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## The Niger Delta Crisis: Perspectives of Its Domino Effect on the Gulf of Guinea (GoG)

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### **Abstract**

*The Niger Delta is a 'region of paradoxes'. A region so rich in resources yet so poor, a major contributor to the development of the Nigerian state yet itself underdeveloped, a region classified as the world's largest wetland, yet lacks potable water. This is the background upon which the Niger Delta crisis is based. This paper therefore, examines the Niger Delta crisis in the context of its domino effect on the Gulf of Guinea. The paper argues that the Niger Delta militants have demonstrated adequate capability to directly extend their operations beyond the shores of Nigeria. This position is especially reinforced in light of their ability to have hijacked the Liberian flagged tanker, MT Kerala, from its Angolan anchorage some 900nm from Nigerian waters and attacked the Bonga deep-water oilfield platform located almost 120 nautical miles inside the Atlantic Ocean. Findings reveal that the activities of the Niger Delta militants have inadvertently, conditioned the behaviors of the member states of the GoG. National spending has shifted from other strategic priorities of government to militarization and securitization of national borders. The paper concludes that host communities participation in development processes as well as a collaborative regional approach is central to strengthening a system that can enhance security and stability of the Gulf of Guinea.*

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**Keywords:** Crisis, Domino effect, Gulf of Guinea, Militants, Niger Delta, Oil, Pirates

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### **Introduction**

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria in the last two decades has experienced different shades and degrees of conflicts. These conflicts varies from clusters of intransigent disputes between local communities and oil companies over environmental justice issues to 'wars' between armed groups and soldiers dispatched by the federal government of Nigeria to protect delicate oil installations and staff of multinational companies operating in the region (Ibeanu, 2006:8). Deprivation, frustration, politics, poverty, under-employment/unemployment, underdevelopment and environmental degradation have all fed on the context to predispose the region, the Nigerian State and the Gulf of Guinea to insecurity. Piracy, violent occupation of oil installations, hijacking of oil tankers, kidnapping of oil workers, gang wars, politics, and cult killings and assassinations have become the hallmark of the region. An emerging dimension of what was considered a local crisis is the threat generated by the activities of Niger Delta militants. These threats, which have defied restriction to the boarders of Nigeria, have

inadvertently conditioned and structured military spending of countries along the Gulf of Guinea. Three perspectives are relevant to this narrative. The first perspective revolves around the myth of Hobbesian Niger Delta which suggests that the Niger Delta militants in their quest to fund their activities engage in criminality like hijacking of oil vessels, kidnapping of oil workers and armed robbery. Ibeanu (2006) makes the point that the Hobbesian myth, in turn, fits into stereotypes of a Niger Delta that is peopled by groups that are prone to conflict, criminality and violence. The second perspective is located around the militants' desire to demonstrate their capacity and reach for violence. The militants by this narrative have hijacked vessels as far as 900nm from Nigerian waters and attacked deep-water oilfield platform located almost 120 nautical miles inside the Atlantic Ocean. Today, a third perspective can be found in the emerging perception (Dryad, 2015; The Africa Report 2012) that the frequency of attacks and criminality by Niger Delta militants have reduced due to the amnesty program of the Nigerian government and activities of security agents along the gulf of Guinea.

According to statistics released by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) in its 2013 analysis, and cited in Usim (2014) Nigeria pirates, moved further afield in 2012 and ventured into waters of Gabon, Ivory Coast and Togo, where they were linked with at least five of the region's seven reported vessel hijackings. Steffen (2017) declared that over a 9-year period (since 2007), the average number of maritime security incidents for West Africa is 122 – typically ranging between 80 and 140 per year. Of this figure, Nigerian waters alone account for an average of 87 attacks per year. Emerging political developments in Nigeria seem to challenge the third perspective of the narrative of reduction in criminality and armed banditry in the Niger Delta which is linked to the amnesty intervention of the Federal government of Nigeria. The plummeting oil price, the defeat of former President Goodluck Jonathan (a son of the Niger Delta) by Muhammadu Buhari and the arrest warrant issued on the former militant leader Chief Government Ekpemupolo popularly called 'Tompson' over corruption deals all hold strong signals that militancy in the Niger Delta is far from receding. Within this context, this paper examines the domino effect of the Niger Delta crisis on the Gulf of Guinea (GoG). It attempts to answer the question 'what is the effect of the Niger Delta crisis on the GoG? The significance of this work therefore, revolves around the need to map the effect of the crises on the GoG with the intent of contributing to the development of a more effective management framework. It is however, instructive to state here that we do not intend to review the literature on the Niger Delta crisis, nor indeed join the debate on what constitute the Niger Delta. Our interest is to merely highlight what in our estimation, constitute the effect of the delta crisis on the Gulf of Guinea. This is to enable a more focused discussion of the domino effect of the crisis on the GoG.

### **Literature Review/Conceptual Issues**

The main issues to be reviewed and conceptualized in this paper are the Niger Delta crisis and its domino effect. The politico-economic implication of the militancy in the Niger Delta has gained increased recognition. Today, the main question is no longer whether the Niger Delta crisis has implications on the politics and economy of Nigeria, but how it affect and shapes the politics and economy of countries in the Gulf of Guinea.

Nigeria's Niger Delta, the World's largest wetland (World Bank, 1995:Vol.1) and Africa's largest delta of some 70,000km<sup>2</sup> has been engulfed in a crisis of instability caused by protesting groups and communities agitating for development, environmental protection, resource control and self-determination (Ibaba, 2008:207). Exactly ten years after the discovery of oil, the dynamics of petroleum prospecting, state violence and militant activities gained currency when the Isaac Boro-led Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) struck in 1966 followed by the Ken

Saro Wiwa-led Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP) (1992), the Aleibiri Demonstration (AD) (1997), the Kaiama Declaration (KD) (1998), the Opia/Ikiyan Invasion (OII) (1999), the Odi massacre (OM)(1999), the Asari-Dokubo-led Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) (2004), the Gbomo-led Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (2006) (Eseduwo, 2008:484). The activities of militants in the Niger Delta have inadvertently produced pirates who now threaten the security of sea lines of communication and influenced military spending in the Gulf of Guinea

