



Evaluation of the Role (Inuwa, A. A. & Gwarzo, A. A¹ 2024) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59479/jiaheri.v1i1.89>

Evaluation of the Role of Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea Commission

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Abstract

The main thrust of this study is the investigation of Nigeria's role in the Gulf of Guinea Commission and its implications on regional security and cooperation in Africa. As a result, it assesses issues with maritime, environmental, security, and mineral resources. The Gulf of Guinea Commission, a sub-regional effort to solve these concerns, is experiencing growing pains, including power struggles. The purpose of this study was to determine Nigeria's roles in the Gulf of Guinea Commission and, by extension, the Gulf of Guinea. It used a qualitative design, purposive sampling, observation, and interview methodologies to do so. The primary and secondary data collected were submitted to thematic and content analysis using a neo-functionalist methodology. Systematically studied were pertinent articles and works on the Gulf of Guinea, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, ECCAS, ECOWAS, global oil politics, oil wars, maritime security, and regional cooperation. The lack of data, the difficulty in locating important Gulf of Guinea Commission for Interview participants, and the classified nature of some data are the study's main obstacles. According to the research, Nigeria is crucial to maintaining the advances made in the Gulf of Guinea Commission through improved leadership skills, budgetary support, and supporting activities (ECCAS, GoGIN, ICC, MOWCA, SPOMO, etc). It also showed that the Gulf of Guinea Commission is a real platform for avoiding the Gulf of Guinea from becoming "another Persian Gulf." It was suggested, among other things, that the Gulf of Guinea Commission be strengthened through measures to promote confidence in order to support other projects like GoGIN, MOWCA, and ESF to realign with GGC.

Keywords: Gulf Of Guinea, Regional Cooperation, Maritime Security, Global Oil Politics, Oil Conflicts.

Introduction

The trend toward multilateralism in international relations is the growing and dominant scenario in the current global system. States have recently realized the need of interdependence, cooperation, and shared responsibility, and as a result, regionalism and supranational cooperation are now playing a major role in world affairs (Gye-Wado 1990). The Gulf of Commission (GGC) is a multinational sub-regional effort for the Gulf of Guinea region's marine security and regional cooperation. The Gulf of Guinea (GOG) is a geopolitical region containing around 13 countries that are endowed with natural resources, making it significant in the politics surrounding the



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world's oil and mineral resources. The idea that the Persian Gulf is progressively losing its position as the world's top source of oil and gas resources due to the ongoing hostilities, political instability, and Sectarian conflicts is seen as the basis for the emergence of GOG as the "New Persian Gulf," as the international oil players recently popularized it (Ondo 2005).

The area is among the richest and least-used in the entire planet. It is endowed with several minerals and other natural resources, including diamond, tin, bitumen, gold, uranium, gas, lead, and zinc, and possesses around 35% of the world's total petroleum reserves. The region's economic success over the years has exposed it to many risky activities like piracy, abduction, and oil bunkering, which has resulted in a high level of marine crime and insecurity. The world's most pirate-infested sea is the Gulf of Guinea, which located on the southern coast of West Africa. In the first nine months of 2020, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recorded a 40% spike in pirate-related incidents and kidnappings, making it the world's piracy hotspot (IMB, 2021).

The issue of membership, ratification, and operationalization of the GGC Objective hinders regional integration and cooperation activities as envisioned in the GGC by the GOG states (Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, and other RIPARIAN States). The GOG's weaknesses, challenges, and instability might have a significant impact on the entire region and beyond. For example, there is a common belief that if Nigeria sneezes, the entire continent of Africa could contract a cold. This claim implies that there is a pressing need to ensure the region is secure and strategically positioned to handle the challenges of its involvement in global oil politics (Gilpin 2007, Iheme, 2008).

This study will assess Nigeria's contribution to the formation and operation of the GGC as a regional forum for addressing issues related to natural resources, security, the environment, and socioeconomic development. However, this study is adopting the Neofunctionalist theory of international cooperation and integration because it is consistent with the scenario in the GGC and the foundation for the cooperation in the GOG. Other approaches and models, such as Marxism, developmentalism, institutionalism, etc., are also available. The Neofunctionalist approach's idea that decision-making is important is similar to the scenario in the GOG. In an intellectual descent known as neo-functionalism, Mitrany's hypothesis was methodologically examined. According to academics like Ernst Phillippe Schmitter, the European Union integration strategies are the main focus of this theory. The theory examined how the integration or cooperative method was chosen. The participant (nation-state) assesses the advantages of collaborating or integrating with others against any potential drawbacks (Goldstein and Pevehouse 2008).

Research Problem

The conflict over leadership in the GGC is between Angola and Nigeria, with Angola believing that Nigeria is using its size (population), political clout, and Big Brotherhood status to threaten or subjugate other GOG member states. (Iheme 2008, Gilpin 2007) Another nagging issues is how certain states were chosen while others were excluded while choosing the members.



