

PIRACY AND MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA: SECURITY GOVERNANCE QUESTION

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Abstract

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea poses a significant threat to international shipping, regional security, and economic development. This region, stretching along the West African coast from Senegal to Angola, has become a global piracy hotspot, accounting for the majority of crew kidnappings and vessel hijackings worldwide. The persistence of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is driven by a combination of factors, including economic hardship, weak governance, inadequate maritime security infrastructure, and transnational criminal networks, impeding global trade, regional economies, and the safety of seafarers. Piracy also exacerbates insecurity and undermines regional development by deterring foreign investment and straining the resources of affected states. Despite international and regional efforts, such as the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, piracy remains a persistent challenge due to fragmented coordination, insufficient naval capacity, and weak legal frameworks. This paper explores the issues and problems surrounding piracy in the Gulf of Guinea while proposing viable solutions. The paper is qualitative, and employs the routine activity theory as its theoretical framework. This paper concludes that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea represents a complex problem rooted in economic deprivation, weak governance, and transnational crime. The paper recommends improved maritime security, regional cooperation and tackling the socio-economic conditions that enable piracy to thrive.

Keywords: *Piracy, Gulf of Guinea, Territorial Sea, Attacks, Maritime Security.*

Introduction

The Gulf of Guinea, a strategic maritime route along the West African coast, has become the global epicenter of maritime piracy. The region, rich in oil and natural resources, is vital for transnational shipping and regional economies. However, piracy continues to undermine maritime security, disrupt economic activities, and threaten human safety due to the region abundant oil and natural resources. The Gulf of Guinea accounts for the highest number of global piracy incidents, with a significant rise in violent attacks on vessels. In 2020, over 90% of global kidnappings at sea occurred in the region, highlighting its vulnerability (International Maritime Bureau, 2021). Unlike piracy in other hotspots such as the Somali coast, which primarily involves ransom negotiations, Gulf of Guinea pirates focus on oil theft, armed robbery, and prolonged hostage-taking (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020). Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is exacerbated by abject poverty, chronic problem of unemployment, and lack of alternative livelihoods in coastal communities. This is because the dependence of the region's economies on oil and extractive industries has restricted job creation, particularly for young people, making piracy an attractive option for quick financial gains (Onuoha, 2013). Similarly, many nations in the Gulf of Guinea struggle with weak governance structures, ineffective law enforcement, and widespread corruption. These factors hinder the ability of nations within the Gulf of Guinea to

effectively address piracy as some officials collude with criminal networks or fail to enforce existing laws (Alemika, 2020).

Also, the Gulf of Guinea has insufficient naval patrols, inadequate surveillance infrastructure, and uncoordinated maritime security efforts. This resulted in a situation where the region's vast coastline and complex maritime environment create operational challenges for authorities (Vreÿ, 2021). Consequently, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea intersects with other forms of organized crime, including illegal oil bunkering, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling, exploiting weak regulatory frameworks and the lack of inter-states cooperation (UNODC, 2020). In the same vein, piracy increases shipping costs due to higher insurance premiums, security measures, and rerouting of vessels because the direct theft of oil and cargo causes significant financial losses for companies operating in the region. According to UNODC (2020), piracy in the Gulf of Guinea costs the global economy approximately \$1.9 billion annually.

In the Gulf of Guinea, Pirates often target crew members, resulting in kidnappings and violence. For instance, incidents of prolonged hostage situations have become more common, creating significant physical and psychological stress for seafarers (International Maritime Bureau, 2021). Furthermore, persistent piracy in the Gulf of Guinea undermines regional stability and economic development, deterring foreign investment in maritime and energy sectors. It also diverts resources from critical social and development programs to counter-piracy efforts, exacerbating existing socio-economic inequalities (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020).

Despite regional efforts and frameworks like the Yaoundé Code of Conduct to combat piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, which promotes cooperation between coastal states for maritime security, the lack of coordination among Gulf of Guinea nations confines their effectiveness in combating piracy. Similarly, conflicting national interests and inadequate resources further weaken collaborative efforts among countries in the region (Alemika, 2020). Additionally, weak legal systems and inconsistent anti-piracy laws across the region hinder the prosecution of arrested pirates, resulting in minimal or no punishment for arrested pirates, perpetuating a cycle of impunity (Onuoha, 2013). Even more so, the reliance on external bodies such as the European Union and the United States for technical and financial assistance creates sustainability challenges. This is because local capacities remain underdeveloped, making regional security efforts vulnerable to funding cuts or shifting international priorities (Vreÿ, 2021).

