can merely say “pass” to the chair, and their speaking time will be absorbed by the dais. In addition, a delegate may also say, “I yield my time to the chair” to skip his/her speech. Note that personal pronouns here are appropriate because delegates are representing individuals, not countries. To move into this style of debate, a delegate may simply request the following: “motion to change the debate style to a round robin.”

## Final Products

The document output for the crisis portions will be heavily modified as well. Because of the nature of the updates provided throughout committee, there will be no resolutions used in this committee. Instead, the committee may pass three types of documents: **press releases**, **communiqués**, and **directives**. Press releases and communiqués are similar documents but have quite different uses. Press releases are when the committee or individuals wish to make information of any kind available to the public. On the other hand, communiqués are addressed to particular individuals and will not be released into the public eye. Anyone who can access a newspaper can subsequently access press releases, but only selected recipients can access communiqués. Thus, if a committee member only wants one other member to know of their stance on an issue, a communiqué may be issued to only that one member.

Directives are of an entirely different nature. Standard resolutions take far too long to write and are very ineffective when dealing with constant crisis. Thus, the committee will utilize directives as an alternative to resolutions. Directives exercise the executive power of the committee in any way that it sees fit. For example, delegates of the committee may redirect aid, distribute pamphlets about the issues, or anything that delegates can think of as long as it falls under the mandate of this special session. Directives are only comprised of sponsors and operatives, and all perambulatory clauses that a resolution must have are stripped. Thus, a directive is a less formal resolution, having only the operative needed and sponsors enlisted.

Each of these documents will require a different voting procedure to be passed. Communiqués sent from individuals concerning a representative's own organization do not need to come before a public vote. Rather, the communiqué is simply handed to chair and immediately passed. Similarly, for directives, if it is within the individual powers of your organization then the committee does not have to pass it for it to go into effect. However, the committee must approve communiqués and directives sent from the governing body. These documents must have three members as sponsors to be considered, and no signatories are needed. After the directive or communiqué is presented to the dais, the dais will formally present it to the committee. At this time, the committee

may either vote immediately on the piece, or the committee may continue to debate the proposal. To enter voting procedure, the committee must approve a motion to vote on the proposals on the floor, and it requires two-thirds to pass. Proposals that pass will immediately go into effect, and proposals that fail will no longer be recognized by the dais and will be returned to one of the sponsors. The document may be altered and reintroduced, but it must go through the voting process once again.

## **Final Notes and Summary**

This committee will be moving extremely quickly, especially during crisis situations. There is no formula to provide the real-time at which a crisis is moving (e.g., 1 crisis minute = 1 simulation hour) since this would make some portions of debate outlandishly quick and others extremely slow. Instead, crisis times and allotted periods for discussion will be under the chair's discretion. All crises will be accompanied by a day, month, and year to keep delegates aware of how the committee is moving. Clearly, this committee is extremely unique and moves at a much different pace than all other committees at NHSMUN. However, if delegates come into committee having read this document and already possessing a rudimentary understanding how this secretariat will function, then the committee shall run smoothly. Delegates will also quickly pick up these concepts as debate moves.

If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Crisis directors.



CRISIS - AU

NHSMUN 2025

**TOPIC A:  
PIRACY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA**

Photo Credit: Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet

## Introduction

The Gulf of Guinea, stretching from Senegal to Angola, has become a major hotspot for piracy and armed robbery activity. This has resulted in severe impacts on global trade, regional stability, and the livelihoods of Gulf of Guinea countries. Creating safe and reliable maritime transport is important for the region's economic development. The survival of the Gulf of Guinea region depends on international trade. These trade routes allow African countries to support their communities' development and attract tourism revenue. However, piracy has caused many economic losses in this region. This includes expensive anti-piracy maritime operations, regional security, insurance, and private security. Therefore, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has become one of the most pressing maritime security issues in the 21st century.<sup>1</sup>

Modern piracy began in the mid-2000s with attacks that usually involved hijacking oil tankers. The oil is brought back to land and sold illegally. Over the years, these pirates have been able to improve their techniques to earn more revenue. A 2023 report by the International Maritime Bureau found that the success rate of modern-day pirates in the Gulf of Guinea was 91 percent. Currently, the pirates have shifted their tactics from traditional oil hijacking to kidnapping the crew and holding them for ransom. As of 2020, at least 99 percent of the world's kidnappings at sea happen within the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>2</sup> Ransom payments are estimated to total USD four million annually.<sup>3</sup>

The Gulf of Guinea is rich in oil resources. Because of attacks on oil tankers, there have been significant economic losses and environmental disasters. For example, oil spills have devastating effects on marine ecosystems and nearby coastal communities. These communities suffer from environmental issues, inadequate infrastructure, and poor funding. As a result, many youths have turned to piracy to make a living. One main region is the Niger River Delta. There, approximately 242 million people live below the UN's threshold for extreme poverty.<sup>4</sup> They have consistently asked for over 50 years for government assistance and for the right to have contaminated-free water. This problem has not been resolved due to weak

governance, corruption, underfunding, and weak law enforcement. However, the international community has attempted to improve the situation. Some solutions include the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCC) and the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security (YAMS). Both outline the measures that need to be taken to address piracy and maritime crime. However, both are non-binding, causing countries to not take action, especially when it "doesn't concern them." Another issue with these operations is that they were never properly funded. Unfortunately, many of the countries in the region do not have enough funds to allocate to solutions that won't show an immediate effect, such as legal frameworks.

Recently, there have been many cases of pirate convictions, with Nigeria being in the lead. However, all of these trials cost tens of thousands of dollars. Over time, countries that are still suffering from economic loss won't be able to afford such methods. Overall, addressing the issue of piracy as a whole in the Gulf of Guinea requires a need to solve many other issues. This includes strengthening the cooperation between regions, fixing and funding legal frameworks, and increasing international support. Solutions are needed to ensure the safety and security of the vital maritime trade, activities, and lives of this region.

1 "2023 Annual IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Report," International Maritime Bureau, January 15, 2024. [https://www.piclub.or.jp/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/No.1253\\_2023-Annual-IMB-Piracy-and-Armed-Robbery-Report.pdf](https://www.piclub.or.jp/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/No.1253_2023-Annual-IMB-Piracy-and-Armed-Robbery-Report.pdf).

2 International Maritime Bureau, "2023 Annual IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Report."

3 Katja Lindskov Jacobsen, and François Morizur. "Pirates of the Niger Delta II." UNDOC - Global Maritime Crime Programme, 2023. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/Maritime\\_crime/UNODC\\_GMCP\\_Pirates\\_of\\_the\\_Niger\\_Delta\\_Part\\_2.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Maritime_crime/UNODC_GMCP_Pirates_of_the_Niger_Delta_Part_2.pdf).

4 World Poverty Clock. 2021. World Data Lab. Available Online: <https://worldpoverty.io/>. Accessed 31 July 2024.

## History and Description of the Issue

### Origins and Causes of Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

Located along the western coast of Africa, the Gulf of Guinea's economic and commercial potential has been used for centuries. Awareness of the region spread by the late fifteenth century as Vasco da Gama's discovery of a sea route to India also included the discovery of the Gulf of Guinea. This led to increased competition between Dutch and Portuguese trade in the region. As a result, the *Mare Liberum* was published in 1609, which claimed the sea could be used by ships from all countries for travel and trade. Today, the Gulf of Guinea's ports still have the cannons and guns used by the Dutch and Portuguese in disputes over the control of trade routes.<sup>5</sup>

The Gulf of Guinea served as a major source of raw materials and markets for goods. Western influence in the region continued to dominate the Gulf of Guinea as the ideas of using maritime power for trade and gaining control of foreign territories began to spread in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> After Germany established political authority in Africa by hoisting its flag in Togo and Cameroon, tensions between European powers intensified and resulted in the Berlin Conference. The Berlin Conference—which divided the African continent up for colonial rule by European powers.<sup>7</sup> By 1890, all of the Gulf of Guinea was under colonial rule by countries like Britain and France.<sup>8</sup> Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea emerged between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the Royal Navy of the British Empire and other European states contributed to its decline. Through decolonization, pirate activities reemerged and left states with weaker navies at a disadvantage.<sup>9</sup>

Modern piracy in the Gulf of Guinea emerged in the mid-2000s.<sup>10</sup> Attacks traditionally consisted of hijacking tankers to steal unrefined oil that would be processed and later sold on the black market. As the criminals' techniques have evolved, the process has become more successful and efficient. A 2023 report published by the International Maritime Bureau found that the success rate of modern-day pirates boarding sea vessels in the Gulf of Guinea was 75 percent.<sup>11</sup> Today, the pirates' tactics have shifted to kidnapping crews for ransom as global oil prices have generally decreased. Currently, over 90 percent of the world's kidnappings at sea occur in the Gulf of Guinea region.<sup>12</sup> Ransom payments are estimated to be USD four million annually while the value of goods stolen through hijacking ships has decreased from an estimated USD two million per attack in the early 2010s to less than USD one million annually by 2021.<sup>13</sup>

Until 2007, piracy attacks in the Gulf of Guinea were categorized as “opportunistic piracy.” The goal of these attacks was to target offshore oil platforms, extracting money from oil companies, and kidnapping migrant workers for ransom. About two-thirds of “opportunistic piracy” attacks took place at ports. Pirates in regions like the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia typically use fishing vessels. However, in the Gulf of Guinea, “opportunistic piracy” attacks were carried out by groups of hijackers using speedboats who carried heavy weapons. For example, in May 2007, six-speed boats carrying over 40 pirates armed with guns attacked the *Dlb Cheyenne*. The pirates successfully kidnapped the ship's crew despite the Nigerian military engaging in a shootout. In the same month, the *Oloibiri* was also attacked and its crew were kidnapped for ransom by pirates using explosives. From these attacks alone, it is clear that the pirates' goal was to kidnap foreign oil

5 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

6 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

7 “General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa, 26 February 1885,” Accessed July 19, 2024, <https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1885GeneralActBerlinConference.pdf>.

8 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

9 Lucas Martin, “The Gulf of Guinea, an added problem,” *Atalayar*, May 5, 2024, <https://www.atalayar.com/en/articulo/reports/the-gulf-of-guinea-an-added-problem/20240531090000200782.html>.

10 Alan Laifer, “Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the Effects of Unstable Governance - Security Outlines,” Security Outlines - česko-slovenský portál o bezpečnosti, May 7, 2024, <https://www.securityoutlines.cz/piracy-in-the-gulf-of-guinea-and-the-effects-of-unstable-governance/>.

11 Laifer, “Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the Effects of Unstable Governance - Security Outlines.”

12 Denys Reva, Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood, and Timothy Walker, “Gulf of Guinea Piracy: A Symptom, Not a Cause, of Insecurity,” ISS Africa, last modified February 10, 2021, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/gulf-of-guinea-piracy-a-symptom-not-a-cause-of-insecurity>.

13 Alan Laifer, “Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the Effects of Unstable Governance - Security Outlines,” Security Outlines - česko-slovenský portál o bezpečnosti, May 7, 2024, <https://www.securityoutlines.cz/piracy-in-the-gulf-of-guinea-and-the-effects-of-unstable-governance/>.

workers for ransom. From 2005 to 2009, 70 percent of piracy attacks in the Gulf of Guinea were classified as boarding and robbery. More than 70 percent of vessels attacked were oil and gas support vessels. However, only about 15 percent of piracy incidents involved kidnapping and ransom.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike Somali pirates who tend to hunt for ships to attack on the sea, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea undertake planned attacks in specific locations. By 2009, piracy expanded beyond the South and West coasts of Nigeria and began targeting ships off the coast of Benin and Cameroon. In 2008, 10 men disguised in military clothing boarded the *Elbia*, a cement carrier off the island of Bioko in Equatorial Guinea. The men identified themselves as Nigerian rebels and demanded food from the ship's crew. After six hours on board, the group left on speedboats. Similarly, in 2008, pirates armed with rocket-propelled grenades kidnapped the crew of a French tug boat off the coast of Cameroon.<sup>15</sup> Between 2010 and 2015, kidnapping and hijacking became more common. By 2016, hijacking tankers decreased significantly due to hijacking failures and the global crash of oil prices. Since 2016, attacks in the Gulf of Guinea usually consist of kidnapping and ransom.<sup>16</sup>

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea stems from many causes: corrupt governance, favorable geography, weak law enforcement, ineffective maritime security, cultural acceptability, and the potential for high reward.<sup>17</sup> Unemployment and limited

economic opportunity within the Gulf of Guinea region have caused many to turn to piracy as a way of providing for themselves and their families.<sup>18</sup> One in three people living in the Gulf of Guinea are living in extreme poverty.<sup>19</sup> Food insecurity due to prolonged drought and extreme weather throughout the western African coast has made piracy more desirable. More than 25 million people in Western Africa are struggling to meet their basic food needs.<sup>20</sup> In Bayelsa—a region of the Niger River Delta—three-quarters of the population rely on farming and fishing to survive. Much of the Niger River Delta's population lives on less than a dollar a day.<sup>21</sup> Combined with declining fish stocks as a result of climate change and illegal fishing by foreign vessels, many modern pirates in the Gulf of Guinea are former fishermen and unemployed youth.<sup>22</sup>

About 20 percent of the world's fish catch comes from the Gulf of Guinea. In Ghana alone, it is estimated that two million people depend on fishing for their livelihoods. The fisheries sector employs millions of people in the region—a quarter of jobs in West Africa are linked to the fisheries industry.<sup>23</sup> The fishing industry thus plays an important role in ensuring food and job security for people throughout the region.<sup>24</sup> Because of their knowledge of local waters, fishermen are also more likely to be targeted by criminal entrepreneurs to become involved in piracy.<sup>25</sup> Studies have proven that a decrease in employment opportunities within the fishing industry is linked to more piracy incidents. Economic declines within

14 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

15 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

16 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: Global Maritime Crime Programme, 2021), [https://www.unodc.org/res/piracy/index\\_html/UNODC\\_GMCP\\_Pirates\\_of\\_the\\_Niger\\_Delta\\_between\\_brown\\_and\\_blue\\_waters.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/res/piracy/index_html/UNODC_GMCP_Pirates_of_the_Niger_Delta_between_brown_and_blue_waters.pdf).

17 Matthew Fiorelli, "Piracy in Africa: The Case of the Gulf of Guinea - Kaiptc," KAIPTC, August 2014, <https://www.kaiptc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/New%20folder/FiorelliM.2014-PIRACY-IN-AFRICA-THE-CASE-OF-THE-GULF-OF-GUINEA.pdf>.

18 Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Fattah, "Piracy in Gulf of Guinea Causes, Efforts and Solutions," Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport, Accessed 2024, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mohamed-Abdelfattah-42/publication/331036118\\_Piracy\\_in\\_Gulf\\_of\\_Guinea\\_causes\\_efforts\\_and\\_solutions/links/5c62849145851582c3e1ae9e/Piracy-in-Gulf-of-Guinea-causes-efforts-and-solutions.pdf?\\_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmtpY2F0aW9uIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmtpY2F0aW9uIn19](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mohamed-Abdelfattah-42/publication/331036118_Piracy_in_Gulf_of_Guinea_causes_efforts_and_solutions/links/5c62849145851582c3e1ae9e/Piracy-in-Gulf-of-Guinea-causes-efforts-and-solutions.pdf?_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmtpY2F0aW9uIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmtpY2F0aW9uIn19).

19 Curtis Bell, *Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis for Coastal States* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, November 2021) [https://www.unodc.org/documents/Maritime\\_crime/UNODC\\_Pirates\\_GoG\\_A\\_Cost\\_Analysis\\_for\\_Coastal\\_States.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Maritime_crime/UNODC_Pirates_GoG_A_Cost_Analysis_for_Coastal_States.pdf).

20 "West Africa: Extreme poverty rises nearly 3 per cent due to COVID-19," United Nations, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/01/1110192>.

21 Ogechi Obi, "Oil Among the Mangrove Trees: a Portrait of Destruction in the Niger Delta, Then and Now," Harvard International Review, last modified May 19, 2023, <https://hir.harvard.edu/oil-among-the-mangrove-trees-a-portrait-of-destruction-in-the-niger-delta-then-and-now/>.

22 Selina Robinson, "Climate Change may be fuelling a Resurgence of Piracy Across Africa," The Conversation, last modified May 24, 2024, <https://theconversation.com/climate-change-may-be-fuelling-a-resurgence-of-piracy-across-africa-228739>.

23 Morcos, "A Transatlantic Approach to Address Growing Maritime Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea."

24 Lucas Martin, "The Gulf of Guinea, an added problem," *Atalayar*, May 5, 2024, <https://www.atalayar.com/en/articulo/reports/the-gulf-of-guinea-an-added-problem/20240531090000200782.html>.