The Niger Delta crisis has a long history but it is one that essentially, revolves around, and is sustained by three contending paradoxes. Poverty and lack in the midst of wealth and plenty, national security generating insecurity in the region and national development under developing the Niger Delta. The agitations by various groups for the control of resources that have hitherto exposed the region to restiveness are done within the context of these paradoxes. The early warning signs of an impending crisis in the Niger Delta could be traced to 1966 when the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) led by Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro called the attention of the military government in 1966 to the negative impact of the activities of the oil multinationals. This attempt was repressed by the military government thereby creating incentives for a more dedicated confrontation by environmental rights activities. The activities of the oil multinationals exposed the environment to hazards of different shades. To this, Ibeanu (2006) alleged that Niger Delta's poverty is in part the consequence of oil production, especially its environmental consequences which have destroyed livelihoods by destroying farmland and fishing waters. Pollution arising from oil spillage destroys marine life and crops, makes water unsuitable for fishing and renders many hectares of farmland unusable. The scholar further noted that Brine from oil fields contaminates water formations and streams, making them unfit as sources of drinking water. At the same time, flaring gas in the vicinity of human dwellings and high pressure oil pipelines that form a mesh across farmlands are conducive to acid rains, deforestation and destruction of wildlife.

In addition, dumping of toxic, non-biodegradable by-products of oil refining is dangerous to both flora and fauna, including man. In the specific case of Ogoniland according to the Earth Action (1994), 'it has been recorded that 30 million barrels of crude oil were spilled in the area in 1970 and oil spills still dots the landscape of the delta. Attempts at ensuring a clean-up of the delta and payment of compensation by Shell have all being frustrated. Gosden (2017) makes the point that 'in January 2015, Royal Dutch Shell agreed to pay £55m (\$84m) in compensation to thousands of residents of Bodo, a fishing community in the Niger Delta for two oil spills. Mustoe (2016) specifically declared that 15,600 clients of the oil spill would receive \$3,300 each for losses caused by the spills and \$30m would be left for the community, which was "devastated by the two massive oil spills in 2008 and 2009". The attempts to activate the clean-up process was noted by Gosden (2017) to have been frustrated when Niger Delta youths mobilized themselves and chased out the contractors declaring that they don't want the clean-up but money meant for that purpose. Greed has frustrated attempts at cleaning up the delta thereby sustaining oil spill which has inadvertently affected the environment thus depriving a people whose major preoccupation is farming the opportunity of using land and water resources for agricultural purposes. Lack of arable land and water for drinking and supporting aquatic lives on the other hand, have fuelled poverty, agitations and militancy.'

Closely related to the above is the downside of national security. In the Niger Delta, national security contradicts the security of nationals because of the politics of oil. This is linked to the desire of the state to ensure national security even at the expense of basic human rights. In order to preserve the major source of revenue to the national government, the federal government is

quick in dispatching men of the armed forces especially the Nigerian Army to quell situations in the region. This conflict management approach often results in huge civilian casualties and creates impetus for self-defence and agitations for resource control. A case in point was when in 1999, the civilian government of Olusegun Obasanjo ordered the destruction of *Odi* a town in Kolokuma-Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. It was supposed that some policemen were abducted by a criminal gang in *Odi* and later killed and the state government's inability to produce the culprits resulted in the order by the federal government to destroy *Odi*. Ibeanu (2006) notes that over two thousand people were killed and many more declared missing and virtually, no house was left standing in *Odi* after the invasion by the military. The government response has been described by Williams (2016:181) as, been "militarily forceful".

The Niger Delta crisis also revolves around the paradox of development enhancing underdevelopment. Due to the terrain, it is generally complex, difficult, and very expensive to initiate and sustain development efforts in the region as a result; infrastructural development is very poor in the region. Ibeanu (2006) aptly declared that generally, inadequate attention has been paid to the provision of facilities like education, health, roads, electricity and potable water by both government and oil companies. Yet, these facilities are readily available at oil installations dotting the delta, making these installations islands of affluence in a sea of deprivation. This has heightened the sense of relative deprivation in communities and made oil installations and their agents' ready targets of the militants.

These paradoxes have fed the Niger Delta crisis till date. When livelihoods are threatened, a feeling of deprivation ensues. A people that feel deprived also feel anxious about their livelihood which is perceived as insecure. Consequently, a condition of security for the people is the elimination of deprivation through a just distribution of resources. This, for them, means that a good part of wealth generated from their land should return to them. The repression of the Niger Delta agitations by the military and civilian governments alike, have left the region highly charged and mobilized and this has often resulted in episodic violence that have affected activities in the Gulf of Guinea.

The perspective that is yet to receive attention is the outcome of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The immediate past president, Goodluck Jonathan who was defeated by Muhammadu Buhari is of the Niger Delta extraction. When the signals became obvious that the outcome of the election may not favour President Jonathan, notable militant leaders like Asari Dokubo of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) had declared his intention to make Nigeria ungovernable if Jonathan losses. In the post-election phase, the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari has implicated many officials of the Jonathan government including his wife Dame Patience Jonathan, tried some, while several others are alleged to have been illegally detained without trials. The invitation of Chief Government Ekpemupolo popularly called 'Tompolo', a former militant leader to answer corruption charges by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), was saluted with bombing of oil installations in Warri, even though he has denied knowledge and involvement. These developments hold strong signals for the security and stability in the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea. While the activities of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta are well known, another perspective that seem not to have been adequately given due attention is the dynamics of emerging quasi activist political groups acting as rebels and extending their activities off-shore. These groups are listed to include the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) that emerged in 2016 to challenge the Nigerian State, armed forces and oil multinationals. Others include Red Egbesu Water Lions, the Concerned Militant Leaders, the Indigenous People of Biafra Movement, the Joint Niger Delta Liberation Front and other activist groups that ally

with or drift from more militant movements. While the threat level posed by the latter groups may be considered negligible compared to MEND, the interaction of these conflict elements no doubt introduces a disturbing dimension to the threats to security and stability of the Gulf of Guinea. Vrey (2016) makes the point when it was noted that although the activities of these groups are localized to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, which is the most productive region for oil production and exports, it is now seen as the center of gravity that has become the measure of insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea region.