Piracy is a criminal act committed at sea that involves illegal acts of violence, detention, or depredation for private gain. It is often defined through international legal frameworks and treaties, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Article 101 of UNCLOS describes piracy as "any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or passengers of a private ship or private aircraft, directed on the high seas against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such as ship or aircraft" (UNCLOS, 1982). Key elements of piracy include its occurrence on the high seas, involvement of private vessels, and acts committed for private gain. This distinguishes piracy from other maritime crimes, such as terrorism, which may have political or ideological motives (Murphy, 2009).

In the contemporary context, piracy has evolved to include attacks within territorial waters, commonly referred to as "armed robbery at sea." The International Maritime Organization (IMO) distinguishes between piracy under UNCLOS and armed robbery, which takes place within the jurisdiction of a coastal state (IMO, 2021). This broader interpretation is particularly relevant in regions like the Gulf of Guinea, where most incidents occur in territorial waters (Bueger & Edmunds, 2020). Piracy is often connected to broader security and socio-economic issues, including weak maritime governance, economic deprivation, and organized crime, which influence its prevalence and character in different regions (Onuoha, 2013). Maritime security on the other hand, refers to the protection of maritime domains, including oceans, seas, and waterways, from threats that undermine safety, economic stability, environmental sustainability, and national security (Klein, 2011). It involves safeguarding maritime interests against threats such as piracy, armed robbery at sea, smuggling, human trafficking, terrorism, illegal fishing, and environmental crimes.

The concept of maritime security has evolved over time, reflecting the growing interconnectivity of global trade and security. According to Bueger (2015), it includes four primary dimensions: the protection of sea-based trade and energy flows, countering maritime threats (such as piracy and terrorism), fostering cooperative security arrangements, and environmental governance. These dimensions highlight the multifaceted nature of maritime security, blending traditional concerns about naval power with non-traditional security issues such as organized crime and environmental degradation. Klein (2011) emphasizes that maritime security is not confined to military defense but also includes economic, environmental, and human security aspects. For example, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing not only depletes fish stocks but also undermines the livelihoods of coastal communities, tying maritime security to broader developmental and humanitarian goals. Moreover, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides the legal framework for addressing many maritime security concerns, mandating cooperation between states to prevent and respond to transnational threats (United Nations, 1982). Therefore, this paper explores the issues and problems of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea while suggesting possible solutions.

Piracy and Security Governance in the Gulf of Guinea

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has garnered considerable scholarly attention due to its growing prevalence, economic implications, and security challenges. A review of the literature reveals multiple perspectives on the causes, consequences, and responses to piracy in this region. The research explores the role of state weakness, economic motivations, and international cooperation, among other factors. Below is a synthesis of key scholarly works that offer insights into the dynamics of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

One of the central themes in the literature on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is the economic motivation driving piracy. Many scholars such as Baud and Van Leeuwen, (2018) argue that piracy in the region is closely linked to the socio-economic challenges faced by coastal communities, including poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment. According to Lupis (2019), the lack of economic opportunities, particularly in the oil-rich but economically disadvantaged countries like Nigeria, drives many individuals to piracy as a viable alternative for financial gain. This is consistent with the study of Aning (2019), who links piracy to the regional dependence on oil exports, with pirates targeting oil tankers for ransom or cargo theft.

In contrast, other studies argue that piracy is also influenced by the broader structural weaknesses within the Gulf of Guinea's political economy. According to Minges (2014), weak governance and corruption are significant contributors to piracy. State institutions in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon have historically been ineffective in policing the maritime space, which facilitates the growth of piracy. In this regard, piracy is seen as a manifestation of broader governance challenges, where the state's inability to provide security opens the door for non-state actors to exploit maritime resources (Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010).