25 Anup Phayal, Aaron Gold, Curie Maharani, Brandon Prins, Sayed Fauzan Riyadi, "The complementary relationship between illegal fishing and maritime piracy: A case study of the Gulf of Guinea," *Marine Policy: The International Journal of Ocean Affairs*, vol. 165 (July 2024), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X24002070>.

the fishing sector—such as a reduction in phytoplankton, a microalgae that is essential to marine ecosystems—have also proven to increase piracy attacks.<sup>26</sup>

Between 2003 and 2020, the coastal catch in Côte d’Ivoire has decreased by 40 percent while in Ghana, small fish catch has decreased by 59 percent between 1993 and 2019.<sup>27</sup> Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by individuals and foreign companies is also linked to more piracy attacks. IUU fishing causes there to be less fish available for local fishers, forcing some to turn to piracy to make up for lost revenue.<sup>28</sup> IUU fishing is estimated to result in annual economic losses of USD two billion.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, IUU fishing increases the chance of piracy by expanding the number of potential pirates with the skills and knowledge of the seas. IUU fishing also increases the number of potential targets for pirates, particularly the IUU fishing vessels.<sup>30</sup>

Some countries in the Gulf of Guinea including Angola, Equatorial Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have ignored the issue of piracy and have instead focused on interstate conflict on land. This is because of the sheer amount of land-based conflicts in the region. For example, the Angolan Civil War which lasted from 1975 to 2002 has resulted in greater focus on land-based personnel. From the early 1990s to today, the Angolan navy has decreased from 4,200 personnel to about 1,000.<sup>31</sup> Since these regions’ waters are less regulated, this encourages individuals to engage in illicit maritime activities like piracy. In West Africa, conflict in the Sahel has diverted attention from the Gulf of Guinea to the north. Groups like Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Boko Haram, and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have also caused states to increase land rather than maritime security. In Cameroon, the navy is adding sailors at

26 Phayal, “The complementary relationship between illegal fishing and maritime piracy.”

27 “Hooking a New Livelihood? Collapse of West Africa Fisheries and Forces Adaptation,” The Salata Institute for Climate and Sustainability, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://salatainstitute.harvard.edu/hooking-a-new-livelihood-collapse-of-west-africa-fisheries-forces-adaptation/>.

28 Anup Phayal, Aaron Gold, Curie Maharani, Brandon Prins, Sayed Fauzan Riyadi, “The complementary relationship between illegal fishing and maritime piracy: A case study of the Gulf of Guinea,” *Marine Policy: The International Journal of Ocean Affairs*, vol. 165 (July 2024), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X24002070>.

29 “Addressing IUU Fishing in the Gulf of Guinea through Effective Training in Fisheries Management and Climate Change Adaptation,” Africa Centre of Excellence in Coastal Resilience, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://acecor.ucc.edu.gh/addressing-iuu-fishing-gulf-guinea-through-effective-training-fisheries-management-and-climate>.

30 Anup Phayal, Aaron Gold, Curie Maharani, Brandon Prins, Sayed Fauzan Riyadi, “The complementary relationship between illegal fishing and maritime piracy: A case study of the Gulf of Guinea,” *Marine Policy: The International Journal of Ocean Affairs*, vol. 165 (July 2024), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X24002070>.

31 “Angola,” Defence Web, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.defencweb.co.za/security/african-militaries/angola/>.



Fishers in Cameroon  
Credit: Rifoeblaise



less than one-third of the rate new soldiers are being recruited into their military.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, many local shipowners do not equip their vessels properly to protect against piracy as the cost of doing so decreases their profits. Much of the region views piracy as an issue to be addressed by the government rather than private effort.<sup>33</sup> However, local navies cannot always patrol the vast waters of the Gulf of Guinea. This is due to bribery of local officials and because insurance typically covers the cost of stolen goods, meaning there is less of an incentive for maritime security efforts to combat piracy.<sup>34</sup> For example, politicians in the Niger River Delta region have used gangs like the Niger People's Volunteer Force and the Niger Delta Vigilante to win elections. Once in office, politicians will abandon the gangs or continue using them to intimidate their rivalries. Gangs are also commonly used by local communities to settle conflicts with individuals, groups, and corporations.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, in Nigeria, the Joint Task Force is made up of personnel from the country's army, navy, and police. The group patrols the region's creeks, inlets, and mangroves. However, the group has a reputation for violence. In 2005, the Joint Task Force responded to an attack on government officials near Odioma, killing 17 residents and burning the town to the ground.<sup>36</sup>

Countries in the Gulf of Guinea also do not have enough personnel to protect their territorial waters. For example, while Angola has the longest coastline and one of the largest GDPs in the region, its navy only has 1,000 members despite having an army of 100,000 members. While Liberia is the world's second-largest flag state by having the most ships registered under its flag, the country's Coast Guard consists of only 50 personnel.<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, governments and ship owners tend to downplay incidents in the Gulf of Guinea to avoid a reputation of insecurity and increased shipping costs. Reporting requirements and procedures also affect the data available on piracy attacks. For instance, in 2020, the Nigerian Navy reported 339 piracy incidents. However, according to the definition of piracy under international law, 214 of such attacks were acts of armed robbery since they occurred in Nigerian territory, not on the High Seas. Coastal states in the Gulf of Guinea are responsible for armed robberies at sea if they happen fewer than 12 nautical miles from the coast.<sup>38</sup>

The geography of the Gulf of Guinea's coastal states also encourages piracy as its rivers, inlets, and mangroves make it easy to hide stolen boats and goods.<sup>39</sup> Reported incidents may not fully reflect the severity of an attack or may be underreported. In West Africa, piracy is underreported by an estimated 50 percent because of a lack of survivors and victims' choosing not to report the incident.<sup>40</sup>

Overall, Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea dates back to the Berlin conference. However, it has only taken precedence in recent years. With updated technology and new methods for committing crimes, pirates have developed advanced methods to attack the shipping industry.

## Petro-Piracy

In 1956, Nigerian oil was first discovered in the Bayelsa State which is located in the Niger River Delta.<sup>41</sup> In 1969, the discovery of oil in Congo-Brazzaville further indicated the Gulf of Guinea's oil and gas potential. However, its potential was not fully realized until the first deep-water oil discovery

32 Okafor-Yarwood and Maisie Pigeon, *Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea*.

33 Matthew Fiorelli, "Piracy in Africa: The Case of the Gulf of Guinea - Kaiptc," KAIPTC, August 2014, <https://www.kaiptc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/New%20folder/FiorelliM.2014-PIRACY-IN-AFRICA-THE-CASE-OF-THE-GULF-OF-GUINEA.pdf>.

34 Fiorelli, "Piracy in Africa: The Case of the Gulf of Guinea - Kaiptc."

35 William Rosenau, Peter Chalk, Renny McPherson, Michelle Parker, and Austin Long, *Corporations and Counterinsurgency*, RAND Corporation, 2009, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2009/RAND\\_OP259.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2009/RAND_OP259.pdf).

36 Rosenau, Chalk, McPherson, Parker, and Long, *Corporations and Counterinsurgency*.

37 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

38 Reva, Okafor-Yarwood, and Walker, "Gulf of Guinea Piracy: A Symptom, Not a Cause, of Insecurity."

39 Stephan Starr, "Maritime Piracy on the Rise in West Africa," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, November 16, 2017, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/maritime-piracy-on-the-rise-in-west-africa/>.

40 Mahmoud Abdel Fattah, "Piracy in Gulf of Guinea Causes, Efforts and Solutions."

41 "Ogoniland's Oil History," United Nations Environment Programme, accessed July 25, 2024, <https://www.unep.org/topics/disasters-and-conflicts/country-presence/nigeria/ogonilands-oil-history>.

in offshore Angola in 1996. Since the 1990s, deep-water and onshore discoveries of oil and gas have continued to rise throughout the region.<sup>42</sup>

The Gulf of Guinea serves as a major route for oil tankers to international markets and accounts for 60 percent of Africa's oil production.<sup>43</sup> Eight oil-rich countries are located on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, producing five million barrels of oil per day and possessing one-tenth of the world's oil reserves. Nigeria is the fourteenth largest oil producer in the world, generating 2.3 million barrels each day.<sup>44</sup> Angola has one of the largest daily outputs of oil barrels with 1.8 million a day. Chad's oil reserves also exceed 900 million barrels.<sup>45</sup>

Large multinational oil companies operate throughout the Gulf of Guinea, especially in the Niger River Delta. This includes TotalFinaElf, ExxonMobil, and Chevron. The oldest and largest company in the region is Royal Dutch Shell which operates as Shell Nigeria. In 2008, the company produced an average of 850,000 barrels of oil per day or half of the country's average daily total. The company has 90 oil fields, 1,000 producing wells, 73 flow stations, and 6,000 km of pipeline. Until the late 1990s, Shell Nigeria used security for its personnel and facilities in response to violence. This security was Nigerian police. These security guards eventually became known as "Shell Police" in some communities. In the 1990s, Shell was accused of working with the government. What resulted was the 1995 government execution of Shell critic Ken Saro-Wiwa. This hurt the company's image greatly.<sup>46</sup>

Since then, Shell Nigeria has shifted its operations. The company now invests in the region's communities by providing education, health care, agricultural services, and supporting microenterprises. In 2005, the company began negotiating

long-term agreements with communities to encourage sustainable development. In 2008, Shell contributed USD 158.2 million to the Niger Delta Development Commission and USD 25.2 million on development projects. A group of Nigerian police known as the Supernumerary Constabulary are also used by Shell for security. Members of this group are trained in Shell security guidelines which reflect international norms, including the UN's Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. The group is still paid by Shell.<sup>47</sup>

The location of the Gulf of Guinea also makes the transportation of oil easier compared to other regions. In other oil-rich regions, resources to extract and process oil are typically on land or in shallow waters. In comparison, the Gulf of Guinea's geography allows for the oil to be exploited, processed, and loaded directly onto ships. This makes transporting oil easier by large oil carriers. The Gulf of Guinea is also located in relative proximity to the United States and Europe—two major oil consumers—compared to other oil-producing regions.<sup>48</sup>

Petro-piracy emerged in the mid-2000s and has continued to increase. Petro-piracy involves stealing crude oil from seafaring vessels and pipelines. The stolen oil is then processed in illegal refineries and then sold.<sup>49</sup> One of the first major reported incidents of petro-piracy was the hijacking of a Greek-owned oil tanker off the coast of Togo in August 2012. The thieves took control of the vessel and siphoned off some of its oil supply. While its crew was uninjured, shots were fired between the pirates and Togo naval forces.<sup>50</sup>

However, the most conflict-prone and underdeveloped region of the county is located along the Niger River Delta which is directly connected to the Gulf of Guinea. The region is also known for its high rates of petro-piracy.<sup>51</sup> The pirates' tactics

42 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

43 Zélie Petit, "The Gulf of Guinea: From Piracy to Oil Bunkering," Grey Dynamics, April 13, 2024, <https://greydynamics.com/the-gulf-of-guinea-from-piracy-to-oil-bunkering/>.

44 Robinson, "Climate Change may be Fuelling a Resurgence of Piracy Across Africa."

45 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

46 Rosenau, Chalk, McPherson, Parker, and Long, *Corporations and Counterinsurgency*.

47 Rosenau, Chalk, McPherson, Parker, and Long, *Corporations and Counterinsurgency*.

48 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

49 European Parliamentary Research Service, "Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: EU and International Action," accessed June 30, 2024, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/649333/EPRS\\_BRI\(2020\)649333\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/649333/EPRS_BRI(2020)649333_EN.pdf).

50 "Pirates hijack tanker with 24 Russian crew off Togo: IMB," Expatica for Internationals, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.expatica.com/ru/general/pirates-hijack-tanker-with-24-russian-crew-off-togo-imb-75454/>.

51 Robinson, "Climate Change may be Fuelling a Resurgence of Piracy Across Africa."

typically consist of hijacking a ship, seizing the vessel, stealing the cargo, and leaving the sailors. Hijacked ships are returned to Nigerian territorial waters where the crews are freed and the stolen oil is transported to criminal partners. The oil is then sold on the black market with help from non-government and government coordinators.<sup>52</sup> The Nigerian Navy estimates that, since 1960, USD 100 billion worth of oil has gone missing.<sup>53</sup>

The Niger River Delta region relies on the profits of foreign oil companies that utilize the Gulf of Guinea's sea routes. In Nigeria alone, profits from petro-piracy are estimated to be between USD 3 billion and USD 8 billion each year.<sup>54</sup> Due to the frequency of government corruption, much of the revenue from the oil industry does not benefit local populations.<sup>55</sup> In Nigeria, 85 percent of oil revenue goes towards 1 percent of the population while 40 percent of oil acquired is stolen and sent abroad.<sup>56</sup> Profits from piracy in the Gulf of Guinea have also been linked to funding extremist groups, including Nigeria's Boko Haram.<sup>57</sup> This specific group was founded in 2002 in northeastern Nigeria and promotes the creation of a pure Islamic state.<sup>58</sup> Through assassinations, kidnappings, and attacks, Boko Haram's violent extremism has led to 40,000 casualties throughout Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, and Niger.<sup>59</sup>

The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) was created in 2005. The organization is made up of militant groups from the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The coalition wants to disable oil exports in Nigeria. Also, they want to expose how Nigeria's government has oppressed people, as well as the devastating effects oil corporations have on the environment.<sup>60</sup> Though MEND claims to fight for "community" interests, most of its work has been linked to criminal activity. An area

that a MEND group operates is known as an *okrika*. These groups regularly kidnap migrant workers living in their *okrika* for ransom. The group gained attention when it began attacking onshore oil pipelines and offshore oil platforms. In response, the Federal Government of Nigeria established a Joint Task Force (JTF) of security agencies. However, this largely proved unsuccessful as MEND groups continued their attacks on government forces. For instance, between 2007 and 2009, 15 Nigerian navy personnel were either killed or went missing after engaging in gun battles with MEND.<sup>61</sup>

In 2009, a sea-borne attack targeting the Presidential Palace of Equatorial Guinea led to allegations of involvement by MEND. This resulted in maritime security frameworks being adopted by members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).<sup>62</sup> The negotiations resulted in a formal agreement between MEND and the Nigerian government in June 2009. MEND criminals were required to give up their weapons in exchange for monthly skills training and monthly allowances. However, critics noted that leaders of MEND were allowed to stay in luxurious hotels alongside politicians and were given financial pay-offs rather than engaging in negotiations. Additionally, some ex-militant leaders were given security contracts of over USD 100 million by the Nigerian government. These allowed ex-militant leaders to control areas in the Niger River Delta without government interference.<sup>63</sup> After negotiations took place, piracy incidents in the Gulf of Guinea decreased from a high of 60 incidents in 2007 to a low of 36 incidents in 2009. However, by 2011, attacks in the region increased to 61 as MEND groups who did not benefit from the negotiations began to resume their

52 Starr, "Maritime Piracy on the Rise in West Africa," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, November 16, 2017, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/maritime-piracy-on-the-rise-in-west-africa/>.

53 Martin N Murphy, "Petro-Piracy: Oil and Troubled Waters," *Orbis*, June 13, 2013, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0030438713000343>.

54 Robinson, "Climate Change may be Fuelling a Resurgence of Piracy Across Africa."

55 Fiorelli, "Piracy in Africa: The Case of the Gulf of Guinea - Kaipctc."

56 Murphy, "Petro-Piracy: Oil and Troubled Waters."

57 Fiorelli, "Piracy in Africa: The Case of the Gulf of Guinea - Kaipctc."

58 Andrew Walker, *What is Boko Haram?* (United States Institute of Peace, June 2012), <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR308.pdf>.

59 Rafael Prieto Curiel, Oliver Walther, and Neave O'Clery, "Uncovering the internal structure of Boko Haram through its mobility patterns," *Applied Network Science* 5, no. 28 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41109-020-00264-4>.

60 Caroline Duffield. "Who Are Nigeria's Mend Oil Militants?" BBC News, October 4, 2010. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11467394>.

61 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

62 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

63 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: Global Maritime Crime Programme, 2021), [https://www.unodc.org/res/piracy/index\\_html/UNODC\\_GMCP\\_Pirates\\_of\\_the\\_Niger\\_Delta\\_between\\_brown\\_and\\_blue\\_waters.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/res/piracy/index_html/UNODC_GMCP_Pirates_of_the_Niger_Delta_between_brown_and_blue_waters.pdf).

criminal activity.<sup>64</sup>

The negotiations between MEND and the Nigerian government show how corrupt governance has contributed to the rise of petro-piracy. However, a reason for this can be linked to the lack of income these government workers receive. Nigerian civil servants have historically gone for months without receiving salaries, incentivizing government officials to become involved in piracy.<sup>65</sup> In 2012, individuals suspected of piracy and working with corrupt government officials in the Gulf of Guinea were arrested by the Nigerian Maritime and Safety Agency (NIMASA). The individuals claimed to be working with a network of government officials who would provide information on the contents of ships and their locations.<sup>66</sup> A lack of government accountability is to blame for this instance of petro-piracy. Creating stronger anti-corruption systems will be necessary for fighting piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

There is also the risk of environmental degradation that comes with petro-piracy. Within the Niger River Delta region alone, more than 1.5 million tons of oil have been spilled since the 1960s.<sup>67</sup> About 300 oil spills occur every year in the Niger River Delta. Between 1986 and 2000, the Nigerian Petroleum Industry reported having 3,854 oil spill incidents. This has resulted in the loss of 437,810 barrels of oil into the region's environment.<sup>68</sup> In 1970, Shell was responsible for the region's first major oil spill in Ogoniland. Shell was forced to pay an 80 million pound fine in 2000 for the spill.<sup>69</sup>

In Ogoniland, a region of southern Nigeria, the UN Environment Programme found that oil pollution has destroyed marine life habitats, contaminated soil, and

groundwater, and is a major threat to public health. As a result, fishing communities have been devastated and land suitable for farming has declined. Many Nigerians have reported oil in drinking water sources while two-thirds of the country does not have access to clean drinking water.<sup>70</sup> A study conducted by the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland found that babies born in Nigeria are twice as likely to die in the first month of their lives if their mother was living near an oil spill before conceiving.<sup>71</sup> Efforts have been made to reduce the effects of oil pollution. For instance, the Nigerian Navy has destroyed many illegal refineries. However, they ended up pouring the stolen oil into local creeks, thus worsening the environmental damage.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the region's shortcomings relating to petro-piracy, its rich oil reserves have caught the attention of the international community. To reduce its reliance on Russian oil and gas, Europe has looked to Africa as an alternate source of energy supply. Three major infrastructure projects—the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano pipeline (AKK), the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline (TSGP), linking West Africa to Europe, and the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP)—have been proposed to establish Nigeria as a major gas exporter. However, Nigerian Gas Processing and Transportation (NGPTC) manages most of the pipelines in Nigeria and has been faced with allegations of corruption, slowing the projects' progress.<sup>73</sup>

The United States' interest in the Gulf of Guinea's oil industry has continued to grow. With the United States Department of Defense being the largest consumer of oil and gas stocks, the United States is largely dependent on fossil fuels in the region.<sup>74</sup> China also has a large interest in the oil industry of the

64 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

65 Murphy, "Petro-Piracy: Oil and Troubled Waters."

66 Evelyn Usman, "Top government officials, politicians contract us – Sea pirates," *Vanguard*, December 12, 2012, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/12/top-government-officials-politicians-contract-us-sea-pirates/>.