Another dimension to the threat to the security in the GoG is the spectre of private maritime security companies which are often contracted to supply and maintain patrol boats. Steffen (2017) declared that more than 100 such privately contracted security vessels are in operation in Nigerian waters with 16 of such companies entering an agreement with the Nigerian Navy in 2016 alone under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), effectively providing the bulk of offshore oil field security, and increasing the amount of merchant vessel protection in - and outbound from Nigerian ports. The downside of the partnership between the private maritime security companies and the Navy is located in the fact that the exact numbers of such private security companies are unknown even to the Nigerian Navy. This much is confirmed by Steffen (2017) who also makes the point that while this contractor fleet provides a welcome relief for the Nigerian Navy, which has only a few assets capable of patrolling the exclusive economic zone, it also presents a major headache for the Nigerian Navy's operations department to monitor the activities of these contracted patrol boats and supply men, weapons, and ammunition to them and ensure compliance with the terms of the MoU.

Thus, from Bayelsa to Rivers State, Akwa Ibom to Delta State, violent conflicts, militancy and hostage taking of expatriates and government functionaries have become a near permanent feature. For instance, Business Day (2007) declared that in 2006, a total of 118 oil workers were taken as hostages in 24 militant attacks. It further affirmed that a total of 129 oil company personnel were taken as hostages in 33 militant attacks between January and July 2007. The frequency of these attacks seem to be declining as Dryad (2014) mentioned that there were 15 confirmed incidents reported during the third quarter of 2014 compared with 22 in Q1 and 14 in Q2. This decline is further corroborated by Dryad (2015a) report which suggests that there were two confirmed incidents against commercial vessels in Lagos Anchorages, with a further five having taken place within the port itself in 2015. According to Dryad (2015) Special Report, the Gulf of Guinea saw an overall reduction in the number of incidents in 2014; a decrease of 18% when compared to 2013. The Report also established that despite this overall reduction, the year saw a marked increase in the number of attacks resulting in the kidnap of senior crew from support craft and commercial vessels trading in the region. Fourteen vessels according to the Report had crew taken captive in 2014, compared to eight vessels having crew kidnapped the previous year. The Report further confirmed that just two of 2014 attacks occurred inside Nigeria's 12 nautical mile (nm) territorial waters, with the remainder further offshore where protection from security vessels is less available. Again, according to the Report, a further 14 unsuccessful attacks took place within the Nigerian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the Niger Delta militants are implicated in all of these attacks.

According to Ogbogbo (2005:170) the Niger Delta has remained the treasure base of the Nigerian state in the past three decades. The area harbors over 95 percent of Nigeria's crude oil and gas resources, which accounts for 90 percent of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Overall, Tom (2006:3) notes that "the sheer scale of oil industry operations in the Niger Delta is overwhelming as it is estimated that the region has at least 7200 kilometers of pipelines, 159 oil fields and 275 flow stations. The oil fields have increased since 2006 as the

National Petroleum Investment Management Services (NAPIMS, 2016), declares that there are 500 oil fields in the Niger Delta with over 55 per cent of these onshore, while the remaining are in the shallow waters (less than 500 meters). In the “Swamps of Insurgency: Nigeria’s Delta Unrest” the International Crisis Group (2006) makes the point that the Niger Delta crisis is a product of “a potent cocktail of poverty, crime and corruption which is fuelling a militant threat to Nigeria’s reliability as a major oil producer” and the crudest banality of state power (Michael: 2004:36).

NAPIMS (2016) notes that the fields in the Niger Delta have enabled the Nigerian state to host the world's 10th largest reserves at about 25 billion barrels. Today, recoverable reserves are estimated at 28.5 billion barrels, with an average productivity of about 2.5 million barrels per day, including condensates. The Niger Delta is therefore a place of intense exploration and exploitation of crude oil and gas which according to Simbine (2006:41) is characterized by violence that is at once, the cause and result of small arms and light weapons proliferation. The consequences of persistent exploration and exploitation have been the massive environmental degradation of the area. The minority status of the autochthonous peoples of the area has led to their political and economic marginalization in the Nigerian federation. This has bred in them a feeling of utter neglect, relegation and discrimination. For the people of the Niger Delta, it is a pathetic case of living by the riverside and washing hands with spittle. In order to address the problems associated with oil and gas exploration in the region, the people of the Niger Delta embarked on a long and sustained struggle to control the resources of their region (Ogbogbo, 2005:170). The struggle by the people of the Niger Delta has since been turned into criminality involving hostage-taking, bunkering, assassination and arms deal with grave implication on the security and stability of the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) in particular and the international community in general.

The general discourse on the Niger Delta crisis appears to have brought to the fore two dominant perspectives. The first is that the crisis in the Niger Delta region poses a fundamental challenge to peace and stability within Nigeria and the second perspective suggest that the crisis threatens global energy security and the core geo-strategic interests of major oil importing countries such as the United States and its Western European allies but also emerging powers like China, India and Brazil (Ukeje, 2010:58). While the above perspectives are instructive, they seem to ignore the far-reaching implications of the Niger Delta crisis for regional security in the Gulf of Guinea. The understanding of the implication of the Niger Delta crisis on the GoG lies in one’s ability to determine the extent to which the Niger Delta crisis provides the impetus for the militarization and securitization of the GoG.

A snapshot of the literature on what constitute security threats in the GoG also brings to the fore two disturbing trends. The first highlights and identifies piracy as the major threat to security in the GoG, and the second pinpoints Nigeria and indeed, the Niger Delta as the hub from where maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea originates and is sustained. This much is corroborated by the works of Vrey (2016) and Steffen (2017). Other causes of maritime insecurity in the GoG are located around structural and proximate factors. Vrey (2016) identified fragility, violence and criminality in the GoG, mis-governance and corruption, economic and socio-political exclusion, unemployment, and natural-resource dependent economies as structural causes of insecurity in the GoG, while proximate causes are identified to include weak law enforcement, porous borders and transnational trafficking, environmental degradation and illegal and under-reported fishing, border disputes, and the scarcity of refined petroleum products. Given that oil producing countries within the GoG are individually facing

varying degrees of governance failure and regime instability, how is the Niger Delta crisis then compounding their respective internal security needs and concerns?