Several scholars have focused on the role of state weakness in enabling piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Okunlola (2021) highlights that poor governance, corruption, and a lack of institutional capacity contributes significantly to the rise of piracy. This position is not out of place because in countries with weak institutions, such as Nigeria, the state struggles to maintain control over its extensive coastline and to provide effective maritime security. This failure of state authority allows piracy to flourish as pirates exploit the absence of effective policing and enforcement of maritime laws. Collaborating this argument, Baud and Van Leeuwen (2018) argue that piracy thrives in environments where states lack the resources or political will to curb criminal activities, which is a characteristic feature of many Gulf of Guinea nations. Yong (2021) expands on this argument by pointing out that the geopolitical challenges of the Gulf of Guinea, such as competing territorial claims and the fragmented nature of maritime law enforcement, further complicate efforts to address piracy. The region's lack of a coordinated security framework exacerbates the problem, as pirates can operate with relative impunity across borders, taking advantage of gaps in jurisdiction and enforcement.

In response to the increasing threat of piracy, international and regional actors have called for greater cooperation in combating maritime crime. Several scholars have reviewed the effectiveness of these initiatives. Clunan and Trinkunas (2010) note that the international community's response through initiatives such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the African Union's (AU) efforts to promote regional security cooperation. They argue, however, that these initiatives have had limited success due to inconsistent implementation and the lack of political will among some regional actors. Aning (2019) assesses the role of regional security organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), in combating piracy. While these organizations have taken steps toward improving maritime security, their efforts are often hindered by member states' competing interests and resource constraints.

According to Aning, piracy persists because of the absence of a robust, unified regional security framework that can address the root causes of piracy, such as poverty and weak governance. Minges (2014) submits that international cooperation has been somewhat successful in curbing piracy, particularly through the use of naval patrols and the presence of multinational task forces. However, the long-term effectiveness of these measures is still debated. Minges also argues that while military responses are essential for ensuring immediate security, they do not address the underlying socio-economic drivers of piracy, thus calling for a more comprehensive approach that combines military action with efforts to improve governance and development in the region.

Another important area of research focuses on the specific tactics and methods employed by pirates in the Gulf of Guinea. Baud and Van Leeuwen (2018) note that piracy in the region often involves hijacking ships, stealing cargo, and, in some cases, kidnapping crew members for ransom. These tactics are particularly prevalent off the coast of Nigeria, where pirates are known to target oil tankers, both for their valuable cargo and for the ransom potential of kidnapped crew members. Clunan and Trinkunas (2010) argue that the tactics used by pirates in the Gulf of Guinea are influenced by the region's specific security dynamics. They highlight how pirates in the Gulf often have access to small, fast boats that allow them to quickly board vessels, overpower the crew, and escape before authorities can respond. This makes piracy in the Gulf of Guinea distinct from other regions, such as Southeast Asia, where piracy is often driven by different criminal motivations.

Scholars have also examined the broader implications of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea for global trade and maritime security. According to Baud and Van Leeuwen (2018), piracy in this region affects global shipping lanes, particularly for the oil and gas industry. The Gulf of Guinea is one of the world's most important oil-producing regions, and piracy poses a direct threat to the safe transport of these resources. Pirates often target oil tankers, which can result in significant financial losses not only for the shipping companies but also for global markets. Aning (2019) extends this argument by noting that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has broader geopolitical implications, as it disrupts the flow of energy resources from Africa to global markets. This has led to increased security spending by international shipping companies, which in turn raises the costs of global trade and fuels economic insecurity in the region.

As piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has risen, international naval patrols and security cooperation have become key components of the response strategy. Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of these measures. Minges (2014) highlights the establishment of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and the increasing presence of multinational naval operations in the Gulf of Guinea. These operations, which include the participation of European and African navies, have been aimed at enhancing maritime surveillance, deterring pirate attacks, and improving overall maritime security. However, while these initiatives have had some success in deterring piracy in the short term, they are often viewed as reactive rather than preventative measures. Yong (2021) submits that international naval efforts have contributed to a reduction in piracy incidents in the region, but their impact is often undermined by the persistent weaknesses in regional governance and law enforcement. The Gulf of Guinea is a vast area, and despite the presence of international naval forces, pirates often have the advantage due to their knowledge of local waters and the lack of consistent regional cooperation. International naval patrols also face challenges related to jurisdictional issues, as pirates often operate in the territorial waters of multiple states, each with different legal frameworks for maritime security. Thus, while international naval

efforts have had a significant role in combating piracy, they have not fully addressed the root causes of piracy or provided a long-term solution to the security challenges of the region.