67 Murphy, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0030438713000343>.

68 Ogechi Obi, "Oil Among the Mangrove Trees: a Portrait of Destruction in the Niger Delta, Then and Now," *Harvard International Review*, last modified May 19, 2023, <https://hir.harvard.edu/oil-among-the-mangrove-trees-a-portrait-of-destruction-in-the-niger-delta-then-and-now/>.

69 Murphy, "Petro-Piracy: Oil and Troubled Waters."

70 John Campbell, "A Primer on Nigeria's Oil Bunkering," Council on Foreign Relations, last modified August 4, 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/primer-nigerias-oil-bunkering>.

71 Kate Hodal, "Absolutely shocking: Niger Delta oil spills linked with infant deaths," *The Guardian*, November 6 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/nov/06/niger-delta-oil-spills-linked-infant-deaths>.

72 Campbell, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/primer-nigerias-oil-bunkering>.

73 Teresa Nogueira Pinto, "Europe's energy switch may boost African producers," *Geopolitical Intelligence Services*, last modified January 23, 2023, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/africa-europe-energy/>.

74 Kamal-Deen Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*, University of Wollongong, 2014, <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses>.

region. In 1997, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) acquired exploration licenses in the Chad Basin. In 1998, the CNPC also acquired exploration licenses for two oil blocs in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Today, much of Congo-Brazzaville's annual oil production is purchased by the CNPC. In 2004, China also began its "loans for oil" diplomacy in the Gulf of Guinea by investing USD two million into the Angolan coast. In 2006, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) acquired a share in Nigeria's future oil production by providing a USD 2.3 billion loan for infrastructure development. In 2012, China also provided a USD three billion loan to the government of Ghana with its repayment terms including the supply of oil to China.<sup>75</sup>

Despite the vested interest many states have in the Gulf of Guinea, petro-piracy still runs rampant. This means that if oil becomes more in-demand, that will be more stealable oil for pirates. It is important to address the root of the issue, because only then can these regional collaborations truly flourish.

## Regional Responses

The Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) was created in 2001 to improve maritime security in West and Central Africa. The GGC is made up of Angola, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Republic of Congo. Much of the GGC does not accept Nigeria's lead role. The GGC's creation was delayed because of many boundary disputes. For instance, Cameroon believed that Nigeria would use the GGC to settle the Bakassi Peninsula dispute. The ratification of the GGC's treaty was postponed until the issue was resolved through the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The GGC has adopted some policies like the 2012 Lunada Declaration on Peace and Security to promote maritime safety. However, these frameworks are outdated and unsuccessful.<sup>76</sup>

In 2013, the 17 countries of the Gulf of Guinea came together at Yaoundé, which is the capital of Cameroon. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) also attended the summit.<sup>77</sup> The summit successfully set goals for maritime safety and security by creating areas of cooperation between Central and West Africa through the Yaoundé Architecture. The Yaoundé Architecture is made up of three tiers. At the top is the Inter-regional Coordination Center (ICC), which is based in Yaoundé. The ICC is responsible for coordination between all Gulf of Guinea member states. Its role is to connect the Central and West African regions through funding, education, and training.<sup>78</sup>

The second tier of Yaoundé Architecture is made up of two more centers, which are each responsible for coordination in the ECOWAS region of West Africa and the ECCAS region of Central Africa. The Regional Center for Maritime Security in West Africa (CRESMAO) is located in Abidjan, while the Regional Center for Maritime Security in Central Africa (CRESMAC) is in Pointe Noire. The bottom tier is made up of five coordination centers and different zones. These are based in Cabo Verde (Zone G), Ghana (Zone F), Benin (Zone E), Cameroon (Zone D), and Angola (Zone A).<sup>79</sup> Each zone has a Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (MMCC). These centers are responsible for sharing information on the day-to-day operations of vessels.<sup>80</sup> MMCCs also communicate with CRESMAO and CRESMAC to maintain and regulate operating procedures.<sup>81</sup>

The Summit decided that regional organizations such as ECOWAS, ECCAS, and GGC would be responsible for strategy. Gulf of Guinea states would be responsible for the operations of the ICC. However, much of the centers' responsibilities are not explicitly defined. A Code of Conduct was also introduced during the Summit to tackle illicit

ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5102&context=theses.

75 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

76 Hasan, "Effectiveness of the Current Regimes to Combat Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: An Evaluation," 34-65.

77 Hüseyin Yücel, "Sovereignty and Transnational Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: How a Network Approach can Strengthen the Yaoundé Architecture," *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies* (2021): 146-157, <https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.90>.

78 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/gulf-guinea-regional-solution-piracy>

79 Okafor-Yarwood and Maisie Pigeon, *Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea*.

80 Hüseyin, "Sovereignty and Transnational Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: How a Network Approach can Strengthen the Yaoundé Architecture," *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies* (2021): 146-157, : <https://doi.org/10.31374/sjms.90>.

81 Yücel, "Sovereignty and Transnational Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea."



Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea  
Credit: DVIDSHUB

maritime activity, armed ship robberies, and piracy. Each signatory state agreed to create a national maritime security committee. However, even today, not all countries have created these committees.<sup>82</sup>

This agreement is not binding. This means Gulf of Guinea countries do not have to implement the agreement's policies. Most piracy attacks in the Gulf of Guinea occur in territorial waters rather than international and ungoverned waters. The agreement does not include rules about extradition. Extradition would allow the law enforcement of one country to deliver a convicted criminal to the law enforcement of another country. Closing legal loopholes that allow criminals to avoid getting caught is necessary. The Yaoundé meeting has not established shared laws and regulations about piracy between countries, making it difficult to enforce laws across the region.<sup>83</sup>

While the Yaoundé Architecture tries to address piracy itself, it does not address the root causes of piracy. This includes poverty, IUU fishing, corruption, and weak governance. The agreement does not ensure that states with fewer resources are

more supported.<sup>84</sup> Concerns over funding these efforts also exist. Creating taxes has been discussed between Gulf of Guinea states, but creating a regional tax is likely not possible.<sup>85</sup> While the Yaoundé meeting was held in 2013, its budget needs have not been met and not all centers are operational. Funds for these centers should be provided by regional states, ECOWAS, and ECCAS. However, about 60 percent of funding comes from non-African donors, intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations, and the private sector.<sup>86</sup>

A lack of cooperation between coastal states has prevented progress. Obstacles to regional cooperation include leadership rivalries between presidents, border disputes, and mistrust towards Nigeria.<sup>87</sup> The maritime border dispute between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana is just one example.<sup>88</sup> The dispute began in 2007 when Ghana discovered oil that Côte d'Ivoire claimed it was their own. In 2019, a court ruling by the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) announced that Ghana did not overstep its border and could continue oil exploration in the region.<sup>89</sup>

82 Yücel, "Sovereignty and Transnational Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea."

83 Yücel, "Sovereignty and Transnational Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea."

84 Yücel, "Sovereignty and Transnational Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea."

85 "Gulf of Guinea: A Regional Solution to Piracy?" International Crisis Group, accessed June 18, 2024, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/gulf-guinea-regional-solution-piracy>.

86 Okafor-Yarwood and Maisie Pigeon, *Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea*.

87 International Crisis Group, "Gulf of Guinea: A Regional Solution to Piracy?"

88 Hasan, "Effectiveness of the Current Regimes to Combat Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: An Evaluation."

89 Ismail Akwei, "Ghana wins three-year maritime boundary dispute case against Ivory Coast," *African News*, September 12, 2019, <https://>

Since 2011, the Gulf of Guinea has spent an estimated USD 82 billion on national defense. It is estimated that counter-piracy patrols cost about USD 285 million per year. From 2012 to 2021, defense spending in Togo and Ghana have doubled. Defense expenditures in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Congo were also increased by 50 percent from 2012 to 2021. In Nigeria and Cameroon, defense spending increased between 10 and 20 percent from 2012 to 2021. However, Angola has decreased its defense spending by more than 75 percent from 2016 to 2021. From 2012 to 2021, throughout the region, it is estimated that military personnel have increased by 17 percent to 485,000. Naval personnel have nearly doubled from about 21,500 to 39,500. Currently, there are about 50 percent more patrol vessels deployed by the Gulf of Guinea states than there were a decade ago.<sup>90</sup>

Over the last decade, Gulf of Guinea states and private countries have begun using Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs) or Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) to secure the region. Ship owners and government organizations can decide whether they want to partner with private companies. Piracy off the coast of Somalia declined through the use of PMSCs and PCASP.<sup>91</sup> However, allowing private armed guards to operate in the region's territorial waters may be risky. For example, the private security company Global West Vessel Specialists Nigeria Limited has an agreement with the Nigerian Maritime Administration Safety Agency (NIMASA). Nevertheless, the security company has been criticized for financial mismanagement and corruption.<sup>92</sup> Its owner, Roger Ekpemukpolo, is also believed to be the ex-commander of MEND. Nigerian law prohibits weapons from being brought through its territorial waters, making partnerships with PMSCs and PCASP even more difficult.<sup>93</sup>

State and local solutions may provide examples of regional cooperation. Côte d'Ivoire has created its own system to

combat piracy. It is made up of four levels and involves different government agencies. This requires cooperation from Côte d'Ivoire's National Safety Council (CNS), federal ministers, and maritime operations centers. Since the Yaoundé agreement was introduced, Nigeria has also implemented regular drills and naval exercises to prepare for potential pirate attacks and to prevent criminal activity.<sup>94</sup>

In Nigeria, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) spends more than USD 200 million per year on reducing piracy and promoting maritime safety. The Deep Blue project was introduced in 2017 to further this goal. About USD 195 million has been spent on new vessels, aircraft, and platforms to respond to piracy incidents. The Deep Blue project involves members of Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Defense, Department of State Services, Office of the National Security Advisor, and the Nigeria Police. The Command, Control, Computer, Communication, and Intelligence (C4i) Center is also an important part of the project. Created in August 2019, the C4i Center combines air, land, and marine capabilities to promote security.<sup>95</sup>

In May 2022, a meeting between African naval staff and Coast Guard chiefs led to the adoption of the Port Harcourt Declaration. This called for a Combined Maritime Task Force in the Gulf of Guinea, which has not yet been created.<sup>96</sup> Effective practices will help to disincentivize maritime piracy. With consistent procedures and law enforcement, the cost of stealing and processing oil, for instance, may become higher than selling it legally.<sup>97</sup> Through updated laws, regional cooperation, and new technologies, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea can be achieved.

## International Conventions and Cooperation

The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the

[www.africanews.com/2017/09/23/ghana-wins-three-year-maritime-boundary-dispute-case-against-ivory-coast/](http://www.africanews.com/2017/09/23/ghana-wins-three-year-maritime-boundary-dispute-case-against-ivory-coast/).

90 Okafor-Yarwood and Pigeon, *Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea*, Stable Seas

91 Hasan, "Effectiveness of the Current Regimes to Combat Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: An Evaluation," 34-65.

92 "Global West vessel specialist owners in legal battle over company shares," Business Day, accessed July 14, 2024, <https://businessday.ng/maritime/article/global-west-vessel-specialist-owners-legal-battle-company-shares/>.

93 Hasan, "Effectiveness of the Current Regimes to Combat Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: An Evaluation."

94 International Crisis Group, "Gulf of Guinea: A Regional Solution to Piracy?"

95 Okafor-Yarwood and Maisie Pigeon, *Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea*.

96 "Security situation in the Gulf of Guinea: Robust Response to combat Maritime Insecurity and Piracy," Amani Africa, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://amani-africa-et.org/security-situation-in-the-gulf-of-guinea-robust-response-to-combat-maritime-insecurity-and-piracy/>.

97 Ralby, South, and Ralby, "The Gulf of Guinea is Ready for Maritime Technology."

Sea (UNCLOS) is the main international treaty on ocean use and governance. UNCLOS' goals are outlined in its preamble, which declares it should be used for maintaining peace and enhancing equitable international economic order.<sup>98</sup> UNCLOS defines piracy as “any illegal acts of violence... committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship...on the high seas...[or] in a place outside the jurisdiction of any state.”<sup>99</sup> Since 2008, all of the Gulf of Guinea states have ratified the UNCLOS.<sup>100</sup>

The First United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I) was held in 1957. However, only three Gulf of Guinea states—Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone—adopted the conference's Conventions at the end of 1958. This was because the framework benefited developed states while hurting developing states, especially those in the Gulf of Guinea who were recently emerging from colonial rule.<sup>101</sup>

The Second United Nations Conference on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS II) was held in 1960. Four Gulf of Guinea states attended: Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, and Liberia. The main goal of the conference was to resolve claims to territorial seas and fisheries zones. Many developed states argued that the maximum limit of a country's territorial sea should be six nautical miles. However, the coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea proposed a 12-nautical mile territorial limit. Most African states attending the conference had already implemented laws that claimed a territorial sea of 12 nautical miles or beyond. Since no agreement was reached, UNCLOS II did not adopt a Convention.<sup>102</sup>

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Organization of African Unity (OAU)—the organization that came before the African Union—demanded a fair Convention be adopted.

Many African states joined the Group of 77. The organization was created in 1964 by 77 developing countries. The group's goal is to gain greater international attention to developing countries' needs through cooperation.<sup>103</sup> It is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations. The annual Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 occurs at the beginning of the UN General Assembly each year.<sup>104</sup>

In 1972, the Yaoundé Regional Seminar was introduced. This allowed African states to create an economic zone beyond their territorial sea. While not part of the Gulf of Guinea, Kenya introduced the concept of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in 1972.<sup>105</sup> A country's EEZ ensures that it has exclusive rights to a certain area of the ocean and its resources that go beyond a country's territorial sea.<sup>106</sup> Through the Addis Ababa and Mogadishu Declarations of 1973 and 1974, African countries began implementing EEZs.<sup>107</sup>

From 1974 to 1982 the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) took place. It was here where the topic of piracy was addressed. UNCLOS stated that states were required to reduce piracy at the national level and to cooperate with other countries at the international level. According to UNCLOS, the coastal states of the Gulf of Guinea must create and enforce laws that target piracy. However, while some coastal states like Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo have implemented specific laws against piracy, many of the Gulf of Guinea states have not.<sup>108</sup> For instance, the UN Mission to the Gulf of Guinea found that the definition of piracy in Benin's national laws was outdated and inconsistent with UNCLOS.<sup>109</sup>

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) was created

98 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*

99 Nilasari Nilasari and Lorna Steele, “UNCLOS Definition of Piracy: Is it still Relevant for Modern Piracy?”, *Mulwarman Law Review* 7, no. 2 (December 2022): 2527-3477, <https://doi.org/10.30872/mulrev.v7i2.943>.

100 Nilasari Steele, “UNCLOS Definition of Piracy: Is it still Relevant for Modern Piracy?”

101 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

102 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

103 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

104 The Group of 77 at the United Nations. “About the Group of 7.” Accessed August 6, 2024. <https://www.g77.org/doc/#>

105 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

106 “What is the ‘EEZ?’” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, accessed July 14, 2024, <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/eez.html>.

107 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

108 Alan Laifer, “Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the Effects of Unstable Governance - Security Outlines,” Security Outlines - česko-slovenský portál o bezpečnosti, May 7, 2024, <https://www.securityoutlines.cz/piracy-in-the-gulf-of-guinea-and-the-effects-of-unstable-governance/>.