### **Theoretical considerations**

The domino effect of the Niger Delta crisis can be better explained within the context of the domino theory and the crisis, by relative deprivation/frustration-aggression theories. While the objective of the paper is to examine the effect of the Niger Delta crisis on the GoG, this can hardly be done without considering the discontent that seems to have created, fueled and sustained the crisis in the delta. Domino theory which was first proposed by General Marshall in 1947 and popularized by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon in April 1954 (Bell, 2001: 117) and traced to the Korean War was built on the notion that the United States was afraid at the spread of communism to countries outside of Europe. The US was particularly worried that communism if left unchecked, would end up spreading through all of South East Asia and the probability was that, if it took over South Vietnam, it could also spread to Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and many more (Moïse, n.d). The central ideals of the domino theory as it were, was that if whole part of South East Asia went under Communist domination or Communist influence, Japan, who trades and must trade with this area in order to exist must inevitably be oriented towards the Communist regime” (Smith, 2007).

The domino theory is therefore, a theoretical understanding of socio-politico economic processes that is built on the assumption that an occurrence in one place has the tendency to influence; structure and condition developments in other places far or near. Such influence may lead to the building or crumbling of structures, change in policy; budget and personnel as well as securitization and militarization of the polity. Domino effect as used here is devised out of domino theory that presupposes in this context, that activities of the Niger Delta militants have the tendency of influencing, structuring, shaping and conditioning socio-politico economic activities in countries in the Gulf of Guinea and beyond. The crisis in the delta which has fed this effect has its roots in certain socio-politico economic developments in the Niger Delta.

Consensus is however, forming around the evidence that the Niger Delta crisis is one that is rooted in relative deprivation (Ibaba, 2008; Eseduwo, 2008, Ibeanu, 2006; Faleti, 2006) which has inadvertently, fuelled and sustained frustration, aggression and criminality. Frustration-Aggression theory which is nourished by Ted Gurr’s relative deprivation theory is credited to John Dollard who initially developed it in 1939 and popularised by scholars like Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962), is often cited, as the most plausible explanation for violent behaviour stemming from unmet expectations. According to Anifowose (1982), theorists who subscribe to this explanatory paradigm use the psychological theories of motivation and behaviour as well as frustration and aggression. The Niger Delta crisis can therefore, in line with this explanatory framework be located in what people of the Niger Delta feel they want/deserve and what they actually get, what Feierabends *et al* (1969) calls the “want-get-ratio” that is, the difference between “expected needs satisfaction” and “actual needs satisfaction” (Davies, 1962). Gurr’s (1970) made the point when it was noted that “the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seem attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result”.

Several narratives have therefore, been deployed in explaining the root causes of the protracted crisis in the delta. While some of these narratives have situated the crisis in the politics of relative deprivation, alienation and resource control, others have cited the paradoxes of incompatibilities - development leading to underdevelopment, security leading to insecurity and poverty and lack of potable water in the midst of plenty. These factors have negatively

interacted to sustain the crisis in the delta. In spite of supportive theoretical frameworks, the analysis of issues in this paper will primarily be done within the context of the domino theory. This is because the primary objective of the paper is to examine the domino effect of the delta crisis on the GoG rather than its root cause(s). The significance of this theory lies in the fact that it will enable the explanation of how the activities of the Niger Delta militants affect and shape operations in the Gulf of Guinea. The relationship between militant's activities in the Niger Delta and insecurity in the GoG is perhaps more aptly reflected in the submission of Steffen (2017) where it was declared that "by and large, when speaking of "Gulf of Guinea piracy" as a problem for international shipping, it is Nigerian piracy that we mean".

### **Understanding the ecology and petro-politics in the Gulf of Guinea**

The porous nature of the Gulf of Guinea has inadvertently exposed it to crimes against seafarers, from simple low-level robbery to complex hijack and cargo theft and the kidnap of crew for ransom (Dryad, 2013). Due to its contiguous, porous and poorly manned borders, criminality in the GoG has impacted oil production and exposed the region to insecurity. The Gulf of Guinea countries overlap three sub-regions: West Africa (Nigeria), Central Africa (Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome and Principe) (Ukeje, 2010:63). The Gulf of Guinea is described by Think Security Africa (TSA, 2011:13) as one of the most resource-rich waters in the world. Oliveira (2007) noted that until recently, none of their offshore oil fields was encumbered by protracted communal violence around strategic installations and production sites. It is not a well-defined geographical coverage or region as it extends from coastlines of Nigeria in West Africa to Angola in Southern Africa. Within this stretch, there are smaller oil producing countries like Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Island of Sao Tome and Principe, and Congo Brazzaville in Central Africa. Besides Chad, whose oil fields are connected to Cameroon coastlines by the 1000-kilometer long Doba-Kribi pipelines, GoG oil is mostly located offshore on the Atlantic Ocean coastlines. In all, they hold 5-7% of the world's proven petroleum reserves and supply 15% of US imports (Oliveira, 2007:3).

According to Lindsay (2005:1-5), less than half of the over 200 countries of the world have proven oil reserves, and of that, 18 are located in Africa and as the epicenter of world oil production shift from the Global North to weaker and less stable developing regions in the Global South, the GoG oil states come into bolder view. According to official energy statistics from the US government (2008), the African countries, Nigeria, Angola and Algeria, are among the top ten countries that supply 88% of the crude oil consumed in the United States. As at 2014, non-African country falls into the first five countries supplying oil to the United States. The first five countries are identified according to the Independent Statistics and Analysis of the United States Energy Information Administration (EIA, 2014) to include Canada, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Venezuela and Iraq. US increased import of oil from the top five countries suggest that US imports from the Gulf of Guinea has dropped but this hardly makes the GoG less strategic in petro-business. In February 2008, the Brookings Institution cited in (Susan and Patrick, 2008) published its *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World* in which 32 African countries were featured among the 50 worst performers. Among the 'critically weak states' instructively, are key African oil producers such as Sudan, Angola, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. Chad and Sudan have, consistently, ranked among the 10 most fragile states in the World between 2008 and 2014 (Lawrence, 2014). These are countries falling within the bottom quintile on key issues such as inflation, rule of law, control of corruption, conflict intensity, rights abuses, incidences of coups, political instability and violence, child mortality, access to improved water and sanitation. This suggests that the countries of the GoG share a common characteristic of bad governance. The increasing

inability of the countries of GoG to provide affordable basic services giving rise to alternative means of survival as expressed in militancy to challenge the legitimacy of the state and the resort to criminality to fund the activities of armed groups have further predisposed the sub-region to threats of instability. According to This Day Online (2008), the performance of Nigeria, the most important oil producing country in GoG, which ranked 28<sup>th</sup> according to the Brookings report matters enormously to the West African region and its further faltering or even political failure would have far-reaching regional and international consequences.