In addition to public security measures, private maritime security has also become an important factor in the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Private security companies have been hired by shipping companies to provide armed guards onboard vessels transiting high-risk areas. Baud and Van Leeuwen (2018) discuss how the use of private security personnel has become an increasingly common strategy to protect vessels from piracy. These guards are often deployed to deter pirates through visible security presence and to provide protection in the event of an attack. While private security can enhance the safety of individual vessels, it does not provide a comprehensive solution to the broader security issues in the region. Clunan and Trinkunas (2010) observe that while private security can reduce the likelihood of a successful pirate attack on a particular vessel, it does not address the systemic problems contributing to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The reliance on private security also raises concerns about the militarization of maritime trade routes and the potential escalation of violence, as pirates may retaliate against security measures.

Moreover, the high cost of employing private security firms means that it is often only available to larger, wealthier shipping companies, leaving smaller vessels and less economically powerful nations vulnerable to attack. Another important dimension in the study of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is the role of local communities and the informal social networks that support piracy operations. Some scholars have pointed to the significant involvement of local populations in piracy, either directly or indirectly. Aning (2019) argues that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is not solely a criminal enterprise but is also tied to the broader socio-political context. Local communities, particularly in areas such as the Niger Delta in Nigeria, are often complicit in piracy, either through providing safe havens for pirates or through direct participation in piracy operations. Baud and Van Leeuwen (2018) further elaborate that pirates often have strong connections to local networks, which can provide logistical support, information, and even a degree of protection from state authorities. This social dimension of piracy complicates efforts to combat it, as addressing piracy requires more than just military or legal action it also requires community engagement and socio-economic development. Scholars like Lupis (2019) stresses that unless the underlying grievances of local populations are addressed, piracy will likely continue to thrive as a form of resistance against the state or as a means of economic survival.

The issue of legal frameworks is also a key area of scholarly focus in the study of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. One of the significant challenges in combating piracy is the fragmented legal infrastructure across the states in the region. Each country has its own maritime laws and regulations, and these laws are often not harmonized or enforced consistently. Okunlola (2021) discusses how, despite the existence of international conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides a legal basis for addressing piracy, the implementation of these laws at the national level is often weak. The Gulf of Guinea has numerous maritime zones that overlap with each other, complicating jurisdiction and law enforcement, especially when pirates operate in waters that are not clearly under the control of a single nation. Furthermore, as Clunan and Trinkunas (2010) observe, the legal framework surrounding piracy is often undermined by political factors. Corruption, lack of political will, and poor governance hinder effective legal responses to piracy. Even when pirates are captured, prosecution is inconsistent, with many suspects being released due to political interference or insufficient evidence. This legal impunity further emboldens pirates and perpetuates the cycle of piracy in the region.

Looking ahead, scholars such as Minges (2014) and Aning (2019) suggest that the future of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea will depend on the region's ability to strengthen both its governance and security frameworks. While international naval patrols and regional cooperation have had some success, they are insufficient by themselves. A more comprehensive approach is needed—one that integrates maritime security, regional cooperation, anti-corruption measures, and socio-economic development to address the root causes of piracy. Furthermore, scholars like Baud and Van Leeuwen (2018) argue that addressing the demand side of piracy such as the global demand for oil and the vulnerability of

international shipping will also be crucial. This is because without reducing the incentives that make piracy a lucrative enterprise, efforts to combat it will be only partially successful.