109 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.



in 1948 to promote navigation and shipping safety. Each Gulf of Guinea state is a member of the IMO. While the IMO has adopted the UNCLOS definition of piracy, the IMO has also created its own definition of “armed robbery against ships.” While this definition is similar to the UNCLOS definition of piracy, it applies only to acts of piracy that occur near the land of the territorial sea. Because of this, the IMO tracks separate instances of “piracy” and “armed robbery against ships” and distinguishes between successful and attempted attacks.<sup>110</sup> With the organization’s unique definition of “armed robbery against ships,” coastal states should establish a uniform approach to combat the crime. The IMO’s data on piracy and armed robbery is publicly available, making it easier for states and local actors to develop anti-piracy policies.<sup>111</sup>

The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) is part of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). The ICC works with the shipping industry to provide insurance and risk analysis. More specifically, the IMB helps to regulate maritime traffic and prevents shipping related fraud. In 1992, the IMB began to monitor global piracy through different reporting points. Its main reporting center is located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Unlike the IMO, the IMB does not distinguish between the definitions of piracy and “armed robbery against ships.” Instead, the IMB defines piracy as the “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.”<sup>112</sup> Each maritime attack that the IMB reports is treated as a piracy attack, no matter the location of the incident.<sup>113</sup>

The IMB’s incident reports are helpful for addressing g piracy, but its general definition of piracy may be too broad. While the IMB may define an incident as piracy, the definition accepted by UNCLOS or the IMO may not. Because of this, data collected from IMO reports compared to IMB reports may differ. This makes it difficult for Gulf of Guinea

states to decide how and where to improve their anti-piracy efforts. Additionally, depending on which definition a coastal state adopts into their laws, the incident may be addressed differently in one state compared to another.<sup>114</sup>

The United Nations (UN) Security Council has adopted resolutions about piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The first resolution was adopted in October 2011. Resolution 2018 encouraged the initiatives taken by states of ECOWAS, ECCAS, and the GGC to combat piracy. It also encouraged the creation of a summit to bring the political leaders of the Gulf of Guinea together to discuss regional solutions. Resolution 2018 also acknowledged support and called for greater assistance from the international community and intergovernmental organizations. The resolution also urged the states of the Gulf of Guinea to implement a regional coast guard project that was being developed by the Maritime Organization for West and Central Africa (MOWCA). In November 2011, the UN Secretary-General sent a special mission to the region to assess the situation.<sup>115</sup>

In February 2012, another resolution was passed as the special mission discovered the worsening threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Resolution 2039 described the initiatives adopted by ECCAS member states as “comprehensive.” The resolution recognized that steps were being taken by ECOWAS to adopt an “integrated maritime strategy.” The resolution also designated the MOWCA as a solution for addressing the situation in the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>116</sup> In May 2022, Resolution 2634 was adopted by the UN Security Council. The resolution once again called upon coastal states to criminalize piracy and to create regional maritime security strategies.<sup>117</sup>

Since the Yaoundé Summit in 2013, the international community has increased their attention towards the Gulf of Guinea. About 13 percent of the European Union’s oil imports originate from the Gulf of Guinea. The G7++ Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea is an organization made up

110 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

111 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

112 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

113 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

114 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

115 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

116 Ali, *Maritime Security Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: Prospects and Challenges*.

117 United Nations, “Adopting Resolution 2634 (2022), Security Council Calls on Gulf of Guinea Countries to Criminalize Piracy, Armed Robbery at Sea under Domestic Laws,” Press release, May 31, 2022, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14915.doc.htm>.



Armed Forces of Gabon during the Obangame Express 2024

Credit: US Africa Command

of Gulf of Guinea states and G7 countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Due to the region's lack of resources and personnel, G7 navies have provided support. The navies have trained local navies and engaged in anti-piracy operations.<sup>118</sup>

Since France introduced "Operation Corymbe" in the 1990s, the country has had a large presence in the Gulf of Guinea, particularly in Senegal, Gabon, and the Ivory Coast.<sup>119</sup> The operation deploys combat vessels in the Gulf of Guinea. Its goal is to fight against piracy in the region and prepare for situations in which French or European nationals may need to be evacuated.<sup>120</sup> France's navy annually organizes three to four regional exercises in the Gulf of Guinea. Each year, the exercises conclude with a major annual exercise known as the Grand African Navy's Exercise for Maritime Operations (NEMO). The 2020 NEMO exercise consisted of 30 ships and aircraft from 14 countries, including the United States.

118 Pierre Morcos, "A Transatlantic Approach to Address Growing Maritime Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea," Center for Strategic and International Studies, last modified February 1, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/transatlantic-approach-address-growing-maritime-insecurity-gulf-guinea>.

119 "EU Maritime Security: Exercise in the Gulf of Guinea strengthens coordination in the fight against piracy and criminal activity at sea," European Union: External Action, accessed August 6, 2024, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-maritime-security-exercise-gulf-guinea-strengthens-coordination-fight-against-piracy-and-criminal\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-maritime-security-exercise-gulf-guinea-strengthens-coordination-fight-against-piracy-and-criminal_en).

120 "Operation Corymbe," UNA -ALAT, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.alat.fr/historiques-operations-exterieures-corymbe.html>.

121 "EU Maritime Security: Exercise in the Gulf of Guinea strengthens coordination in the fight against piracy and criminal activity at sea," European Union: External Action, accessed August 6, 2024, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-maritime-security-exercise-gulf-guinea-strengthens-coordination-fight-against-piracy-and-criminal\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-maritime-security-exercise-gulf-guinea-strengthens-coordination-fight-against-piracy-and-criminal_en).

122 Morocco, "A Transatlantic Approach to Address Growing Maritime Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea."

123 Kent Mensah, "Gabon: US and allies heighten maritime security training along West Africa's coast." *The Africa Report*. May 14, 2024. <https://www.theafricareport.com/348049/gabon-us-and-allies-heighten-maritime-security-training-along-west-africas-coast/>.

The exercise consists of Gulf of Guinea states and their Interregional and Regional Coordination Centers, Maritime Operation Centers, and navies.<sup>121</sup>

The US Africa Command (AFRICOM) also organizes a major annual exercise in the region known as the Obangame Express.<sup>122</sup> The Obangame Express joint naval exercise occurs every year. In 2024, the United States introduced new technologies such as drones. About 30 regional and international partners participate in the exercise. The exercises last for two weeks. Exercises focus on integration between Maritime Operation Centers as well as visit, board, search, and seizure scenarios. Angola, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, São Tomé and Príncipe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Togo are involved in the exercises. Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands are also involved.<sup>123</sup>

Due to their historical and economic ties with the region,

Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Spain, or the United Kingdom, occasionally deploy their navies and ensure a large presence at sea. With its significant shipping industry which is responsible for more than 10 percent of the global transport, Denmark is also largely involved in the region through capacity building efforts.<sup>124</sup> However, foreign countries that have become involved in the region are faced with questions of sovereignty and accusations of neo-colonialism. In 2022, an Italian warship known as *Luigi Rizzo* gained international attention for stopping a pirate attack on the bulk carrier *MV Arch Gabriel* in the region. However, in November 2021, a Danish warship known as the *Esbern Snare* became involved in a conflict with pirates in the region. Five pirates were killed while four others were arrested. Due to shortcomings in international law, there was no legal process to bring the pirates to Nigerian authorities from the Danish vessel. As a result, the Danish navy left three pirates on the sea in a dinghy while a remaining injured pirate was taken to Denmark for trial. Nigeria considered prosecuting Danish forces for their actions against Nigerian nationals. This highlights the challenge of policing the region. While local governments want to maintain their sovereignty, foreign governments want to maintain safety for trade.<sup>125</sup>

China also has a large presence in the region. The country has a share of numerous key ports in the Gulf of Guinea, including Lagos and the port of Lekki in Nigeria. China also has 50 percent ownership of the container terminal in Lomé, which is the deepest natural port in the Gulf of Guinea. This port connects the Gulf of Guinea to countries in the interior of the Sahel. This has led to concerns about China's strategic and military intentions. Reports emerged about China's plans to build naval bases in Equatorial Guinea in 2021 and Gabon in 2023. However, unlike many European countries, the United States has not carried out any military exercises in

West Africa.<sup>126</sup>

In 2020, the Yaoundé Architecture Regional Information System (YARIS) was created by GoGIN, leaders from the Yaoundé Architecture, and support from the European Union. The platform connects 96 percent of the maritime centers with the Yaoundé Architecture. The program's goal is to train government officials on the principles of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), Yaoundé Architecture centers, and to improve information sharing. The program also looks to expand and improve technology use and uses mapping, instant messaging, and surveillance tools. YARIS serves as a database and helps to analyze and assess piracy threats.<sup>127</sup> In February 2022, officials from Cote d'Ivoire attended a training program hosted by GoGIN, CRESMAO, and ARSTM. Operators and analysts were taught how to use the system.<sup>128</sup> In 2023, YARIS helped to locate the crews of the *Monjasa Reformer* and *Success 9* who were attacked by pirates.<sup>129</sup>

Additionally, the Maritime Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea (MDAT-GOG) is currently located in Brest, France and Portsmouth, United Kingdom. The organization shares information with commercial actors.<sup>130</sup> France and Nigeria have begun to work together to reduce piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Concerns over international support also involve questions over if it will come in the form of bilateral or multilateral partnerships. Bilateral cooperation such as an exclusive partnership with the United States and Nigeria rather than the United States and all of the Gulf of Guinea may increase competition between coastal states for security resources.<sup>131</sup>

From 2015 to 2024, INTERPOL has also engaged in Project AGWE in the Gulf of Guinea. Its goal is to enhance maritime law enforcement in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria,

124 Morocs, "A Transatlantic Approach to Address Growing Maritime Insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea."

125 Max Williams, "Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security: Lessons, Latency, and Law Enforcement," *War On the Rocks*, May 15, 2024, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/05/gulf-of-guinea-maritime-security-lessons-latency-and-law-enforcement/>.

126 Williams, "Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security: Lessons, Latency, and Law Enforcement," *War On the Rocks*, May 15, 2024, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/05/gulf-of-guinea-maritime-security-lessons-latency-and-law-enforcement/>.

127 "Effective cooperation during pirate attacks, thanks to YARIS," YARIS, accessed August 9, 2024, <https://yaris.site/en/project-news/effective-cooperation-during-pirate-attacks-thanks-to-yaris/>.

128 "YARIS assists the coordination between the maritime agencies of Ivory Coast," YARIS, accessed August 9, 2024, <https://yaris.site/en/project-news/yaris-assists-coordination-between-maritime-agencies-ivory-coast/>.

129 YARIS, "Effective cooperation during pirate attacks, thanks to YARIS."

130 Hüseyin, "Sovereignty and Transnational Cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea: How a Network Approach can Strengthen the Yaoundé Architecture."

131 "Gulf of Guinea: A Regional Solution to Piracy?," International Crisis Group, accessed June 18, 2024, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/gulf-guinea-regional-solution-piracy>.

and Togo. The project hopes to improve communication between first responders, prosecutors, and investigators while also increasing cross-border collaboration. From 2015 to December 2023, 900 officials in the Gulf of Guinea have been trained through 78 capacity building activities. The program also supported two successful piracy prosecutions in Togo and Nigeria.<sup>132</sup>

## Legal Responses and Convictions

The Gulf of Guinea borders 20 countries, having a coastline of about 6,000 meters. Moreover, the Gulf has trade potential that reaches an average of USD 1.925 billion annually. This means that the Gulf of Guinea is a key trade route in the world.<sup>133</sup> While this allows many larger ships, like oil tankers, to use the gulf for trading purposes, it also means that maritime piracy is concentrated in that very region. Regionally, Western and Central Africa have endured the highest rate of piracy attacks since 2018.<sup>134</sup>

Piracy is often found in regions with weak legal systems and lax law enforcement, which makes the Gulf of Guinea a hotbed for this behavior.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, as of late the countries in the Gulf have been suffering from extreme poverty, most notably Nigeria. While Nigeria has made profit off of its oil exports, the income is rarely given back to its citizens. Instead, it is kept with the government. This corruption adds on to the general economic instability in the region. With this instability comes a higher rate of unemployment, and with unemployment comes a lack of funds. Given this lack of funding, many find that piracy is the only source of income left.

Indeed, poverty and unemployment in the region directly relates to the rise of piracy. For example, one pirate group in particular, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), had the goal of weakening the region's oil

infrastructure by taking money from Nigeria's government and giving it back to the people. However, after a ceasefire agreement between them and the Nigerian government, the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) picked up where they left off. What this means is that the problem cannot be solved by simply stopping the pirates themselves. It is related to the poverty and unemployment that runs rampant in the region. Unless this is addressed, new groups will continue to rise, just as NDA took off when MEND disbanded.

The main role of legal frameworks is to properly convict pirates, so that the pirates themselves can be sentenced and others can be deterred from committing acts of piracy. One of the biggest issues that institutions face is that creating frameworks for convicting piracy is difficult. According to data compiled by the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), trainings related to convicting pirates has cost the Gulf at least USD 350,000 since 2019, with the greatest expenditures being Nigeria (USD 79,000), Côte d'Ivoire (USD 68,000), and Ghana (USD 43,000).<sup>136</sup> Given this, the UNODC Global Maritime Crime Programme calculated that each trial would cost approximately USD 50,000. This includes hiring government employees, compensation of the jury, and other miscellaneous costs.<sup>137</sup>

Large amounts of money have been spent on counter-piracy operations. One of these is the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security (YAMS). YAMS is a network of maritime centers that work to speed up intra-regional information sharing. This would help better coordinate responses towards emerging incidents.<sup>138</sup> This operation was agreed to in 2013, and it has continued to advance towards full operationalization. However, the financial needs for YAMS have not been met. In 2013 the 25 states of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community

132 "Project AGWE, West Africa," INTERPOL, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Maritime-crime/Project-AGWE-West-Africa>.

133 Thomas Greminger, and Nayef Al-Rodhan. "Maritime Security: Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea ." Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), November 2022. <https://dam.gcsp.ch/files/doc/policy-brief-1-maritime-security>.

134 ICC International Maritime Bureau. *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships*. London: ICC International Maritime Bureau, 2019. Accessed August 1, 2024.

135 Kincaid. "Maritime Crime in Western & Middle Africa and Southeast Asia: Motivations behind Modern-Day Piracy." <https://edspace.american.edu/jk1744a/wp-content/uploads/sites/1447/2020/10/Writing-Sample-1.pdf>.

136 Curtis Bell, Jon Huggins, Jay Benson, Lydelle Joubert, Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood, and Tarila Marclint Abide. "Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis." Stable Seas - Rethinking Maritime Security, November 2021. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/Maritime\\_crime/UNODC\\_Pirates\\_GoG\\_A\\_Cost\\_Analysis\\_for\\_Coastal\\_States.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Maritime_crime/UNODC_Pirates_GoG_A_Cost_Analysis_for_Coastal_States.pdf).

137 Bell, Huggins, Benson, et al. "Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis."

138 Bell, Huggins, Benson, et al. "Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis."

of Western States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission signed the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCC).<sup>139</sup> Under this code, the involved states agreed to cooperate to repress transnational organized maritime crime. This includes maritime piracy, terrorism, and illegal fishing. Additionally, the YCC established an Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC) to help foster and oversee cooperation between states.<sup>140</sup>

Moreover, the Code also outlines future methods that should be taken by the states to maintain safety at sea. This includes training and educational programs. Unfortunately, the YCC has proven to be very limited. This is because it is a non-binding document, meaning it is not legally necessary to obey. Moreover, it does not address all the necessary issues, including the protection of merchant ships or the use of armed guards. However, if all regional states cooperate, it has the potential to have sustainable benefits.

To reaffirm, convicting pirates and putting them on trial is something most African countries cannot afford. Often when they can afford to convict pirates, there are doubts as to whether it is even effective. For example, for every dollar gained by pirates, whether it is extorted or stolen, the Gulf of Guinea's governments spend around USD 524 on counter piracy efforts. These expenses have forced these states to invest in more long-standing solutions. This includes capable patrol boats, increased patrols, building platforms for maritime awareness, legal training, and information sharing networks. However, it has been estimated that expenditures of this kind have increased by approximately USD 100 million per year since 2017. Moreover, for every dollar pirates take from Africans, Gulf of Guinea states are robbed of around USD 170 in port fees due to decreased shipping activity. This loss of government revenue has totaled to an estimated amount of

USD 1.4 billion per year.<sup>141</sup>

Given these issues, there is evidently a severe lack of prosecutions. Most of these countries that fail to prosecute face issues ranging from funding, legal limitations, and inability to actually conduct proper investigations due to insufficient experience in the matter. With the expected rise in maritime trade and with the current lack of consequence, there is a chance that piracy rates will also rise, leaving countries worse than before.<sup>142</sup>

For Nigeria, corruption plays a central part in their fight against piracy. In a 2016 study, the International Crisis Group found that some of the Nigerian navy's elite were involved in the illegal oil trade. Others had direct ties to pirates themselves.<sup>143</sup> A recent investigation by the Nigerian Anti-corruption Commission found that corruption is reported to be a legitimate and accepted tool to promote business interests.<sup>144</sup> This exemplifies how piracy is allowed to run rampant without any consequences.

On an international level, the majority of maritime security is addressed through the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Specifically, Article 105 says that any state can exercise jurisdiction over any act of piracy. However, the definition of 'piracy' only covers acts that occur outside the jurisdiction of a state. This points to international waters. However, acts of piracy that occur inside the territorial waters do not fall under the UNCLOS legal provisions. This means that the UN is unable to do anything about these specific types of attacks.<sup>145</sup> Additional outside parties are also trying to assist the Gulf in their fight against piracy. For instance, the United States military has facilitated the Obangame Express exercise. This was designed to increase

139 Eric Pichon, and Marian Pietsch. "Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: EU and International Action." European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), March 2020. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/649333/EPRS\\_BRI\(2020\)649333\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/649333/EPRS_BRI(2020)649333_EN.pdf).

140 Anabia-Tiah, Richardis Kali. "Assessing the Effectiveness of Maritime Centres in the Context of the Implementation of the Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa (Yaounde Code Of Conduct)." The Maritime Commons: Digital Repository of the World Maritime University, October 31, 2022. [https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3143&context=all\\_dissertations](https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3143&context=all_dissertations).

141 Bell, Huggins, Benson, et al. "Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis."

142 Vivek Pandey, and Geetika Vyas. "Piracy and Prosecution Challenges." Centre for Maritime Law, October 10, 2019. [https://cmlnlno.law.blog/2019/10/10/piracy-and-prosecution-challenges/#\\_ftn17](https://cmlnlno.law.blog/2019/10/10/piracy-and-prosecution-challenges/#_ftn17).

143 Sheelagh Brady. "Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: Time to Bring Anti-Corruption on Board Capacity-Building Programmes." U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, September 7, 2020. <https://www.u4.no/blog/piracy-in-the-gulf-of-guinea>.