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These contentious issues necessitate further efforts to achieve the GGC's goals in relation to regional cooperation, integration, and maritime security of the GOG and beyond.

Purpose of The Study

The GOG sub-region is now falling short of expectations when it comes to maritime security, environmental protection, and socioeconomic difficulties that call for group initiative like GGC. The majority of earlier research on GOG and GGC has been funded by the IMF, World Bank, EU, USA, and other organizations, many of which have been seen to merely address and defend their strategic interests. In order to fill in the gaps and assist policymakers in the GOG, Africa, and other Global Oil Interests, this dissertation will offer an Afrocentric approach. In order to provide the foundation for formulating appropriate policies for resource exploration, maritime security, and regional cooperation, toward protecting the economic resources of the Sub-region, it can help by providing useful insights into the nature and dynamics of the vast resources of the GOG. This study may offer the reawakening potion required to realign GGC in the direction of achieving long-term regional security and cooperation.

Research Assumptions and Questions:

This study shall be guided by the following statements.

- i. There is a significant relationship between regional cooperation and the collective security of a region,
- ii. GGC can foster regional security of GOG and beyond,
- iii. Regional Cooperation and security can enhance the socioeconomic and political development of GOG and beyond.

These assumptions serve as the triggers for the following Research Questions

- i. Is the GGC initiative important in the regional cooperation of the GOG?
- ii. What are the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of GGC for regional maritime security GOG?
- iii. Does Nigeria's Membership and leadership role in the GGC of any significant interest?

Methodology

Research Design

Qualitative research design was used to evaluate the nature and extent of the problems experienced in the GOG, GGC, and the role of Nigeria in the regional initiative. The empirical research design, in the opinion of Maxfield and Babbie (2017), generates knowledge based on experience or observation. When knowledge is founded on our experiences, social science is said to be empirical. According to Dlakwa (2008:48), qualitative research can generally be undertaken as a precursor to or complement to trials and quantitative research rather than as a replacement for them. He added that the researcher should be able to undertake Triangulation of all accessible approaches, both quantitative and qualitative, that are most appropriate for a modern study.

According to Adamu (2008) said: Choose Qualitative – If: No existing research data on the topic, appropriate unit of measurement is not certain, concept on a Nominal scale with no clear



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demarcation points, exploring reasonability people do or behave something and extreme situations."

Sources and Method of Data Collection:

When gathering data, the researcher adopted a qualitative methodology. Ivan (2021) claims that "Qualitative data refers to the descriptive and conceptual information obtained through surveys, interviews, or observation. By examining qualitative data, we can explore ideas and provide additional justification for quantitative results ". Because qualitative research only uses non-mathematical components and data, the processes that can be utilized are primarily those that can generate non-numerical data. secondary data from summit decisions, conference papers, periodicals, working papers, circulars, gazettes, diplomatic cables, monograms, reports, etc. (Kothari, 2009).

Population and Sampling Technique:

Upon arrival at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Abuja, Multilateral Relations officials at the Desk office opted for an unstructured interview, rather than questionnaires. So, the researcher interviewed the desk officer. Ten critical officials were selected for the interview. It is imperative for the research to delineate the target population depending on the survey type or objectives. To get the specific target, Sampling techniques are deployed. The variables are defined and determined in order to investigate the effects (Cause-Effect) on one another. (Kost, 2022).

Data Analysis Techniques Content Analysis

This is accomplished by combining secondary data from sources including commission papers, gazettes, periodicals, position papers, memoranda, and archives with the qualitative information obtained from the interview. A detailed study of the contents is performed on the interpretation and application in accordance with the standards for qualitative research. In the second analytical step, the first and second authors honed the tentative categories into precise subthemes and themes reflecting the interpretation of their content and relationships, according to Harri et al (2020).

Results

Nigeria's Sub-Regional Security Efforts:

Alli (2012) noted that Nigeria's approach to sub-regional security has been significantly influenced by the national role envisioned for it in international relations by its leaders in a research commissioned by FES on The Role of Nigeria In Regional Security Policy. This idea of a function has evolved into the fundamental framework for conducting foreign policy. In accordance with this paradigm, Nigeria is the undisputed leader of Africa, endowed with a manifest destiny and the duty to advance and defend the interests of the continent and all black people worldwide in all contexts. They also contend that the country's security is linked to that of other African nations due to shared cultural and historical experiences as well as transnational security concerns, which are defined as those that relate to how a nation's security is impacted by events in neighboring



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countries (Yoroms; 2010 in Alli, 2012). Nigeria must treat this sub-region as a natural foundation from which to promote its national interests and regional influence, according to Ate (2011) and Alli (2012).