Theoretical Framework

This paper employs the Routine Activity Theory (RAT) developed by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979 as a framework to understand how societal changes influence crime rates. Unlike traditional criminological theories that emphasize offenders' psychological or social conditions, the theory focuses on the situational factors and opportunities that facilitate criminal acts. The routine activity theory has become influential in explaining various crimes, including property crimes, violent offenses, and, more recently, maritime crimes such as piracy. Cohen and Felson's pioneering work introduced RAT in their seminal article *Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach*. Their theory shifted the focus of criminology from the characteristics of offenders to the circumstances that enable crime. Over time, the theory has been expanded and advanced by other scholars such as Clarke and Felson (1993), Felson (1994), and Eck and Weisburd (1994). Clarke and Felson (1993) applied the theory to crime prevention, highlighting the importance of situational crime prevention measures. Felson (1994) on his part, elaborated on the idea of "crime opportunities" and the role of societal and technological changes in creating new crime patterns. While Eck and Weisburd (1994) built upon Routine Activity Theory to integrate it with environmental criminology, emphasizing the role of geographic and spatial factors in crime occurrence.

Routine Activity Theory is based on three core assumptions about the conditions under which a crime is likely to occur. These are often referred to as the "crime triangle," comprising motivated offenders, suitable targets and absence of capable guardianship. Therefore, the theory assumes that there is always a supply of individuals motivated to commit crimes. While it does not delve deeply into why individuals are motivated, it suggests that offenders are rational actors who weigh the costs and benefits of their actions (Clarke & Felson, 1993). Factors like socio-economic deprivation, unemployment, and access to illicit networks often increase the pool of motivated offenders. The theory also posits that crime requires the presence of a target that is attractive or vulnerable. Targets can be physical objects, people, or even digital systems. The attractiveness of a target depends on its visibility, value, accessibility, and lack of security measures (Cohen & Felson, 1979). For example, oil tankers in the Gulf of Guinea are considered suitable targets because of their high value and often insufficient protective measures.

Lastly, the theory submits that the lack of effective oversight or protection creates opportunities for crime to occur. Guardianship can take many forms, including physical security, law enforcement presence, community vigilance, or technological surveillance (Felson, 1994). Weak institutional frameworks or poorly resourced security systems are examples of inadequate guardianship.

Theory Application

Routine Activity Theory shifts the focus from offenders to the situational factors that enable crime, explaining the convergence of motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardianship, the theory provides a robust framework for understanding and preventing crime in specific contexts. Its application extends to modern challenges, such as maritime piracy, cybercrime, and urban theft, emphasizing the importance of altering opportunities to reduce crime rates. In the context of the Gulf of Guinea, the theory is particularly useful in analyzing how the convergence of three key elements: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and a lack of capable guardianship can explain the prevalence of piracy in the region.

In line with the theory's assumption that criminal behaviour is often the result of individuals who are motivated to commit crimes when the opportunity arises, in the case of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, the region's socio-economic conditions, including poverty, unemployment, and the absence of state control, creates a fertile ground for motivated offenders. This is because many pirates in the Gulf of Guinea are believed to be motivated by financial gain, often arising from limited economic opportunities. The piracy gangs in this area are often made up of young individuals who see hijacking oil tankers or kidnapping crew members for ransom as a lucrative and low-risk activity. This explains why scholars such as Clunan and Trinkunas (2010) have argued that in unstable states like those

surrounding the Gulf of Guinea, the lack of legitimate income sources significantly increases the likelihood of individuals engaging in criminal enterprises like piracy.

Indeed, the theory's emphasis that crimes are more likely to occur when there are suitable targets in close proximity to motivated offenders, is appropriate because in the case of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, the region's vast maritime space, characterized by busy shipping lanes and high volumes of oil exports, provides numerous attractive targets. Ships, particularly oil tankers and cargo vessels, present themselves as highly lucrative targets for pirates. Similarly, the Gulf of Guinea is one of the world's busiest maritime routes, with oil and gas shipments constituting a major part of its trade, making it a prime location for piracy. Therefore, the valuable cargo and the often slow-moving nature of these ships make them suitable targets for pirates who do overpower them with relative ease. The region also has poorly secured ports and weak law enforcement structures, which further increase the vulnerability of these ships.