144 Niranjana Jose. "Understanding the Dynamics of Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea." Young Diplomats Society - YDS, November 23, 2022. <https://www.theyoungdiplomats.com/post/understanding-the-dynamics-of-piracy-in-the-gulf-of-guinea>.

145 Eric Pichon, and Marian Pietsch. "Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea: EU and International Action." European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), March 2020. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/649333/EPRS\\_BRI\(2020\)649333\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/649333/EPRS_BRI(2020)649333_EN.pdf).

sea cooperation to counter illicit activity, while focusing on maritime domain awareness.<sup>146</sup> In their training, they have studied boarding techniques, search and rescue operations, medical casualty responses, radio communication, and information management techniques - all of which are steps towards better handling of piracy.<sup>147</sup>

The growth of piracy is directly connected to regional instability, weak governance, severe poverty, and corruption. It is true that countries in the Gulf of Guinea are able to pass many codes and call for operations. However, most of these actions are ineffective. There is a clear lack of regional cooperation, resources, and a strong inability to implement solutions to their full extent. To start seeing results in the fight against piracy, the root of the issue must be addressed, along with the creation of a sustainable legal framework that is made to last.

## Current Status

### Niger River Delta

The Niger River Delta is made up of nine states in southern Nigeria that border the River Niger. This includes the states of Abia, Akwa, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers. The region has a population of 21 million. Many communities can only be accessed by boat. This makes their populations vulnerable to piracy, social conflicts, floods, and oil pollution. The Niger River Delta has over 2,000 waterways, making piracy in the region more accessible.<sup>148</sup> Declines in agricultural production and a low level of industrial activities may make the region's population more dependent on the maritime industry.

Currently, the Niger River Delta contributes USD 400 billion to Nigeria's annual GDP. Farming and fishing are the region's main economic activities.<sup>149</sup> The Niger River Delta's urban areas contribute to commerce and oil industries. About 70 percent of the population in the Niger River Delta lives

146 "Obangame Express," United States Africa Command (March 2019).

147 "Obangame Express." United States Africa Command, 2023. <https://www.africom.mil/what-we-do/exercises/obangame-express>.

148 Makodi Biereenu-Nnabugwu, Andrew O. Obiajulu, and Nobert Chijioko Abah, "Oil Wealth and Underdevelopment in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 20, no. 10 (October 2015): 13-21. <https://doi.org/10.26765/DRJSSES65469979>.

149 Biereenu-Nnabugwu, Obiajulu, and Abah, "Oil Wealth and Underdevelopment in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria."



Oil pollution in the Niger Delta

Credit: Ucheke

below the poverty line. Additionally, about 33 percent of the population is unemployed. The region currently faces three different types of piracy: Deep Offshore, Coastal and Low-reach, and Riverine piracy.<sup>150</sup>

Recently, the main objective of Deep Offshore pirate groups in the Niger River Delta is kidnapping foreign seafarers. Deep Offshore pirate groups have shown their ability to kidnap more than 10 hostages per attack. A maritime expert from the region noted there has been an emergence of “mass kidnapping[s]” since 2019. These Deep Offshore pirates have developed the tactics necessary to negotiate ransom payments for each crew member kidnapped.<sup>151</sup> Deep Offshore groups are those that operate in the Gulf of Guinea, generally off the coast of West Africa. They primarily target international shipping crews for ransom. Some groups have gone as far as conducting attacks in the Atlantic Ocean on the high seas.<sup>152</sup>

Coastal and Low-reach pirates tend to specialize in hijacking vessels, specifically vessels transporting oil. Much of the attacks conducted by these pirates take place along the coast of the Niger River Delta in the Andoni River, the Calabar River, and the Opobo River. Much of the vessels targeted also include local supply, cargo, and fishing vessels. These groups use speedboats, outboard engines, and more sophisticated weapons like assault rifles. Local fishers are typically targeted for fish catch, or equipment like engines and nets. Instead of targeting crews, Coastal and Low-reach pirates target the vessel’s captain, chief mate, or chief engineer. It has been reported that these criminal groups also have onshore hideouts where hostages are held. Negotiations for crew members to be released last about two weeks. Ransom amounts range from about USD 3,000 to USD 4,000 per group of hostages. For instance, in 2020, USD 18,000 was paid in ransom to release five Ghanaian crewmembers. It is estimated that there are currently between four and six Deep Offshore Piracy groups operating in the region. Some members have been involved in piracy for many years. Released hostages have noted that

pirates told them of their attacks against other vessels. This supports the belief that Deep Offshore pirates in the Niger River Delta likely have more experience, resources, and knowledge of piracy.<sup>153</sup>

Coastal and Low-reach pirates are also more likely to be involved in other forms of crime such as local illegal oil bunkering. These pirates appear to be generally accepted by local communities who are either unaware of their activities or may accept them for fear of violent retaliation if they collaborated with local law enforcement. Most Nigerian law enforcement agencies do not address this type of piracy as they cause less issues in comparison to other methods of piracy. However, in the Ibeno Local Government Area, a Special Force Squad was created to patrol waterways and protect fishing activities. More specifically, Low-reach pirates mainly engage in robbery. They target oil and gas support vessels, passenger vessels, local cargo tankers, and industrial fishing trawlers. Because of these attacks, a Cameroonian company operating passenger boats in the region stopped their commercial operations. Low-reach pirates tend to hijack vessels that carry illegal goods which have little to no security.<sup>154</sup>

Riverine Criminals in the Niger River Delta region do not engage in piracy according to the UNCLOS definition of piracy. Most of these groups operate in inland riverine areas and target local vessels. Reports indicate that Riverine Criminals have not kidnapped crews. Their goal is to steal money and valuables rather than kidnap for ransom. Most vessels targeted are passenger boats. However, Riverine Criminals’ attacks have been fatal. In January 2021, two passengers were killed and several others were missing after an attack of two vessels on Bonny waterways located near the Dema Abbey Community. Incidents are largely unreported and mainly affect local communities. The number of Riverine Criminal groups in the region are unknown, but likely fluctuate frequently due to their declining community support.<sup>155</sup>

150 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: Global Maritime Crime Programme, 2021), [https://www.unodc.org/res/piracy/index\\_html/UNODC\\_GMCP\\_Pirates\\_of\\_the\\_Niger\\_Delta\\_between\\_brown\\_and\\_blue\\_waters.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/res/piracy/index_html/UNODC_GMCP_Pirates_of_the_Niger_Delta_between_brown_and_blue_waters.pdf).

151 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

152 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

153 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

154 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

155 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

Pirates have expanded their ability to operate in waters further from the Niger River Delta's coast. As of March 2021, pirates reached up from 220 nautical miles from the Niger River Delta region. This could be seen in the March 2021 attacks of the *David B* and *Bourbon Evolution 802* vessels. Deep offshore pirate headquarters are located deep within the Niger River Delta region. They can be found in Akwa Ibom, Cross River States, Bayelsa, Rivers, and Delta. It must be noted that reports of piracy in these regions differ. While a recent report on insecurity in the Niger River Delta found that piracy activities in Akwa Ibom were "pronounced," interviews with locals claimed the region has been "very calm." Once again, differing definitions of piracy may be the reason for these discrepancies. According to the IMB, ICC, and MDAT-GoG, Akwa Ibom's waters have recently not been at risk of Deep Offshore piracy. However, reports by local media indicate that piracy is common in the region, especially against local fishing vessels.<sup>156</sup>

While the Nigerian Navy has implemented strategies to combat piracy in the Niger River Delta, report indicates that Riverine Criminals are targeted more than Coastal, Low-reach, and Deep Offshore pirates. Only three arrests of Deep Offshore piracy were made in 2020. In Nigeria, the only instance of piracy that has been charged as a crime has been for the attack of the *Hailunfeng 11*.<sup>157</sup>

In April 2024, Nigeria's Minister of State for Defence announced that the country's navy had deployed 1,486 personnel to combat piracy in the Niger River Delta Region. The group went through six months of warfare and combat training to prepare. Their main focus would be addressing sea pirates and oil thieves. The Navy's goal is to expand its forces, infrastructure, and technology. In addition to expanding its personnel, the country will receive two offshore patrol vessels from Turkey and fast attack crafts from China. Joint exercises and training with foreign naval partners have also continued.

Operation Delta Sanity—which was created to combat oil theft—has increased oil production from less than 1 million barrels per day to almost 1.5 million barrels per day.<sup>158</sup>

Between 2021 and 2023, the government of Germany funded a program known as the Community Based Crime Prevention Strategy within the communities of Otuan, Ikeberi, and Ayamasa. The program helped to improve law enforcement practices and provide training on community-oriented policing. The project also created youth centers and a crime prevention youth sports program known as Line Up Live Up.<sup>159</sup>

In May 2024, the Executive Governor of the Bayelsa State, Ambassador of Denmark to Nigeria, and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Representative of Nigeria launched a new project to strengthen the Niger Delta Peace Architecture<sup>160</sup>. The project's goal is to strengthen the Bayelsa State Community-Based Crime Prevention Strategy which was created in 2022. The program will be implemented in five communities throughout the Bayelsa State. Within the five communities, joint security committees will also be created to manage their security environment. During the launch of Denmark's project, Bayelsa's governor also welcomed ambassadors and high-level representatives from the European Union, Finland, and Germany. The group met with the BRACED commission, which is composed of six Niger River Delta states: Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Bayelsa, Cross River, Edo, and Delta. The group discussed security challenges in the Niger River Delta and ways the international community could work with the governments of the Niger River Delta.<sup>161</sup>

Additionally, Shell has made numerous commitments to sustainability in Nigeria, specifically in the Niger River Delta. The company also claimed to contribute to the country's local economic growth through providing employment in their supply chain activities and working with governments to create

156 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

157 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

158 News Agency of Nigeria, "Nigerian Navy recruited 1,486 personnel to tackle oil theft, piracy in Niger Delta: Minister," *Peoples Gazette*, April 27, 2024, <https://gazettengr.com/nigerian-navy-recruited-1486-personnel-to-tackle-oil-theft-piracy-in-niger-delta-minister/>.

159 "Bayelsa State Government, Denmark and the United Nations launch new project to strengthen the Niger Delta Peace Architecture," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed July 27, 2024, <https://www.unodc.org/conig/en/links/bayelsa-state-government--denmark-and-the-united-nations-launch-new-project-to-strengthen-the-niger-delta-peace-architecture.html>.

160 "Bayelsa State Government, Denmark and the United Nations launch new project to strengthen the Niger Delta Peace Architecture."

161 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Bayelsa State Government, Denmark and the United Nations launch new project to strengthen the Niger Delta Peace Architecture."



jobs. The company also claims to support the development of local businesses and suppliers. In 2019, Shell pledged to fund the USD one billion cleanup of the oil spill in the Niger River Delta with the backing of the UN. The plan was led by the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP). HYPREP's governing council and board of trustees are members of the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC). However, the cleanup efforts left Ogoniland more contaminated than ever. UN reports revealed that the group's mismanagement, waste, lack of transparency, and insufficient storage of oil-soaked soil were to blame. This allowed chemicals into grounds and creeks that were initially uncontaminated.<sup>162</sup>

According to the Rise For Bayelsa campaign, about 40 million liters of oil are spilled every year in the Niger River Delta region. Oil contamination blocks wetlands and is difficult to remove without causing more damage. The tides in the region move oil to vegetation, which causes the asphyxiation of plants, resulting in the death of mangrove vegetation. In turn, this disrupts the balance of the Niger River Delta's ecosystem and harms plant and animal life. This reduces farmers' yields of food and their nutritional content, especially staple foods such as cassava. Oil contamination has been linked to heavy metal exposure. By being exposed to increased levels of lead, mercury, and chromium, the risk of diseases like cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and kidney damage also increases. Women living in contaminated regions are more likely to experience postpartum hemorrhages and cesarean sections. Gas flaring—which is the process of burning excessing natural gas that is released by drilling for oil—releases benzene and naphthalene which have been linked to cancer. The black carbon also released during this process can cause trouble breathing, heart and respiratory diseases, and strokes.<sup>163</sup> The region's swamps and mangroves have become uninhabitable for

numerous species. The average human life expectancy is 10 years less than the Nigerian average.<sup>164</sup>

In 2021, four farmers of the Niger River Delta won a lawsuit brought against Shell Nigeria. The farmers sued for damages to their farms by major oil spills from underground pipelines. By a ruling from the International Court of Justice, Shell Nigeria was ordered to pay damages to the farmers to carry out a clean-up of the damaged communities.<sup>165</sup> In March 2022, a Nigeria court prevented the sale of any of Shell's assets in Nigeria. Through a High Court Order in 2020, Shell was required to pay USD 1.95 billion to 88 communities in the Rivers State of the Niger River Delta region to repair damages to farms and waterways. In February 2021, a United Kingdom Supreme Court decision allowed oil-polluted communities in Nigeria to sue Shell in UK courts.<sup>166</sup>

In late 2021, the members of the Nembe community in the Niger River Delta protested against months-long oil spills by the Aiteo Eastern and Production Company. The oil spilled into fishing settlements along the Nembe coastline and into the Santa Barbara River, which empties into the Niger Delta. Local media reports have described the incident as the biggest oil spill in the history of the Nigerian petroleum industry. In the past six years, the Nigeria Ministry of Environment has reported 5,000 cases of oil spills.<sup>167</sup> It is estimated that over 2 million barrels of oil have spilled into the Niger River Delta.<sup>168</sup> The Deputy Environment Minister of Nigeria, Sharon Ikeazor, has compared the damage from the oil spills to the World War II atomic bombing of Hiroshima in Japan. Governor Douye Diri has compared the oil spills to the 2010 incident in the Gulf of Mexico which is largely considered to be one of the largest marine oil spills in history. Ikeazor has called for a review of Nigeria's National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency and to introduce greater punishments

162 Ogechi Obi, "Oil Among the Mangrove Trees: a Portrait of Destruction in the Niger Delta, Then and Now," *Harvard International Review*, last modified May 19, 2023, <https://hir.harvard.edu/oil-among-the-mangrove-trees-a-portrait-of-destruction-in-the-niger-delta-then-and-now/>.

163 Obi, "Oil Among the Mangrove Trees: a Portrait of Destruction in the Niger Delta, Then and Now."

164 Eromo Egbejule, "Niger Delta residents protest against month-long oil spill." *Al Jazeera*, December 7, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/7/niger-delta-youths-protest-against-month-long-oil-spill>.

165 Nimi Princewill and Krystina Shveda, "Shell escaped liability for oil spills in Nigeria for years. Then four farmers took them to court – and won," *CNN World*, May 26, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/25/africa/shell-oil-spills-nigeria-intl-cmd/index.html?ref=hir.harvard.edu>.

166 Obi, "Oil Among the Mangrove Trees: a Portrait of Destruction in the Niger Delta, Then and Now."

167 Egbejule, "Niger Delta residents protest against month-long oil spill."

168 Olusegun Samuel, "Nembe Communities Protest Continuous Oil Spill, 31 Days after Blowout," *This Day Newspapers*, 2021, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/12/07/nembe-communities-protest-continuous-oil-spill-31-days-after-blowout/?ref=hir.harvard.edu>.

for oil companies.<sup>169</sup>

Statements from the Aiteo Eastern and Production Company claim that the oil spill has been contained and that they had suspicions about what may have caused the spill in the first place.<sup>170</sup> Protestors called upon government agencies to address the spill and that a Joint Investigative Unit (JIV) examine the region.<sup>171</sup> In July 2024, women from Nembe protested against oil mining conducted in Bayelsa by the Aiteo Eastern and Production Company. The protestors demanded the clean-up of and proper compensation for an oil spill that occurred in June 2024. The group threatened they would occupy the oil production company's loading point at the Nembe Creek.<sup>172</sup>

### Recent Attacks and Responses

In 2019 and 2020, many Deep Offshore pirate groups targeted ports in Cameroon, Benin, Togo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Their goal was to kidnap crewmembers of tankers,

containerships, and cargo vessels.<sup>173</sup> Recent analysis of Deep Offshore pirates' patterns indicate they quickly adapt the areas they target to "cold areas." These "cold areas" have little to no military presence and where vessels may not be aware of the piracy threat. Today, pirates attempt to board large, international commercial vessels with foreign crews. Their goal is to kidnap crewmembers for ransom. While vessels in the area may be alerted, the pirate groups will change their locations again to look for new targets. In some cases, pirates will turn to attacking local vessels.<sup>174</sup>

Since 2023, tankers have become pirates' main targets.<sup>175</sup> On March 25, 2023, a Danish-owned tanker flying the Liberian Flag known as the *Monjasa Reformer* was attacked off the coast of Pointe-Noire. The vessel was supplying fuel to other nearby ships. The Congolese authorities reported it was three armed men who attacked the vessel. Five days after the initial attack, it was reported that six crew members were kidnapped

169 Egbejule, "Niger Delta residents protest against month-long oil spill."

170 Egbejule, "Niger Delta residents protest against month-long oil spill."

171 Samuel, "Nembe Communities Protest Continuous Oil Spill, 31 Days after Blowout."

172 Samuel Ese, "Nembe women protest over oil spill, demand cleanup in Bayelsa," Punch Nigeria Limited, July 12, 2024, [https://punchng.com/nembe-women-protest-over-oil-spill-demand-cleanup-in-bayelsa/#google\\_vignette](https://punchng.com/nembe-women-protest-over-oil-spill-demand-cleanup-in-bayelsa/#google_vignette).

173 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: Global Maritime Crime Programme, 2021), [https://www.unodc.org/res/piracy/index\\_html/UNODC\\_GMCP\\_Pirates\\_of\\_the\\_Niger\\_Delta\\_between\\_brown\\_and\\_blue\\_waters.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/res/piracy/index_html/UNODC_GMCP_Pirates_of_the_Niger_Delta_between_brown_and_blue_waters.pdf).