It is instructive to borrow Yate's (2004:48-49) concept of oil-dependent economies and oil-dependent states to further buttress oil politics in the GoG. Countries of the GoG are heavily reliant on oil for their survival. To this end, Yates offered a distinction between oil-dependent economics like Equatorial Guinea and Gabon and oil-dependent states like Angola, Nigeria and Congo Brazzaville. Except Cameroon, the other GoG countries are heavily dependent on foreign exchange earnings from oil to meet their national needs. According to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), as cited in Rudolf and Yates (2004:14), Angola has a proven oil reserve estimated at 9.04 billion barrels, and natural gas reserves standing at 270 billion cubic meters while Nigeria's estimated oil reserve is about 36.22 billion barrels and 5,215 billion cubic meters of natural gas. NAPIMS (2016) however, declares that Nigeria's reserves stands at about 25 billion barrels making it the World's 10<sup>th</sup> largest reserve. Today, recoverable reserves according to NAPIMS are estimated at 28.5 billion barrels, with an average productivity of about 2.5 million barrels per day, including condensates. Whereas petroleum exports account for \$42.00 billion of the \$42.85 billion total exports by Angola, it represented \$57.90 billion Nigeria's total export of \$61.50 billion (Ukeje, 2010:64). This analysis indicates that the economy of the countries of the GoG is primarily dependent on oil, as a result, a threat to oil exploration and exploitation is a threat to state survival. It is even more so, when activities of militants in one country condition and structure socio-politico economic development of member states.

### **Perspective of the Niger Delta crisis on socio - politico economic processes of countries in the GoG**

Nigeria holds a very strategic position in the Gulf of Guinea. Amongst other factors, Nigeria stands out as one of the highest producers of oil and gas and the most populous country in the Gulf of Guinea. Again, Nigeria has the highest military strength and has contributed in many ways to the maintenance of regional peace and stability. Due to its strategic position, any development in Nigeria (good or bad) seems to have a spillover effect not only on the GoG but the global community. Derived from the above therefore, the militancy in the Niger Delta has contributed to conditioning and structuring the economy and security of not only Nigeria but that of countries even beyond the Gulf of Guinea.

Think Security Africa (TSA, 2011:32) declared that at the height of the Niger Delta instability, Nigeria was losing 200,000 bpd and US\$12 million daily. Shell, Chevron and Agip were the companies most affected by militant attacks. The intermittent disruption of oil production in the Niger Delta affects GoG in two observable ways. Internally, Nigeria is unable to meet its budget expectation as a result of the disruption thereby further deepening the gap between the expected deliverables of government with the actual deliverables. The illicit proceeds from oil bunkering by militants have further fueled and sustained criminality in the region. Externally, global supply of oil especially to US and other partners is affected while the security and stability of the GoG is consistently under threat.

The severity of this threat according to Ukeje (2008:35-48) was perhaps reinforced in 2002 when President George W. Bush declared African oil to be of strategic importance to the United States, making it unequivocally clear that Washington would be willing to go to war to protect its source(s). There has since been a considerable scaling up of US military presence in the GoG. The struggle for survival in the face of threatened and dwindling economy has inadvertently strengthened criminality. To this end, Simbine (2006:50) notes, that violence in the Niger Delta have become an industry and a veritable source of livelihood for many people, resulting in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Niger Delta crisis therefore, stands out as a portent threat to the stability of the GoG especially with the possibility of the crisis spilling over to countries of the GoG in terms of direct and perceived attacks on personnel and critical installations. This much is surmised in the submission of Steffen (2017) where it was declared that “by and large, when speaking of “Gulf of Guinea piracy” as a problem for international shipping, it is Nigerian piracy that we mean”. The exportability of Niger Delta crisis into neighboring GoG countries is further shown by incessant reports of attacks and the killing of Cameroonian gendarmes on patrol duties along the disputed Bakassi peninsula, east of the Niger Delta (Africa Research Bulletin, 2007:1-30). In November 2007, Ukeje (2010:71) confirmed that the authorities in Yaoundé, Cameroon announced that unknown assailant had attacked a speedboat around an army post causing the death of 20 soldiers. Again, on June 15, 2008, Cameroonian officials found the bodies of five ‘mutilated and bullet-riddled’ persons believed to be that of at least six people abducted in the same location on June 9 (Reuters, 2008). To further highlight the domino effect of the Niger Delta crisis on the GoG, the statement by the Sahara Reporters credited to the controversial leader of the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) Alhaji Asari Dokubo becomes instructive. He is alleged to have remarked that “in March 2005, a group of armed militants from the ‘Bush Boys’ camp stormed his residence to complain that he was leaving them out of a drive to recruit mercenaries to topple the government of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema in Equatorial Guinea”. Whether the above statement is real or imaginary, it however opens up a new perspective that suggest that the Niger Delta militants can actually commercialize their activities by offering mercenary services to willing clients in the Gulf of Guinea and beyond.

Despite huge investments in securing oil installations, the militancy in the Niger Delta seems to have intermittently punctured such investments by their repeated attacks. To this end, the African Oil Policy Initiative Group (2002:15) noted that ‘overwhelmed by its own internal contradictions and limitations, the ease with which armed gangs have been attacking oil installations and undermining general security are signs that Nigeria lacks “offshore security capability” despite the fact that huge investments are taking place in its deep waters’. The domino effect of the Niger Delta crisis has seen many countries in the GoG investing more in militarization and securitization of critical installations especially in the light of the June 2008 event when the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) attacked the Bonga deep water oilfield platform located almost 120 nautical miles inside the Atlantic Ocean (The Guardian Newspaper, June 20, 2008). The Bonga attack clearly shows that the Niger Delta militants have the capacity to directly blow up critical installations far and near. Again, to further demonstrate the capability of the Niger Delta-based pirates, Dryad (2014) mentioned that Niger Delta pirates hijacked the Liberian flagged tanker, MT Kerala, from its Angolan anchorage – some 900nm from Nigerian waters. The rate of hijacking of oil vessels fluctuates and this is clearly reflected in the submissions of Dryad, (2014) where it noted that while three product tankers were hijacked for their cargo of fuel or oil during 2014, five were hijacked in 2013 and seven in 2012. It further made the point that the picture could have been a different one with a further five tankers unsuccessfully attacked by heavily armed gangs during the year.