In the final analysis, the third component of RAT involves the presence of capable guardianship such as law enforcement agencies, private security companies, or other protective measures that prevent crime from occurring. In the Gulf of Guinea, the lack of effective maritime policing and security infrastructure exacerbates the vulnerability of shipping vessels, making it difficult to effectively combat piracy. Therefore, the absence of robust maritime security forces, as well as corruption and poor governance, create a permissive environment for piracy. Consequently, pirates exploit the weak state control over vast stretches of coastline and the limited enforcement of maritime law, which significantly hinders the ability to prevent or respond to piracy incidents. Although Routine Activity Theory does not necessarily address deeper structural causes of piracy such as political instability or global maritime policies, it remains a valuable framework for analyzing the immediate and situational factors that make piracy a recurring issue in the Gulf of Guinea.

Discussion of Findings

The Gulf of Guinea, a critical region for global maritime trade, has faced persistent piracy issues, posing risks to maritime security, regional stability, and economic growth. Security governance, which involves managing and coordinating policies, strategies, and operations among multiple stakeholders, is central to combating this challenge. This analysis examines how security governance frameworks account for the reduction of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Security governance in the Gulf of Guinea relies heavily on multilateral initiatives to combat piracy. The Yaoundé Code of Conduct, signed in 2013 by 25 West and Central African states, is a cornerstone of these efforts. It promotes regional cooperation in surveillance, information sharing, and joint maritime operations (Ejiogu, 2020). The establishment of the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC) in Yaoundé facilitates collaboration between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). For example, the success of joint operations such as those under the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centres (MMCCs) illustrates the role of coordinated governance in reducing piracy incidents. For instance, the Zone E MMCC has conducted effective patrols in areas historically plagued by attacks.

Similarly, the role of individual states in strengthening maritime security through governance is vital. For instance, Nigeria, accounting for over 70% of incidents in the Gulf of Guinea, has implemented initiatives like the *Deep Blue Project*. Launched in 2021, this integrated security strategy includes deploying surveillance drones, patrol vessels, and land-based centers to monitor piracy (Onuoha, 2021). For example, since the implementation of Nigeria's Deep Blue Project, piracy incidents in its waters have significantly declined. According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB, 2021), reported piracy incidents dropped from 81 in 2020 to 34 in 2021. In the same vein, international partnerships and funding contribute significantly to the region's security governance. The European Union (EU), the United States, and organizations like the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have provided funding, training, and resources. The EU's Gulf of Guinea Maritime Security (GoGIN) project exemplifies this, focusing on enhancing regional capacities for maritime domain awareness (Vrey, 2022). For instance, the GoGIN project supports information-sharing platforms like the Maritime Trade

Information Sharing Centre for the Gulf of Guinea (MTISC-GoG), which has improved the coordination of responses to piracy threats.

However, several challenges impede security governance frameworks in combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. For instance, overlapping jurisdictions between ECCAS and ECOWAS hinder effective coordination. Similarly, weak legal systems and inconsistent enforcement exacerbate these challenges, as many countries lack the capacity to prosecute piracy effectively (Hurlburt, 2021). Also, many Gulf of Guinea states lack sufficient resources to maintain robust maritime security measures. The reliance on external funding raises sustainability concerns, as local governments often struggle to maintain initiatives after donor support ends. Furthermore, security governance frameworks often neglect the socioeconomic roots of piracy, such as poverty, unemployment, and weak governance onshore. Without addressing these drivers, efforts to curb piracy risk being short-lived (Asuni, 2020).

Conclusion

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea represents a complex problem rooted in economic deprivation, weak governance, and transnational crime. Its impact on regional and global security, trade, and human safety is profound, necessitating coordinated and sustained efforts. Addressing the issue requires not only improved maritime security and regional cooperation but also tackling the socio-economic conditions that enable piracy to thrive. This paper analyzes how security governance frameworks reduced piracy in the Gulf of Guinea through regional cooperation, national initiatives, and international partnerships. However, challenges like resource constraints, jurisdictional overlaps, and socioeconomic drivers of piracy require a holistic approach.

Recommendations

This paper recommends as follows:

- (i). Enhancing regional harmonization by streamlining coordination between ECCAS and ECOWAS.
- (ii). Increasing investment in sustainable capacity-building for local security forces
- (iii). Integrating socioeconomic development initiatives into maritime security strategies to address root causes of piracy.

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