174 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

175 "Crew Kidnapped from Tanker in Ongoing Incident in the Gulf of Guinea," The Maritime Executive, Accessed July 31, 2024, <https://maritime-executive.com/article/crew-kidnapped-from-tanker-in-ongoing-incident-in-the-gulf-of-guinea>.



Benin Navy and Police Force

Credit: Petty Officer 2nd Class Cameron Edy

by pirates who then abandoned the tanker.<sup>176</sup> The six crew members were held for five weeks by the pirates before being rescued in an undisclosed location in Nigeria. While the crew was returned home safely, the attack left the ship's company Monjasa, and the Danish Shipowners Association with concerns. In a statement by Monjasa's CEO, it was stated that West African piracy was "far from being resolved."<sup>177</sup>

A South Korean product tanker known as *Success 9* was hijacked in April 2023 off the coast of Cote d'Ivoire. After five days of the vessel being reported missing, the tanker was located with its 20 crew members off the coast Abidjan in Cote d'Ivoire. The ship was located through the efforts of MDAT-GoG, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, and the Monrovia Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Center of Liberia.<sup>178</sup> While none of the crew was injured, the pirates stole fuel from the vessel.<sup>179</sup>

Between June 28 and July 1 of 2023, three consecutive piracy attacks occurred in the Gulf of Guinea. This led to security services issuing a warning of increased danger in the area. The security provider EOS Risk Group confirmed the first attack involved two Chinese registered fishing vessels, the *Hai Lu Feng 13* and the *Hai Lu Feng 14*. The pirates approached the vessels in numerous speed boats. Shots were fired between the crew and the pirates as members of the Cameroon military were aboard the fishing vessels. One pirate was likely killed. About an hour after the first incident was reported, a Panama-registered cargo ship—known as the *Oya 1*—was also attacked. The MDAT-GoG confirmed that numerous pirates boarded the ship and six crew members were taken. Responding to calls for assistance, the Cameroon military addressed the situation and escorted the ship to the dock at Douala.<sup>180</sup> During this three-day time period, the crew of the Maersk Roubaix was

unsuccessfully attacked. The ship's crew reported that three individuals were seen boarding the vessel while it was at anchorage in Takoradi, Ghana. The crew sounded the alarm when they saw the three individuals, scaring the pirates off. Only some of the ship's supplies were stolen.<sup>181</sup>

In November 2023, pirates stole material from a supply vessel while it was anchored in Angola. In December 2023, an attack off the coast of Nigeria left one fisherman dead and pirates stole fishing gear and engines.<sup>182</sup> In January 2024, Nigerian pirates attacked the *Hana 1*, a chemical tanker. Nine crew members were kidnapped by the pirates off the coast of Equatorial Guinea.<sup>183</sup>

On May 17, 2024, an unnamed product tanker was boarded by 10 armed pirates. The vessel was about 363 nautical miles from the Cape Verde islands. This is about 350 miles west of Africa. While security experts have noted that this distance is beyond the normal operating range of the Gulf of Guinea, it is still unclear who was responsible for this attack. The IMB reported that the hands and feet of the crew were tied and the engineers were told to stop the engines.<sup>184</sup> The pirates demanded that the vessel drift into the Atlantic Ocean. The crew was forced into the vessel's steering gear room where they were told to remain for two hours. The crew was threatened by the pirates who told them the door was rigged with explosives. When the crew emerged, it was reported that the pirates had left and no bunkers or cargo were stolen. Instead, the pirates took cash and other valuables—the IMB believes the pirates attempted to steal the cargo or bunkers but were unsuccessful. However, during the attack, the pirates damaged the vessel's navigation equipment, internet, and communication. The main engine's air control pipes and cylinder oil flow valves were also damaged by pirates.<sup>185</sup>

176 "Will The Gulf of Guinea Ever Be Free of Piracy?", Dryad Global, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://channel16.dryadglobal.com/will-the-gulf-of-guinea-ever-be-free-of-piracy>.

177 Dryad Global, "Will The Gulf of Guinea Ever Be Free of Piracy?"

178 Aqil Hamzah, "Singapore-flagged ship boarded by pirates found; all 20 crew members reported safe," *The Straits Times*, April 17, 2024, <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapore-flagged-ship-boarded-by-pirates-found-all-20-crew-members-reported-safe>.

179 The Maritime Executive, "Crew Kidnapped from Tanker in Ongoing Incident in the Gulf of Guinea."

180 The Maritime Executive, "Six Crewmembers Abducted in West Africa as Piracy Attacks Increase."

181 "Six Crewmembers Abducted in West Africa as Piracy Attacks Increase," The Maritime Executive, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://maritime-executive.com/article/six-crewmembers-abducted-in-west-africa-as-piracy-attacks-increase>.

182 "Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security: Lessons, Latency, and Law Enforcement," Dryad Global, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://channel16.dryadglobal.com/gulf-of-guinea-maritime-security-lessons-latency-and-law-enforcement>.

183 Dryad Global, "Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security: Lessons, Latency, and Law Enforcement."

184 "Crew Tied Up and Robbed on Product Tanker in Atlantic Far from Africa," The Maritime Executive, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://maritime-executive.com/article/crew-tied-up-and-robbed-on-product-tanker-in-atlantic-far-from-africa>.

185 The Maritime Executive, "Crew Tied Up and Robbed on Product Tanker in Atlantic Far from Africa."

Current trends indicate that pirates have improved their organization and capability. Interviews with locals have reported that pirates have improved their hostage camps. Proper camps have been set up on the border region close to Cameroon. It is clear that the pirates have invested in new hostage camp infrastructure. Additionally, pirate attacks have shifted from mostly occurring at night to about 50 percent occurring during the day. The increasing number of hostages taken per incident also proves the pirates' capability to conduct kidnap and ransom operations.<sup>186</sup>

Reports also show that pirates are becoming less violent towards hostages. This is likely due to the fact that hostages are critical to the pirates' business model. Hostages' survival is necessary to secure ransom payments. While pirates' objectives were once oil and cargo, capturing the crew seems to be their main objective. Ransom payments have also been increasing. In 2008, the ransom for kidnapped crews was about USD 25,000. In 2020, ransom estimates were estimated to be between USD 250,000 and USD 300,000 per group.<sup>187</sup>

According to the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC), global piracy and armed robbery incidents increased by 4 percent from 2022 to 2023. Attacks in the Gulf of Guinea have contributed to this rise. In the first nine months of 2023, 21 incidents were reported compared to the 14 that were reported during the same time in 2022.<sup>188</sup> Crew kidnappings are currently increasing in the Gulf of Guinea. In 2023, 14 crew members were kidnapped while only 2 were kidnapped in 2022. It is estimated that 54 crew members were taken hostage in 2023.<sup>189</sup> In 2023 alone, 75 percent of all reported hostages came from the Gulf of Guinea according to the IMB PRC. In 2023, about 80

percent of the incidents occurred when a vessel was anchored or docked. Takoradi Anchorage in Ghana was listed as one of the world's top five locations for piracy and armed robbery in 2023.<sup>190</sup> During this period, most attacks took place off the coasts of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast.<sup>191</sup>

Due to rarer but ongoing attacks, Loyz Marine Services, a security provider based in Lagos has emphasized that while Gulf of Guinea piracy has weakened, it still remains a threat. The company has noted partnerships between government, the Nigerian Navy, and private security providers have contributed to a drop in piracy incidents since 2020. Loyz Marine currently operates a fleet of eight security vessels.<sup>192</sup> More specifically, the company has acknowledged the success of the Deep Blue Project in funding greater security efforts. While progress has been made, Loyz Marine Services argued that decreasing security efforts may create an opportunity for more attacks in the future.<sup>193</sup>

In February 2024, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization Arsenio Domiguez announced that shipping companies should be on high alert for piracy off the coast of Africa. Since December 2023, many shipping companies have moved their shipping routes to West Africa due to piracy incidents in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. Domiguez emphasized that companies should increase their security efforts to levels seen between 2008 and 2012 when Somali piracy peaked.<sup>194</sup> Currently, about 60 percent of commercial vessels with routes in the Suez Canal have moved their operations to the southern and western coast of Africa.<sup>195</sup>

In April 2024, the president of the ECOWAS Commission, Omar Touray, announced that piracy and armed robbery had

186 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

187 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, *Pirates of the Niger Delta: Between Brown and Blue Waters*.

188 Mike Shuler, "Rise in Piracy Incidents in Gulf of Guinea and Singapore Straits Raises Concern," *gCaptain*, October 11, 2023, <https://gcaptain.com/rise-in-piracy-incidents-in-gulf-of-guinea-and-singapore-straits-raises-concern/>.

189 Shuler, "Rise in Piracy Incidents in Gulf of Guinea and Singapore Straits Raises Concern."

190 "Is the Decline in Global Piracy Over?," Gard, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.gard.no/articles/is-the-decline-in-global-piracy-over/>.

191 "Piracy Incidents Rise Globally in 2023 Reversing Downward Trends," The Maritime Executive, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://maritime-executive.com/article/piracy-incidents-rise-globally-in-2023-reversing-downward-trends/>.

192 Matt Coyne, "Gulf of Guinea piracy is weakened but still remains a threat, security provider warns," *Trade Winds: Global Shipping News Source*, September 13, 2023, <https://www.tradewindsnews.com/tankers/gulf-of-guinea-piracy-is-weakened-but-still-remains-a-threat-security-provider-warns/2-1-1517472>.

193 Coyne, "Gulf of Guinea piracy is weakened but still remains a threat, security provider warns."

194 Robert Wright, "Pirates targeting ships diverted from Red Sea, warns UN shipping chief," *Financial Times*, February 22, 2024, <https://www.ft.com/content/a4abcba608-4450-908b-a8d903c8d884>.

195 Nick Savvides, "Concerns over Cape re-routes and West African piracy," *Seatrade Maritime News*, February 2024, <https://www.seatrade-maritime.com/piracy/concerns-over-cape-re-routes-and-west-african-piracy>.

declined. Touray made his announcement during the fourth Annual Meeting of the Heads of Institution (HOI) of the ICC. He acknowledged this was due in part to efforts by the ICC.<sup>196</sup> The Yaoundé Architecture has also been credited for security improvements in the Gulf of Guinea. However, the program still has many shortcomings. A lack of supporting technology and funding as well as reluctance from some states to create and implement national maritime strategies continue to prevent progress.<sup>197</sup> At the opening of the second African Maritime Forces Summit in April 2024, President of Ghana Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo addressed the issue of piracy. He announced that cooperation with foreign actors was necessary to secure the region.<sup>198</sup>

In the first quarter of 2024, six incidents of piracy were reported in the Gulf of Guinea. In the first quarter of 2023, five incidents of piracy were reported in the Gulf of Guinea, indicating a stable trend in piracy.<sup>199</sup> In March 2024, Nigeria's president held a meeting with the president of Equatorial Guinea. During their talks, Nigeria's president reaffirmed the country's commitment to securing the Gulf of Guinea. The president of Equatorial Guinea emphasized that the Nigeria-Equatorial Guinea Joint Commission should be revitalized. The leaders spoke about improving maritime security efforts as well as economic collaboration in the oil and gas industries.<sup>200</sup>

In April 2024, the German government and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPITIC) held a two-week Maritime Security and Transnational Organized Crime course. Its focus was to train officials on ways to promote safety in the Gulf of Guinea. 25 officials from seven African countries attended the training. During the training, KAPITIC staff reaffirmed that the Gulf of Guinea should remain an area of concern. While there have been fewer reports

of piracy attacks in recent years, it was discussed that long-term solutions are needed. During the conference, the Political Advisor of the German Embassy in Ghana emphasized it was necessary to empower military personnel, police officers, women, and civilians through investing in skills to combat transnational crime.<sup>201</sup>

To conclude, there is a need to focus on strengthening international cooperation, investing in improving technology and infrastructure, while also promoting legal reforms. Collaborating with other international agencies and private security could allow for an enhancement in maritime security efforts allowing for much needed support in the development and deployment of advanced surveillance and communication technologies. Additionally, the need for a stronger legal framework includes investing in training programs which will help improve their methods for fighting transnational crime, namely piracy.

## Technological Updates for Anti-Piracy

Today, maritime security is under constant threat. A number of activities, including overfishing, drug smuggling, and human trafficking threaten the Gulf's security. Piracy is no exception. Because regional states have a limited capacity to monitor and control activities at sea, the Gulf of Guinea is the ideal environment for maritime insecurity.<sup>202</sup> Therefore, many states have turned to technology to better fight against these threats.

The Automatic Identification System (AIS) was originally developed in the 1990s. The maritime industry needed a universal method of exchanging information, and the AIS was created as a result. In 2002, the International Marine

196 Michael Olugbode, "Piracy, Armed Robbery in Gulf of Guinea Has Reduced, Says ECOWAS Commission President Touray," *Arise News*, April 18, 2024, <https://www.arise.tv/piracy-armed-robbery-in-gulf-of-guinea-has-reduced-says-ecowas-commission-president-touray/>.

197 "Yaoundé Architecture Played Key Role in Quelling Piracy in Gulf of Guinea - KAIPITIC.," Dryad Global, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://channel16.dryadglobal.com/yaound%C3%A9-architecture-played-key-role-in-quelling-piracy-in-gulf-of-guinea>.

198 Goddy Ikeh, "Ghana: Press spotlights call for global collaboration to deal with piracy in Gulf of Guinea, others," *APA News*, May 3, 2024, <https://apanews.net/ghana-press-spotlights-call-for-global-collaboration-to-deal-with-piracy-in-gulf-of-guinea-others/>.

199 Lucas Martin, "The Gulf of Guinea, an added problem," *Atalayar*, May 5, 2024, <https://www.atalayar.com/en/articulo/reports/the-gulf-of-guinea-an-added-problem/20240531090000200782.html>.

200 Stephen Angbulu, "Nigeria will secure Gulf of Guinea, Tinubu tells Equatorial Guinea president," *Punch*, March 13, 2024, <https://punchng.com/nigeria-will-secure-gulf-of-guinea-tinubu-tells-equatorial-guinea-president/>.

201 "Gulf Of Guinea Still Focus Of Organised Crime- Air Cdre Akrong," Daily Guide Network, accessed July 31, 2024. <https://dailyguidenetwork.com/gulf-of-guinea-still-focus-of-organised-crime-air-cdre-akrong/>.

202 Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood, Olivia Eastwood, Noleen Chikowore, and Lucas de Oliveira Paes. "Technology and Maritime Security in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in the Gulf of Guinea." *Marine Policy*, December 20, 2023. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X23005092>.

Organization (IMO) issued a mandate stating that any new ships will need to be fully equipped with AIS technology.<sup>203</sup> Since then, this system has become an indispensable part of maritime safety. AIS is known for its ability to transmit vessel identification data several times in one minute. This allows for vessel tracking to occur in real time. Furthermore, AIS is not limited to port areas, meaning its effectiveness does not waver if it is used far from shore.<sup>204</sup> The AIS database holds lots of essential information, including pointing out areas with heavy ship activity or highlighting the occurrence of illegal activities. However, for AIS to be used properly, its data must be accurately organized and interpreted, meaning that there is a learning curve to using it.<sup>205</sup>

Unfortunately, there are some downsides to using AIS. For one, the software can be hacked into. Pirates can modify a ship's data or eavesdrop on communication networks. However, measures are being taken to ensure that these vulnerabilities are not exploited. For example, a public-key infrastructure is being established, which would make use of digital certificates issued by official national maritime authorities.<sup>206</sup> This would provide a high level of authentication of messages between ships and radio stations.

Similar to AIS, the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) was developed in the 1990s. The VMS was specifically designed to use a satellite surveillance system to track vessels in the shipping and fishing industries. Therefore, it would transmit data at a slower rate in comparison to AIS, given the limitations of satellite technologies. However, it is also considered more secure due to its private nature.<sup>207</sup> Currently, it is being used to support law enforcement and prevent violations. The VMS

currently monitors over 4,000 vessels, and has been known to operate with accuracy.<sup>208</sup> Additionally, the VMS is required to be on all vessels regardless of size, whereas the AIS is only required on big ships.<sup>209</sup> This means that the VMS system has more compatibility with different types of vessels.

Other technological innovations include the Synthetic Aperture RADAR (SAR) and the Vessel Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS). SARs was developed in the 1950s as a military reconnaissance tool. It was a 24-hr aerial remote service that was noted for its versatility. For example, SAR would observe areas during any weather conditions and at any point during the day. Additionally, the images and data that it produces are known to have detailed resolution, allowing for accurate vessel activity and position to be recorded.<sup>210</sup>

The usage of SAR, among other data processing technologies, means that illegal activity can be identified at a higher rate than before. For example, SAR can be used to identify “dark areas” in the waters. Dark areas are parts of the sea where ships frequently turn their tracking systems off, often to engage in illicit activities. Having the ability to detect “dark areas” allows maritime security agencies to identify areas of high risk.<sup>211</sup> Despite these benefits, there are still downsides to the SAR technology. Given that it uses satellite imagery, for example, it has the same issues associated with these types of algorithms. Namely, data collection is expensive and is slower than, say, the technology used with AIS.

On the other hand, the Vessel Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS), created in 2011, is a system that's main function is to detect light sources at sea.<sup>212</sup> This system is able to greatly

203 “Introduction to Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) - Spire Maritime.” Spire, September 19, 2023. <https://spire.com/whitepaper/maritime/introduction-to-automatic-identification-systems-ais/>.