The push factor for the various hijacking attempts by the pirates is to fund their criminal activities in the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea. The domino effect of the Niger Delta crisis is almost always strongly felt by the countries in the GoG thereby leading to increase investments in security. The Bonga attack and the hijacking of the Liberian flagged tanker, MT Kerala, from its Angolan anchorage demonstrates the capability of the Niger Delta militants to directly extend militancy to other countries of the GoG like Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.

Think Security Africa (TSA, 2011:14) noted that as a result of the effect of the Niger Delta militancy, Equatorial Guinea has embarked upon a major drive to protect its offshore oil and gas assets, and continues to invest substantially in the latest generation of military hardware to secure its strategic assets along the Gulf of Guinea against the spillover effects of the militancy and general criminal activities of countries of the GoG. TSA further mentioned that Equatorial Guinea is also most likely motivated by its dispute with Gabon over the islands of Cocotiers and Mbabane, and by piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. There is a risk that Equatorial Guinea's investment in hardware, may lead to an arms race in the Gulf of Guinea, as countries along the Gulf take more assertive steps to protect their national assets. This may lead to heightened tensions along the Gulf, particularly with the proliferation of oil and gas producing states. Again, kidnapping of crew for ransom to fund the activities of militants in the Niger Delta and cargo theft would probably remain a recurrent decimal in the Niger Delta beyond 2017. The criminal reach demonstrated with the Bonga jetty attack and hijack of MT Kerala, the number of successful and attempted attacks in 2014/16 and the lack of any evidence that such gangs have been neutralized, suggests that further attempts at cargo theft will take place in 2017 across the region. This is further reinforced by the outcome of the 2015 presidential election in which Goodluck Jonathan (of Niger Delta extraction) was defeated by Muhammadu Buhari. This assumption is further strengthened by the anti-corruption crusade of President Buhari where officials of former president Jonathan have been indicted and the corruption charges leveled against the former billionaire militant leader, Chief Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo). Despite the ebb and flow of criminality in the GoG, these elements, suggests, that the militancy in the Niger Delta that has strengthened criminality in the Gulf of Guinea is far from receding.

The Socio-economic and political conditions of the countries in the Gulf of Guinea further create the impetus for the activities of the Niger Delta militants to influence and shape developments in countries of GoG. This is because the countries in the GoG seem to share some common characteristics ranging from a history of bad governance, repressive and sit-tight regimes to corruption and violence. Politically, virtually all the GoG countries are deeply marred in governance misadventure occasioned by long years of entrenched military/civilian autocratic rule. Ukeje (2010:65) notes that in each of these countries, flawed internal distribution of oil-related benefits is raising the specter of violent conflicts and insecurity. In economic terms, each of the countries especially Nigeria, represent a profound perversion in that huge revenues from oil have not translated into qualitative and sustainable improvements in the welfare of the majority of their peoples. In terms of the most basic human development indicators according to the Central Intelligence Agency (2008) Angola for instance top the global list of countries with the highest rates of infant mortality defined by the number of deaths per thousand live births with 182.31% followed by Chad 100.36%, Nigeria 93.93%, and Equatorial Guinea 83.75%. Shaxson (2007:40) declared that the GoG countries are also among the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) in sub-Saharan Africa confirming the view that oil exporting countries with relatively high per capita income mask larger disparities in social indicators comparable to those of lower income African countries.

Due to the inability of the government of the countries in the GoG to strengthen good governance, armed groups are challenging and undermining the authority of various governments in ways that complicate the already tenuous internal situations in the countries. In Chad for instance, it is manifesting in festering distrust and division between the north and south, while in Angola, it is evident in the unending political ambitions of the Cabinda separatists against Luanda. In Cameroon, another nascent separatist movement is brewing in the predominantly Anglophone south-western region sharing borders with the contested Bakassi Peninsula, while in Nigeria, the Niger Delta crisis and the Boko Haram insurgency is seriously threatening the very foundation of the country. The GoG is credited with a history of 'sit-tight' dictators. This range from Nguesso Nguema (1979) to dos Santos (1979) and Paul Biya (1982), in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Angola and Cameroon respectively (Ukeje,2010:67). Beyond the 'sit-tight' syndrome associated with some of the GoG countries, others have a record of civil wars waged for various reasons. Nigeria, for instance witnessed a 30 months civil war (between 1967 and 1970) due to a secessionist attempt by Biafra. This left the country seemingly sterile and inadvertently set the background for mutual suspicion amongst the various units that makes up the Nigerian federation. The case is not different in Angola. A civil war broke out soon after the abrupt termination of Portuguese colonial rule in 1974, a thoughtless development that played a major part in Angola's lapse into a protracted and bloody civil war. On the flip side, Equatorial Guinea with a population of about 500,000 inhabiting five small islands sandwiched between Cameroon and Gabon is noted to have one of the fastest growing GDPs in the world since joining the league of oil producers in 1996 (Sunday, 2008). Despite the wealth as reflected in the growing GDP, 65% of the population of Equatorial Guinea lives below poverty line (Gary, 2007:118-119). Today, Equatorial Guinea faces serious domestic threat of destabilization by a secessionist group, *Movimiento de Autodeterminacion de la Isla de Bioko* (MAIB) as a result of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo repressive policies (Oliveira, 2007:225-226). The situation is not any different in Cameroon as President Paul Biya, one of the 'sit-tight' Presidents in the GoG who has ruled since 1982, plunged the country into unfavorable economic difficulties that precipitated widespread riots against escalating food and fuel prices in Yaoundé and Doula in February 2008. The twin islands of Sao Tome and Principe with a population of 150,000 are some of the smallest in Africa. The peace of these islands was threatened when on July 16, 2003, disgruntled army officers took advantage of President Fradique de Menezes trip to Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital, to stage a coup d'état (Gerhard, 2003:10). According to the Center for Integrity as cited in Gary (2007), out of all the GoG oil states, Gabon was by far the most 'stable', notoriously so because President El Hadj Omar Bongo held on ruthlessly to power and foreclosed any democratic openings since he assumed power in 1968. Based on estimates, Gabon's oil reserve increased from 1.3 million barrels in 1996 to 2.5 billion barrels in 2004, making it the third largest in Africa at the time (Gary, 2007:119).