204 Okafor-Yarwood, Eastwood, Chikowore, and Paes, “Technology and Maritime Security in Africa.”

205 “Introduction to Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) - Spire Maritime.”

206 “Introduction to Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) - Spire Maritime.”

207 Okafor-Yarwood, Eastwood, Chikowore, and Paes. “Technology and Maritime Security in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in the Gulf of Guinea.”

208 “Enforcement: Vessel Monitoring: NOAA Fisheries.” Vessel Monitoring | NOAA Fisheries, 2020. <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/enforcement/vessel-monitoring>.

209 Philip D. Doherty, Benoît C. Atsango, Gaston Ngassiki, Appolinaire Ngouembe, Nathalie Bréheret, Eva Chauvet, Brenden J. Godley, et al. “Threats of Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing To ...” *Society for Conservation Biology*, February 22, 2021. <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cobi.13723>.

210 Moritz Lehmann, and Andrew Middleditch. “Satellite Dark Vessel Detection for Maritime Domain Awareness.” *Starboard Maritime Intelligence*, November 22, 2022. <https://starboard.nz/case-study-dark-vessel-detection-for-md/>.

211 M. Rodger and R. Guida, “Mapping Dark Shipping Zones Using Multi-Temporal SAR and AIS Data for Maritime Domain Awareness,” *IGARSS 2022 - 2022 IEEE International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2022, pp. 3672-3675, doi: 10.1109/IGARSS46834.2022.9883797.

212 “Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) .” NASA. Accessed August 3, 2024. <https://ladsweb.modaps.eosdis.nasa.gov/missions-and-measurements/viirs/>.

strengthen vessel tracking at night. The VIIRS is useful for detecting illegal fishing vessels that work at night.<sup>213</sup>

Another technology is the SOLARTA system. Developed by the UK, SOLARTA is a solar powered surveillance system designed to enhance awareness and security. Since 2018, SOLARTA has been essential in the Gulf of Guinea for data collection and surveillance. Its usage has resulted in the decrease of piracy-related activities.<sup>214</sup> SOLARTA's ability to operate independently has proven extremely beneficial.

SeaVision, developed by the US Navy, is another piece of technology that uses the internet. It allows its users to view and share an array of maritime information easily. This has improved the effectiveness of maritime operations, and has also increased security in the region.<sup>215</sup> SeaVision was initially created in 2012 and has been actively used within the Gulf in recent years. While in use, it is able to visualize vessel movement in near real time. It also has the ability to incorporate AIS and satellite imagery to provide a detailed view of activities in the area.<sup>216</sup>

Lastly, the Yaoundé Architecture Regional Information System (YARIS) is an information sharing platform that was developed to combat threats within the Gulf. It was co-developed by the Gulf of Guinea's Inter-Regional Network as well as the European Union (EU). First implemented in May 2020, the platform allows for the sharing of information regarding sea incidents.<sup>217</sup> It also integrates mapping information and a variety of vessel tracking systems, such as AIS, SAR, or SeaVision.<sup>218</sup>

Overall, there have been many efforts made to greatly decrease illegal activities in the maritime sector. However, given how vast the Gulf actually is, it is near impossible for any one country or region to safeguard their territory alone. More

often than not, external help is needed. With technological costs on the rise, as well as inter-regional projects on the verge of expiration, such as YARIS, these countries must look for alternatives.<sup>219</sup>

## Bloc Analysis

### Points of Division

The four blocs are mainly separated by their goals regarding policy. Despite this, the blocs must collaborate to represent different methods of solving the region's core issues. Otherwise, they risk growing more divided, thus harming the Gulf of Guinea even more.

States that emphasize maritime security will seek to strengthen their naval forces. To do this, they would need to focus on operations that build trust between countries. Furthermore, they would need to provide proper funding for existing operational frameworks. This includes the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, which already has the groundwork for maritime security laid out but is unable to be fully used due to a lack of funds. Finally, these states would want all future frameworks to be binding. This would ensure that all participating states would play an active role in the removal of piracy in the region.

States that are more focused on protecting their own economic interests will want to secure trade routes, strengthen legal frameworks, and seek international help. By creating a strict and unflinching legal system, the rate of piracy will fall because there are now harsh consequences for engaging in these activities. Moreover, these states would seek assistance from outside parties, namely international organizations. This assistance could include forces, information, or even funding for current efforts. Additionally, this bloc would prioritize the

213 Okafor-Yarwood, Eastwood, Chikowore, and Paes. "Technology and Maritime Security in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in the Gulf of Guinea."

214 Okafor-Yarwood, Eastwood, Chikowore, and Paes. "Technology and Maritime Security in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in the Gulf of Guinea."

215 "A Web-Based Maritime Situational Awareness Tool." SeaVision. Accessed August 2, 2024. <https://info.seavision.volpe.dot.gov/>.

216 Tyler Barker. "Seeing the Full Picture: SeaVision Supports Maritime Domain Awareness during Obangame EXPR." United States Navy, May 13, 2024. <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/News-Stories/Article/3772870/seeing-the-full-picture-seavision-supports-maritime-domain-awareness-during-oba/>.

217 Isabelle Gachie. "The Information Sharing Platform of the Yaoundé Architecture." Yaris, March 8, 2023. <https://yaris.site/en/project-news/information-sharing/yaris-the-information-sharing-platform-of-the-yaounde-architecture/>.

218 Gachie, "The Information Sharing Platform of the Yaoundé Architecture."

219 Okafor-Yarwood, Eastwood, Chikowore, and Paes. "Technology and Maritime Security in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in the Gulf of Guinea."

protection of merchant and commercial shipping through high-risk waters. They would do this by using their navy when necessary and allowing the use of private security when the navy is unavailable.

Countries who seek to promote economic development and boost employment in the maritime industry will seek to improve the living standards of those currently in the industry. This has many forms, and can involve increased government spending in ports, reducing pollution to improve overall health, and passing economic legislation to improve the lives of locals. Much will depend on their ability to collaborate with other blocs to pass meaningful reforms for those who need it most.

Lastly, states focused on anti-corruption and improving weak governance will need to place their attention on implementing systems that discourage corruption while also enhancing transparency. Moreover, they will need to improve current legal frameworks to ensure that all states equally contribute to the solution, and prevent one country from having to carry the burden. A good example is the creation of universal jurisdiction for piracy, with clear punishments for those who commit the crime. Delegates must understand that these groups must all work together to improve the lives of their citizens, compromising to accomplish what is ultimately the best for everyone involved.

### **Countries Focused on Protecting Commercial Interests and Trade Routes**

Members of this bloc will focus on securing their economic interests and commercial partnerships. About 90 percent of trade in West Africa occurs by sea.<sup>220</sup> In 2021, the Gulf of Guinea had a GDP of USD 866.343 billion. This accounts for about 45 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's GDP. The area makes

up about 25 percent of all African maritime traffic and has 20 seaports.<sup>221</sup> The region is one of the world's most important shipping routes for consumer goods and oil exports.<sup>222</sup> For example, about 30 percent of American oil imports come through this region. Members of this bloc may include representatives from countries like Angola and Nigeria. These countries are Africa's second-largest oil producers and have major commercial interests in the region.<sup>223</sup> With Togo making progress as the region's main logistics and trade hub, Togo may also be a member of this bloc.<sup>224</sup>

Before 2015, more than 80 percent of incidents in the Gulf of Guinea were characterized by robbery and hijacking for theft rather than kidnapping for ransom. Theft includes stealing computers, phones, engines, gasoline, and oil. It is estimated that goods stolen during these attacks sum to USD one million in losses per year.<sup>225</sup>

In 2011 when oil prices increased significantly, it is estimated that between USD two million and USD six million worth of oil was stolen per pirate attack. However, the price of oil has generally fallen over the past decade. This has led to a decline in petro-piracy. Most oil thefts now occur on shore rather than at sea.<sup>226</sup> For instance, congestion at Lagos ports causes ships to wait for long amounts of time to load and unload goods. Thus, there is a large amount of ships in a small area for pirates to target.<sup>227</sup>

Shipping traffic in West Africa is increasing faster than the global average. However, a survey of ship operators and security officers found that many companies would start operations or increase their activities if piracy and armed robbery were decreased. About 38 percent of respondents who do not have operations in the Gulf of Guinea said they would certainly begin operations if piracy was reduced. About 50 percent said

220 Eromo Egbejule, "Maritime piracy increases business costs in the Gulf of Guinea," *Al Jazeera*, December 27, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2019/12/27/maritime-piracy-increases-business-costs-in-the-gulf-of-guinea>.

221 Carlota Ahrens Teixeira and Jaime Nogueira Pinto, "Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea," Geopolitical Intelligence Services, last modified March 28, 2022, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/piracy-gulf-guinea/>.

222 Egbejule, "Maritime piracy increases business costs in the Gulf of Guinea."

223 Teixeira and Pinto, "Maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea."

224 "The World Bank in Togo," World Bank Group, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/togo/overview#4>.

225 Curtis Bell, *Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis for Coastal States* (Stable Seas, 2021) <https://www.stableseas.org/post/pirates-of-the-gulf-of-guinea-a-cost-analysis-for-coastal-states>.

226 Bell, *Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis for Coastal States*.

227 Egbejule, "Maritime piracy increases business costs in the Gulf of Guinea."



they would consider operations if piracy was reduced.<sup>228</sup>

Over the past decade, piracy has resulted in USD 1.7 billion in lost port fees and USD 8.5 billion in lost import tariffs.<sup>229</sup> In 2017, the economic cost of piracy in the region was USD 818.1 million. Studies conducted by Stable Seas found that there is a close relationship between countries that have been identified as the highest risk countries for piracy and decreased port calls. It is clear that a decrease in attacks through anti-piracy efforts may increase shipping volume and bring economic benefits to the region. About a quarter of this amount was spent by countries and companies contracting maritime security. Concerns over security have led global insurance firms like Beazley to offer a “Gulf of Guinea Piracy Plus” insurance plan for maritime crew and vessels. This specific plan provides compensation for stolen vessels and crew kidnappings.<sup>230</sup> However, insurance premiums are increasing for companies, potentially making the region less attractive for business.<sup>231</sup>

### Countries Focused on Maritime Security/ Defense and Cooperation

Members of this bloc will focus on strengthening defense in individual countries and throughout the region. It has been over a decade since the entire Gulf of Guinea came together to discuss and implement security measures. In 2013, the Yaoundé Code of Conduct was signed and the ECOWAS, ECCAS, and GGC adopted policies to combat piracy in the region. While the navies and coast guards of member states have since developed programs to combat piracy, they have not been entirely effective. With the exceptions of Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa most armies, navies, and coast guards in the region are underdeveloped. While countries like Cabo Verde, Liberia, and Sao Tome and Principe have coast guards, they do not have the ability to patrol or enforce laws

in their territories. These countries do not have the personnel or funding.<sup>232</sup>

While many countries have implemented security programs, a lack of coordination also contributes to the problem. For example, compared to other countries in the Gulf of Guinea, Ghana has a more sophisticated surveillance system. However, Ghana’s navy, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, and Maritime Administration each operate separate surveillance systems. This prevents effective information sharing between enforcement agencies. In March 2018, a group of pirates hijacked three vessels and took five hostages. within two days. The initial hijacking occurred off the coast of Ghana. However, it reportedly took hours for the Ghana’s navy to respond to the first attack. By the second day, the pirates were sailing towards Nigeria. Such a delay in response suggests a lack of communication between Ghana’s navy and Ports Authority.<sup>233</sup>

Members of this bloc will prioritize expanding their own security efforts and collaborating with others in the region. Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, South Africa, and Togo may be members of this bloc. In September 2023, the three countries came together to form Operation Safe Domain II.<sup>234</sup> This came two years after the introduction of Operation Safe Domain I in 2021. The initiatives look to promote information sharing and joint maritime and air surveillance.<sup>235</sup>

This bloc’s members may also look to cooperate with international actors. For instance, in February 2024, Cote d’Ivoire and the United States signed the Cote d’Ivoire Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement.<sup>236</sup> This agreement allows Ivoirian officials and United States officials to board each other’s vessels for cooperation. The United States also has maritime law enforcement agreements with Cabo Verde,

228 Bell, *Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis for Coastal States*.

229 Bell, *Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: A Cost Analysis for Coastal States*.

230 Egbejule, “Maritime piracy increases business costs in the Gulf of Guinea.”

231 “Vessel Insurance Premiums Jump as JWC Redraws Gulf of Guinea Risk Area,” Dryad Global, accessed July 31, <https://channel16.dryadglobal.com/vessel-insurance-premiums-jump-as-jwc-redraws-gulf-of-guinea-risk-area>.

232 Okafor-Yarwood and Pigeon, *Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea*.

233 Okafor-Yarwood and Pigeon, *Stable Seas: Gulf of Guinea*.

234 “Nigeria, 3 Others Launch Operations to Combat Sea Piracy,” Dryad Global, accessed August 2, 2024, <https://channel16.dryadglobal.com/nigeria-3-others-launch-operations-to-combat-sea-piracy>.

235 Dryad Global, “Nigeria, 3 Others Launch Operations to Combat Sea Piracy.”

236 U.S. Embassy in Côte d’Ivoire, “Signing of U.S. - Côte d’Ivoire Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement - February 6, 2024,” press release, February 8, 2024, [https://ci.usembassy.gov/signing-of-u-s-cote-divoire-maritime-law-enforcement-agreement\\_february-6-2024/](https://ci.usembassy.gov/signing-of-u-s-cote-divoire-maritime-law-enforcement-agreement_february-6-2024/).

Gambia, Senegal, Seychelles, and Sierra Leone.<sup>237</sup>

### **Countries Focused on Economic Development and Expanding Employment Opportunities in Maritime Industries**

The Gulf of Guinea's economic potential is restricted by poor infrastructure, an unmaintained road network, and flawed water supply. Moreover, unemployment runs rampant in the region.<sup>238</sup> It is the countries focused on economic development and employment opportunities in maritime industries that look to fix these issues.

In 2013, the Gulf of Guinea's economic decline led to periods of violence within the region. This resulted in economic activity being brought to a standstill that lasted for several months. During this period, there were big tax revenue losses.<sup>239</sup> This only reaffirms the importance of employment in the maritime region. There is a direct link to a Gulf state's economic growth and the health of the maritime industry. Indeed, rebuilding port infrastructure will help in creating job opportunities in the sector, thus allowing young people more access to work other than piracy.

One key measure has been to create initiatives to modernize the ports' infrastructure.<sup>240</sup> These initiatives will create more work, thus causing less people to join pirate groups, increasing the livelihood of the area. Moreover, the additional job creation will increase the state's revenue, which can be used to support surrounding coastal areas.

Nigeria is among the leading countries with modernized infrastructure and significant contributions to their regional economies. Trade alone allowed Nigeria to bring home USD 44.7 billion as of 2019.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, in Nigeria there is a strong emphasis on reducing pollution to help improve health.

Ghana has also adopted a science-backed approach to address the issue of plastic pollution in maritime environments. They have become one of the first countries to integrate this type of data on plastic.<sup>242</sup> There are also countries that promote tourism as a way to generate revenue and create jobs, like São Tomé and Príncipe.<sup>243</sup> Additionally, there have been various programs aimed at reducing poverty that are currently being implemented. This includes initiatives to improve access to education, healthcare, and other basic rights. Other countries in this bloc include Gabon and Namibia. Within the Gulf, the African maritime sector has seen rapid expansion and development. Maritime infrastructure and investments are expanding. Moreover, ports are being upgraded and created. However, more needs to be done to safely ensure that the region no longer suffers from deficiencies in any sector.

### **Countries Focused on Anti-Corruption and Improving Weak Governance**

Corruption has had its grip on the Gulf of Guinea for the past few decades. If allowed to persist, it will only cause citizens to continue losing faith in the institutions that are supposed to protect them from that very behavior. This can potentially increase the risk of conflict in the region. Countries focused on anti-corruption and improving weak governance are focused on mending this very issue. They might seek solutions through international assistance or strengthening the already existing frameworks. Countries in this bloc include Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Benin, for example, has sought out the World Bank to help the state improve access to justice. This is to ensure that all communities can easily report corrupt public projects. Specifically, the network of civil courts would be expanded beyond the usual urban centers. Nigeria has also collaborated

237 U.S. Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire, "Signing of U.S. - Côte d'Ivoire Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement - February 6, 2024," press release, February 8, 2024, [https://ci.usembassy.gov/signing-of-u-s-cote-divoire-maritime-law-enforcement-agreement\\_february-6-2024/](https://ci.usembassy.gov/signing-of-u-s-cote-divoire-maritime-law-enforcement-agreement_february-6-2024/).

238 Damelys Delgado, "Mobilizing Resources to Reduce Poverty in Guinea - OPEC Fund for International Development." <https://opecfund.org>, April 1, 2013. <https://opecfund.org/news/mobilizing-resources-to-reduce-poverty-in-guinea>.

239 "Guinea - Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper—Progress ..." International Monetary Fund, February 2015. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr1540.pdf>.

240 Raju Gidwani, "Impact of Maritime Trade on the Sierra Leonean Economy." The Maritime Commons: Digital Repository of the World Maritime University, October 31, 2022. [https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3134&context=all\\_dissertations](https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3134&context=all_dissertations).

241 "Maritime." *Commercium Africa*, March 1, 2023. <https://commercium.africa/industries/maritime/>.

242 Dilek Fraisl, Ansa Heyl, and Linda See, "Turning the Tide: Ghana's Innovative Approach to Tackle Marine Plastic Pollution with Citizen Science." *IIASA*, September 19, 2023. <https://iiasa.ac.at/news/sep-2023/turning-tide-ghanas-innovative-approach-to-tackle-marine-plastic-pollution-with>.

243 "Sao Tome and Principe." *HandInHand*, 2022. <https://www.fao.org/hand-in-hand/investment-forum-2022/sao-tome-and-principe/en>.

with the World Bank. Since 2022, the bank has supported Nigeria's fight against financial corruption. This has led to tax compliance, a reduction in money laundering, and overall transparency.<sup>244</sup>

A priority for this bloc is to strengthen legal frameworks to ensure that corruption is criminalized. Also, this bloc might focus on ensuring that enforcement of these laws are enforced properly. This might include the creation of independent agencies that are tasked with anti-corruption standards. The use of checks and balances, especially for governments, can enhance effective policy implementation and monitor abuses in power.<sup>245</sup> One such example is Togo, who has recently adopted a five year strategic plan aimed at strengthening its institutional framework while enhancing the transparency and quality of public administration.<sup>246</sup>

International cooperation plays a large role in long-term solutions. It is also useful in cases involving cross-border illicit activities, like piracy. The establishment of a universal jurisdiction for piracy could be a step in the right direction. This would ensure that countries share an equal responsibility in prosecuting pirates, regardless of location. However, there are various other methods that this bloc might use to strengthen anti-corruption efforts. Indeed, it is up to consensus to hone in on the most sustainable, long-term solution to these issues.

## Committee Mission

The African Union's main goals are to promote peace and stability among African states.<sup>247</sup> The organization consists of representatives from various African countries, as well as

members from other major organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). During official AU meetings, these representatives collaborate in expanding and improving on past solutions, while also introducing new policies.<sup>248</sup>

Similar to the United Nations, the African Union does not have any binding legislative powers. This means that the organization cannot force member states to comply with its rules. What this means is that often, there will be a lack of consensus among member states. As a result, many African politicians have criticized the organization's ineffectiveness. Indeed, it is only by assisting one another that proper solutions can effectively develop.<sup>249</sup> Despite compliance not being mandatory, representatives do have to decide how to work together, because the issues in the Gulf of Guinea end up affecting all African states. Since the AU cannot enforce laws, members will also have to consider implementing policies in their own countries and organizations while balancing regional cooperation.<sup>250</sup>

Similar to the United Nations Security Council, the African Union's Peace and Security Council has the ability to use military force. The Union's military is known as the African Standby Force.<sup>251</sup> The Peace and Security Council may decide to use the African Standby Force to prevent, manage, and help resolve crisis situations like the current maritime threat. Representatives must consider whether implementing the African Standby Force is necessary in certain crisis situations, as well as its potential consequences.<sup>252</sup> The Union also has the ability to represent African interests on the world stage.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>244</sup> "Building Trust by Combating Corruption in Western and Central Africa."

<sup>245</sup> "Corruption and Good Governance." Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment (GRACE), 2018. [https://grace.unodc.org/grace/uploads/documents/academics/Anti-Corruption\\_Module\\_2\\_Corruption\\_and\\_Good\\_Governance.pdf](https://grace.unodc.org/grace/uploads/documents/academics/Anti-Corruption_Module_2_Corruption_and_Good_Governance.pdf).

<sup>246</sup> Esaïe Edoh. "Togo Adopts 5-Year Strategy to Deal with Corruption." Togo First - Actualité économique au Togo., October 17, 2022. <https://www.togofirst.com/en/economic-governance/1710-10786-togo-adopts-5-year-strategy-to-deal-with-corruption>.

<sup>247</sup> "About the African Union," African Union, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://au.int/en/overview>.

<sup>248</sup> "Security situation in the Gulf of Guinea: Robust Response to combat Maritime Insecurity and Piracy," Amani Africa, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://amaniafrica-et.org/security-situation-in-the-gulf-of-guinea-robust-response-to-combat-maritime-insecurity-and-piracy/>.

<sup>249</sup> "The African Union is weak because its members want it that way – experts call for action on its powers," The Conversation, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://theconversation.com/the-african-union-is-weak-because-its-members-want-it-that-way-experts-call-for-action-on-its-powers-224191>.

<sup>250</sup> The Conversation, "The African Union is weak because its members want it that way – experts call for action on its powers."

<sup>251</sup> Andrew E Yaw Tchic, and Ndubuisi Christian Ani. "Standby Security Arrangements and Deployment Setbacks: The Case of the African Standby Force." Training for Peace, October 2022. [https://trainingforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/ASF-Report\\_Standby-Arrangements.pdf](https://trainingforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/ASF-Report_Standby-Arrangements.pdf).

<sup>252</sup> "African Standby Force turns 20: has it helped keep the peace? The pros and cons," The Conversation, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://theconversation.com/african-standby-force-turns-20-has-it-helped-keep-the-peace-the-pros-and-cons-228649>.

<sup>253</sup> "The African Union," Federal Foreign Office of Germany, accessed August 6, 2024, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/>

Representatives must decide how and whether they would like to collaborate with foreign countries and international organizations to promote security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Representatives to the African Union must come together to form unique solutions against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. United by a common enemy with numerous resources at their disposal, representatives should look to resolve the crises they are faced with, while also preventing future incidents. Only through collaboration can the root causes of piracy must be addressed.

## Committee Representatives

### Angola - Minister of Justice

The Minister of Justice role is to oversee the legal and judicial systems within Angola to ensure the enforcement of laws. His authority extends from implementing legal reforms, to overseeing the judiciary, as well as creating mechanisms to control the policies outlined for the promotion and protection of human rights. Currently, Angola has begun to strengthen their legal frameworks and collaborate with their regional partners with regards to piracy.<sup>1</sup>

### AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security

The AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security is responsible for overseeing the African Union's efforts to promote peace, security, and stability. The Commissioner works to identify and address potential conflicts, supports peacekeeping operations and promotes peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-affected areas, and coordinates humanitarian assistance efforts for people affected by conflict or natural disasters.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the Commissioner serves as a key figure in coordinating the AU's response to piracy, promoting regional cooperation, and advocating for a more secure maritime environment in the continent.

### Benin - Minister of National Defence

The Minister of National Defence is in charge of ensuring that Benin's defense policies, national security measures, and military operations are up to date and ready. The Minister's authority extends as far as overseeing military operations, coordinating with international defense partners, and implementing defense strategies. To combat piracy, the Minister has invested in the purchase of military, maritime and aviation assets to enhance its maritime security capabilities. Additionally, they have purchased new patrol boats and new surveillance aircraft to supplement the boats currently being used by the navy for patrols.<sup>3</sup>

### Cameroon - Minister of Defence

The Minister of Defence is responsible for overseeing the country's military forces and defense policies. Currently, the Minister has been strengthening international relations to combat piracy. Specifically, the Minister has signed agreements with other governments in the fields of maritime security and safety, training, education and technical support.<sup>4</sup>

### Côte D'Ivoire - Chief of Defense Staff

The Chief of Defense Staff controls Côte D'Ivoire's military operations, defense policies (implementation and execution), and national security precautions and is the professional head of the Armed Forces of the country.<sup>5</sup> The Chief of Defense Staff is responsible for directing and coordinating naval forces deployed to counter piracy, including planning and executing operations to apprehend pirates, rescue hostages, and protect shipping lanes.

<sup>1</sup> "Ministry of Justice (Angola)," Wikipedia, accessed September 16, 2024, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry\\_of\\_Justice\\_\(Angola\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Justice_(Angola)).

<sup>2</sup> "H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye," African Union, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://au.int/en/commissioners/he-amb-bankole-adeoye>.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the United Nations assessment mission on piracy in the*

*Gulf of Guinea (7 to 24 November 2011)*, (New York: Security Council, 2012), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/AUUN%20S%202012%2045.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> "Robles and Cameroon's Minister for Defence sign maritime cooperation agreement," La Moncloa, January 16, 2024, [https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/news/Paginas/2024/20240116\\_spain-cameroon-agreement.aspx](https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/gobierno/news/Paginas/2024/20240116_spain-cameroon-agreement.aspx).

<sup>5</sup> "Chief of the Defence Staff (Ivory Coast)," Wikipedia, accessed September 16, 2024, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief\\_of\\_the\\_Defence\\_Staff\\_\(Ivory\\_Coast\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_of_the_Defence_Staff_(Ivory_Coast)).

## **Democratic Republic of the Congo - Minister of Foreign Affairs**

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is in charge of the DRC's foreign policy and relations, diplomacy, bilateral, and multilateral relations.<sup>6</sup> As Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister may coordinate with the country's military, law enforcement, and maritime authorities to ensure a unified approach to combating piracy.

## **Equatorial Guinea - Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation**

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation oversees Equatorial Guinea's foreign security policies and intelligence operations and has the authority to implement needed security measures, coordinate with international security partners, and control any operation related to intelligence. The Minister has focused on criminalizing piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as investigating, prosecuting, and extraditing the perpetrators of such crimes and those who incite, finance, or facilitate them.<sup>7</sup>

## **Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is tasked with combating drugs, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism to achieve health, security, and justice. As Executive Director of the UNODC it is key to offer practical assistance and encourage transnational approaches to combat piracy.<sup>8</sup>

## **Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission**

The Executive Secretary of the Gulf of the Guinea Commission is to create conditions of mutual confidence, security and peace to the development of its member states, including Angola, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, and Sao Tome and Principe. The Executive Secretary has the role to coordinate with all respective member states to facilitate information exchange and promote regional cooperation, including the areas of maritime security and piracy.<sup>9</sup>

## **Gabon - Minister of Transport, Merchant Shipping, and the Sea**

The Minister of Transport, Merchant Shipping, and the Sea, must oversee Gabon's merchant shipping operations, transport infrastructure, and other maritime affairs. The Minister is able to implement maritime policies, especially those that will enhance safety, and shipping regulations. In terms of piracy, the Minister focuses primarily on protecting existing shipping routes and improving maritime security as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

## **Ghana - Minister of the Interior**

The Minister of the Interior is in charge of maintenance and enforcement of law and order. Ghana's Minister of the Interior, has emphasized the need for clear maritime boundaries to ensure peace and security in Africa. Specifically, the Minister has focused He in delimiting its maritime boundaries, including the launch of the National Integrated Maritime Strategy (NIMS) in 2023.

<sup>6</sup> "Minister of Foreign Affairs (Democratic Republic of the Congo)," Wikipedia, accessed September 17, 2024, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister\\_of\\_Foreign\\_Affairs\\_\(Democratic\\_Republic\\_of\\_the\\_Congo\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_Foreign_Affairs_(Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo)).

<sup>7</sup> "Equatorial Guinea: His Excellency Simeón Oyono Esono Angue Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation," United Nations, September 23, 2022, <https://gadebate.un.org/en/77/equatorial-guinea>.

<sup>8</sup> "About the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> "The Gulf of Guinea Commission," Embassy of the Republic of Ghana, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://ghanaembassy-angola.com/ghana-and-the-gulf-of-guinea-commission/the-gulf-of-guinea-commission/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Gabon: Minister Dieudonné Loïc NDINGA MOUDOUMA raises awareness of the emergency plan for safeguarding human life at sea at a workshop in Port-Gentil," Maritime Africa, December 1, 2023, <https://maritimafrika.com/en/gabon-minister-dieudonne-loic-ndinga-moudouma-raises-awareness-of-the-emergency-plan-for-safeguarding-human-life-at-sea-at-a-workshop-in-port-gentil/>.

The Minister also mentioned the construction of a lighthouse to enhance maritime safety and demarcate territorial boundaries.<sup>11</sup>

### **Namibia - Minister of Defence**

The Minister of Defence is tasked with safeguarding Namibia's territory, its inhabitants and national interests, as well as contributing to national development and world peace. The Minister of Defence also provides socio-economic support to veterans of the national liberation struggle and preserves heritage of the liberation struggle.<sup>12</sup> In collaboration with other governments, the Minister of Defense helps formulate strategies to prevent, deter, and respond to piracy incidents.

### **Nigeria - Minister of Marine and Blue Economy**

The Minister of Marine and Blue Economy is tasked with formulating and implementing policies, programs, and initiatives that will facilitate the development of an inclusive maritime and blue economy assets.<sup>13</sup> To achieve this, the Minister has launched projects to reduce piracy and maritime threats, enhancing safety and security in the maritime space.<sup>14</sup>

### **President of the Economic Community of Central African States Commission**

The President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has to oversee the implementation of policies and initiatives aimed at promoting peace, security, and economic development. The President has the task of integrating into a single and harmonized legal and institutional framework, all the components of the regional integration process within ECCAS, namely economic and trade integration, maritime security issues, political integration and social stability, physical and socio-cultural integration.<sup>15</sup>

### **Representative of the European Union to the African Union**

The Representative of the European Union to the African Union is tasked with contributing to enhancing the unique and diverse partnership that exists between both Unions. This includes the protection of human rights for all, gender equality, the rule of law, actions to preserve the climate, and steps to combat piracy and other illegal maritime threats. It is the Representative's responsibility and authority to represent the EU in all AU meetings, as well as facilitate partnerships and promote EU policies and initiatives between the two.<sup>16</sup>

### **Representative of the UN Office to the African Union**

Representative of the UN Office to the African Union has the responsibility to further a more systematic, streamlined and structured partnership between the AU and the UN. Specifically, the Representative is tasked with implementing steps to prevent and mediate conflict and sustain peace. Additionally, the Representative must provide coordinated and consistent advice to the African Union on long-term capacity-building and short-term operational support matters, like piracy and other maritime threats.<sup>17</sup>

11 "Ghana's Interior Minister Calls for Clear Maritime Boundaries for Peace and Security in Africa," Minister of the Interior, September 3, 2024, <https://www.mint.gov.gh/ghanas-interior-minister-calls-for-clear-maritime-boundaries-for-peace-and-security-in-africa/>.

12 "Ministry of Defence," Republic of Namibia, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://modva.gov.na/>.

13 "Our Commitment," Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://fmmbe.gov.ng/>.

14 Blessing Ibunge, "Nigeria Determined to Sustain Zero Piracy in Maritime Domain, Says Blue Economy Minister Oyetola," *Arise News*, June 7, 2024, <https://www.arise.tv/nigeria-determined-to-sustain-zero-piracy-in-maritime-domain-says-blue-economy-minister-oyetola/>.

15 "Who are we?" Economic Community of Central African States, May 24, 2023, <https://ceeac-eccas.org/en/2023/05/24/who-are-we/>.

16 "Who we are," Delegation of the European Union to the African Union, November 18, 2023, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/african-union/who-we-are\\_en?s=43](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/african-union/who-we-are_en?s=43).

17 "Mandate," United Nations Office to the African Union, accessed September 16, 2024, <https://unoau.unmissions.org/mandate>.

## São Tomé and Príncipe - Minister of National Defence

The Minister of National Defence oversees the protection of citizens, territories, values and interests at home and overseas, through strong armed forces and in partnership with allies. The Minister is in charge of obtaining policy directions of the government on all defense and security related matters. With regards to piracy, the focus has mainly been in trying to strengthen the legal framework, boost the economy, and enhance and preserve national heritage.<sup>18</sup>

## Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organisation

The Secretary-General as head of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has the responsibility of implementing measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships. The Secretary-General is also involved in legal matters, including liability and compensation issues and the facilitation of international maritime traffic.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the Secretary-General IMO provides assistance to member states seeking to develop their measures to address the threat of piracy.<sup>20</sup>

## South Africa - Minister of Defence and Military Veterans

The Minister of Defence and Military Veterans is responsible for overseeing the Department of Defence, the Department of Military Veterans and the South African National Defence Force.<sup>21</sup> The Minister may oversee the development of counter-piracy strategies, including tactics, equipment, and training for military personnel. Additionally, the Minister may coordinate with other government agencies, to ensure a comprehensive approach to combating piracy.

## Togo - Minister of Maritime Economy, Fisheries and Coastal Protection

The Minister of Maritime Economy, Fisheries, and Coastal Protection, is in charge of promoting coastal resource protection, the implementation of maritime regulations, and fisheries management within Togo. The Minister also works in the implementation of policies and strategies to promote growth of the Blue Economy. The Minister works to advance the social and economic development of Africa through innovation and leadership. Lastly, the Minister has been involved in international conferences about anti-piracy laws.<sup>22</sup>

## US Ambassador to the African Union

The US Ambassador to the African Union is tasked with strengthening democratic institutions, promoting peace and stability, supporting sustainable economic development, and improving the lives and health of all people in the African continent.<sup>23</sup> The Ambassador can facilitate cooperation between the US and AU member states on anti-piracy efforts like negotiating agreements, sharing intelligence, and coordinating joint operations.

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## Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

### Topic A

1. What role should regional frameworks such as the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security play in strengthening a country's response to piracy and how can they be improved?
2. What actions does your character believe should be taken to strengthen maritime security and protect the overall interests of the Gulf of Guinea?
3. What lessons can be learned from the success of anti-piracy efforts in other regions, such as the Gulf of Aden and Somalia, and be applied to the Gulf of Guinea?
4. What specific community programs should be implemented to provide alternative livelihoods to civilians turning towards piracy? How can these programs be funded and sustained?
5. What are the environmental risks associated with piracy and how can these risks be mitigated?
6. What steps should be taken to improve the legal prosecution of pirates within their respective countries?
7. What role should foreign navies and private security companies play, if any, in anti-piracy operations?
8. What steps can your character take to further their political agenda in the context of combating piracy? Does your character support the current administration's policies on maritime security?
9. How can anti-corruption efforts within the Gulf of Guinea contribute to anti-piracy initiatives?
10. What specific policy changes should be implemented to address the root causes of piracy and prevent its resurgence?

## Important Documents

### Topic A

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