It could be clearly gleaned from the foregoing that the very nature of the countries of the Gulf provides conditions that make conflict and instability inevitable. For instance, given the huge governance and legitimacy deficits faced by countries of the GoG, national budgets are not only skewed in the direction of security to wade off external attacks but in reality to douse opposition-a situation that has often precipitated arm struggles and militancy. Rather than strengthen good governance, oil wealth in the GoG appears to have become a factor impeding democratization and sustaining different shades of authoritarian rule in virtually all the GoG countries. The militancy associated with the GoG has weakened state capacity to provide the security needs of its people thereby bringing to question the strength of the various countries in ensuring maritime security especially in the face of the frequent pirates' attacks along the coasts of Southern Cameroon and the GoG which is reportedly more than the African average

(Oliveira, 2007:231). The oil wealth, instability and interests of especially the global south have drawn much attention to developments in the GoG.

### **Perspective on crime, militarization and securitization of the Gulf of Guinea**

The domino effect of the Niger Delta crisis on the GoG and the general threats to stability posed by it have inadvertently seen countries of the Gulf of Guinea committing huge resources to securing its borders and critical installations. The countries of the GoG according to Ukeje (2010:72) share a number of pathologies in terms of their response to insurgent activities as there are also some of the biggest military spenders on the continent going by the rankings of African countries vis-à-vis percentage of GDP. According to CIA World Fact Book (2008), Angola, which also sits on top of the World's list of countries with the highest infant mortality rate, tops that of Africa's military spenders though by 2015 report according to DefenceWeb (2015), Algeria now tops the list of Africa's military spenders. The CIA World Fact Book (2008), also declares, that based on the 2006 estimates, Luanda spent 5.70% of its GDP on military expenses while other African oil producing countries namely Libya, Gabon, Egypt, Algeria, Republic of Congo and Sudan, are within the top 50 spenders on their militaries worldwide.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) as cited in DefenceWeb (2015), declares that despite the fact that total world military expenditure dropped between 2013 and 2014, military spending in Africa increased by 5.9 per cent in 2014, with the top two spenders Algeria and Angola, both major oil producers, increasing their spending by 12 and 6.7 per cent, respectively. The SIPRI report also mentioned that "Nigeria's budgeted military expenditure fell in 2014 for the third year running, by 9.3 per cent, to \$2.3 billion. It further acknowledged that nonetheless, the total is still 79 per cent higher than in 2005, and the budgeted figure does not include a \$1 billion loan approved by the Nigerian Congress in October 2014 for military hardware and training to fight the militant group Boko Haram. It remains to be seen whether the crash in oil prices in late 2014 will halt this trend. This perspective suggest that beyond the impact of the activities of the Niger Delta militants on the Gulf of Guinea, other elements like the activities of Boko Haram can also strengthen criminal activities in the GoG. Due to the porosity of the borders of the countries of the GoG, it is easy for instance, for all sort of criminal activities to crisscross from one country to the other with little security restriction. According to Glada, Paul and Felix (2013), Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea accounted for nearly 30% of attacks (427 of 1,434) in African waters between 2003 and 2011. The report further mentioned that much of the problem of oil theft may have root causes in Nigeria. The Niger Delta is home to 30 million people, 30% of whom are unemployed. The report also argued that developments in the Niger Delta does not just present an immediate domestic economic problem, but the toxic mix of organized crime, rising small-arms proliferation and insurgency, and high levels of youth unemployment has regional implications too.

Between 2000 and 2007, the World Defense Review cited in Africa Research Bulletin, (2007:1-31) reported that more maritime attacks occurred in the GoG than the rest of Africa, while the International Maritime Organization ranked the West African sea lanes as the next most dangerous after the Strait of Malacca. The GoG countries along with those off the coast of Cape Verde are believed to be responsible for more than half of all African cocaine seizures as well as serving as transshipment points for drugs from South America to markets in Western Europe (Africa Research Bulletin, 2007). It could be gleaned from the foregoing, that most of the countries of the GoG would logically tend to allocate a greater percentage of their budget to security. The reason for this is not far-fetched. Amongst other reasons is the fact that the countries of the Gulf are heavily dependent on oil for their survival hence a threat to any

country's oil and gas reserve is a threat to the survival of such a country. The fear of the perceived or real threat to such 'oil driven' economy becomes the major reason for the increased investment in security. Besides, the protracted conflict in the Mano River region of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire aided the flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) into the Niger Delta thereby sustaining the conflict in the region.

Activities of pirates in the Gulf of Guinea seem to differ markedly for instance, from pirates activities in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean. Dryad (2013) declares that in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, Somali pirates take advantage of the lawless conditions of a failed state which has allowed them freedom of action to mount operations, hijack vessels and return them to anchorages from where they have negotiated ransoms for the vessels' release.

The source further notes that in recent times, the risk reward ratio has changed for Somali pirates as a result of the fact that international shipping has promoted best practice that has reduced the risk to vessels transiting the area alongside the international naval efforts and the embarkation of armed guards on board individual vessels to prevent hijack. Again, International navies have operated freely along the Somali coastline and, where necessary, have moved into the beaches and beyond in pursuit of pirates, either independently or as part of a coordinated coalition effort. Privately sourced armed guards have also supported the process by responding to approaching pirates with demonstrations and actual use of force that has thus far prevented any pirate group from hijacking a vessel with an armed guard detachment on board. On the flip side and according to Dryad (2013), pirates and maritime criminals in the Gulf of Guinea do not have the benefit of the un-policed haven of a failed state, but instead operate out of a number of sovereign states with their own territorial waters (TTW) and exclusive economic zones (EEZ). This very state of order means that the measures adopted in the east are inappropriate in the west. Dryad (2013) alleged that there appears to be no craving for an international naval operation in the Gulf of Guinea, nor is there any way that foreign armed guards can operate within the TTW of the regional, sovereign nations. The inability of maritime security to ensure the arrest of maritime criminals in addition to few signs of successful judicial outcomes makes the risk reward ratio appear to favour the criminals, with little evidence seen of them being caught in sufficient numbers or held to account for the violent crimes they perpetrate. The above context has strengthened criminality in the Gulf of Guinea even when there is a decline in High Risk Area (HRA) of the Horn of Africa and India Ocean. The international naval efforts, judicial capabilities and the use of embarked armed guards which has recorded some success against the Somali pirates seem to be lacking as strategies in the fight as pirates in the Gulf of Guinea.

### **Concluding Remarks: challenges and prospects of managing the effect of the Niger Delta crisis on the GoG**

Whatever the approach deployed in managing the Niger Delta crisis and its effect on the Gulf of Guinea, it is now obvious that it is yet to yield desired results. The Amnesty Program of the federal government of Nigeria to redirect conflict energies into productive enterprises and the activities of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to address the challenges of development in the Niger Delta have all patently failed either to contribute to halting militancy/criminality or enhancing development. That the activities of Niger Delta militants have structured and conditioned the socio-politico economic processes of countries in the GoG is no longer in contest. Current thinking stresses the need to deploy a sub-regional framework in managing the Niger Delta crisis because of its fluid and cross-cutting nature. Within this context, some factors have made the Niger Delta crisis seemingly intractable. The putative 'elite-centered' approach to managing the delta crisis, misappropriation of oil wealth, contiguous but porous borders of the GoG, bad governance, the downside of private maritime

security companies, insincerity and lack of political will. In terms of military capability, the possibility of strengthening stability in the GoG is dim because of inadequate military capacity of some of the countries of the GoG. According to the Center for Public Integrity (2008) Gabon for instance, a country of 1.2 million people with huge oil well, rife with some of the worst inequalities as at 2008 maintains a national army comprising 1,320 soldiers, 120 and 100 naval and air force personnel respectively that are poorly trained, poorly motivated and hardly to be trusted. It is difficult to think that Gabon would be capable to adequately contribute to strengthening the stability of the GoG beyond its borders with such number of ill-equipped military personnel. Again, due to the vastness and porosity of the maritime boundaries shared by the GoG countries, effective policing and interdiction is often difficult, if not impossible to achieve. Apart from Nigerian Navy, none of the other GoG and West African countries has a sizeable and deployable naval or coastguard capability to meet the growing demands for sea patrol, interdiction and counter-insurgencies. This is partly the reason according to Jennifer (2007:100-101) why many GoG countries have become net recipients of controversial military largesse from outside, principally from the United States and other major countries. African Oil Policy Initiative Group (2002) declared in December for instance, that the Nigeria Navy received 15 patrol boats supposedly for securing its coastline and creeks. These challenges call to mind, the need for a sub-regional approach to dealing with the menace posed by the Niger Delta crisis.

Prospects for managing the Niger Delta crisis and its effect on the GoG are not as dim. A more fruitful approach in this regard is first, to ensure sincere leadership both at the center and the Niger Delta states. The militants have a leadership that is known, a good starting point in this context would be to ensure that environmental and peace and conflict impact assessment of the explorative activities of oil multinationals are conducted. This will highlight how their activities interact with other elements to impact the environment thereby predisposing it to agitations and restiveness. The result of this assessment should inform the development of evidence-based interventions in the Niger Delta. Frequent tripartite town hall meetings between oil multinationals, government and host communities could provide the much needed opportunity for a continuous needs assessment and feedback, strengthen host communities participation in activities on their land and entrench and sustain confidence in the activities of government and oil multinationals by host communities. A review of the MoU between private maritime security companies and the Nigerian Navy is appropriate to clearly identify and create a database of private operators and redefine a realistic means of monitoring their activities. This is to avoid a situation whereby the Nigerian Navy may inadvertently through this partnership provide arms and logistics to militants.

At the level of GoG, a sub-regional intervention framework is appropriate in managing the effect of the delta crisis on the Gulf of Guinea. First, the spills of the delta crisis can be contained if the conditions in the Niger Delta are right. Development interventions that will not in turn generate underdevelopment, security that will not further create insecurity, sustainable explorative and exploitative activities that will not threaten livelihoods. Central to mitigating the spills of the delta crisis are the interests of major powers like the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany and China in the oil in the GoG. The panel on regional security in Africa of the Washington-based Center for Security and International Studies (CSIS) makes the point when it highlighted the importance of US oil production in the Gulf of Guinea and the need to develop a strategy to protect this production from terrorism (Africa Oil Policy Initiative Group, 2002:15) even it means the use of military force (Obi, 2005:38-40). A revitalization of the Gulf of Guinea Commission is very strongly recommended here as part of the durable measure of strengthening the security and stability of the GoG. It is unfortunate

that the Gulf of Guinea Commission that was established by treaty to ensure the peaceful exploration of and exploitation of the resources of the region among member countries, tackle a range of problems such as environmental pollution, border issues, joint patrol, immigration, coordination of fishing and to build mutual confidence and trust, is yet to be fully operational. The delay according to Eze and Rudolf (2004:84-85) and Ariweriokuma (2009) is due to the fact that only a few countries including Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe (DRSTP) have ratified the treaty.

More specifically and in line with the Gulf of Guinea Commission, adopting a whole regional approach to improving security in the Gulf of Guinea is central to enhancing security and stability in the GoG. Individual countries of the GoG must urgently attend to their domestic problems hindering the actualization of the socio-economic aspirations of its people, open up and strengthen participatory democracy, economic empowerment and the capacity of the respective governments of the GoG to meet the most basic needs of their people. There is also a need to contain existing threats and crises within the country of origin, to prevent them from spreading to other countries of the GoG. Again, improved border security is an essential part of containment. Preventing the movement of dangerous persons, expertise and weapons, is essential for preventing further instability in the Gulf of Guinea. As part of preventive measures, it might be useful to experiment with the principle of hardening potential targets in the respective countries. This is seen as a necessary step in denying extremist groups and others the opportunity to successfully sow fear and panic across individual countries of the GoG. The need for a regional intelligence team in strengthening security and stability of the GoG cannot be overemphasized. Regional intelligence services must be prioritized as the single most important tool that the government of the countries of the Gulf of Guinea has for detecting and dismantling threats to the peace and stability in the region. Over and above all, there is an urgent need for countries of the Gulf of Guinea to ratify the treaty establishing the Gulf of Guinea Commission, get it fully operational and domesticated in order to forge a coherent, collaborative and indigenous/regional approach to strengthening the security and stability of the Gulf of Guinea.

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