This perspective has propelled Nigeria to the centre stage. The FES study specifically identified key roles: Peace Keeping and Support Operations, Mediation, Fight against Cross-border crimes, counter-terrorism, coordination of Democracy, Strategic Training For Military Personnel and Economic Integrations (Alli, 2012).

Nigeria's Status in the Gulf Guinea Commission (GGC):

The Gulf of Guinea Commission

The GGC was created by the Treaty that Angola, Congo, Gabon, Nigeria, and Sao Tome and Principe signed on July 3, 2001 in Libreville, Gabon. It served as a permanent institutional framework for collaboration among the Gulf of Guinea bordering nations in order to protect their shared interests, advance peace, and foster socioeconomic growth on the principles of discussion, agreement, and connections of friendship, solidarity, and fraternity. 2008 saw the addition of Cameroun and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Gulf of Guinea Commission. Other states in the Gulf of Guinea region are welcome to join the Gulf of Guinea Commission in order to turn the area into a Zone of Peace and Security (CGGRS, 2021).

The Presidential Press Release (2021) underscores the status of Nigeria and its expected roles in GGC: "It is in the best interest of member states, and of Nigeria in particular, to fortify the Gulf of Guinea Commission, so it can perform the roles for which it was set up," President Muhammad Buhari has said. The president spoke Tuesday in a virtual audience with the Executive Secretary of the Commission, Florentina Ukonga, A Nigerian. "The Gulf of Guinea is very strategic, and it is regrettable that most member states of the Commission are not up and doing. We need to check the theft of oil through the Gulf, the smuggling of arms and ammunition, and the breaking of border regulations through the waters," President Buhari said.

He promised that Nigeria would be alive to her responsibilities in terms of prompt payment of dues, adding that he would also write leaders of member states "to participate actively in the programs of the Commission, and to defray their financial commitments." (Premium Times July 28, 2021).

Key areas GGC is expected to address quickly are

- Oil Theft
- Smuggling of Arms and Ammunition
- Breaking of Border Regulations, transborder crimes, and Piracy. (Premium Times, 2021)

Addressing Critical Challenges of GOG by GGC Instruments:

Gulf of Guinea Commission: A Regional Solution to Piracy

International Crisis Group Study, ICG Report (2014) revealed the deliberate strategies being deployed by GGC with Nigeria at the Vanguard as follows:



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Acts of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea represent more than a quarter of worldwide reported attacks. Steadily increasing since 2007, maritime insecurity in this region affects the trade of 455 million people. It affects the shipment of five million barrels of oil per day (Africa's total is nine million), accounting for forty percent of European and twenty-nine percent.

A. Setting up a Maritime Security Architecture And Inter-regional Coordination Centre (ICC).

Crisis Group: A regional initiative, backed by the UN, was introduced during the Yaoundé Summit in June 2013. The Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) were all represented at the summit, and they all agreed on that.

B. Protecting the Maritime Region and Blue Economy: Interregional Network for the Gulf of Guinea (GoGIN, Report 2022). The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (CGG) each had 22 members, thus in response, the Yaoundé process was started to secure the maritime security of the region. Three documents were signed during the Yaoundé Summit in June 2013: the Declaration.

C. International Partnership and Cooperation: The EU-Nigeria partnership on GOG Maritime security and protection program was inaugurated in Lagos, Nigeria, according to the Nigerian Navy Report (2022). Threats like illicit fishing, human trafficking, and international crimes in the Gulf of Guinea are expected to be addressed by the visiting European Union nations, which included Italy, Spain, Greece, and France.

D. Nigeria's Strengthening Efforts of GGC and GOG Activities: According to the office of national security adviser's ONSA Report, the President of Nigeria took over as GGC chairman in 2017 and implemented reforms. The report went on to say that Nigeria had continued to improve the ability of its armed forces, especially the Navy and other maritime agencies, to successfully address these difficulties. In fact, the Nigerian Navy and the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency are developing their monitoring capabilities to provide a secure environment both within the domain and in the Gulf of Guinea, according to Monguno, NSA.

Major Findings and Discussions:

Studying both primary and secondary sources of the qualitative data, including related research and reports, the following can be deduced:

- i. GOG is also replete with challenges: Oil theft, Maritime Piracy, Cross-border crimes, the proliferation of Small arms and ammunition, insurgencies, and banditry. The mineral resources and 'life-lines that is Oil exploration is being threatened.
- ii. GoG is the new oil and gas hub with many international actors and Interests, especially now that the Persian, which hitherto was the main attraction, is in turmoil exacerbated by the Arab



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- iii. Institutionalization of Anti-piracy legal framework and support by Nigeria such as SPOMO Act, reduction in piracy from 53 to 34 and many more, can be credited to Nigeria's role in GOG and GGC.
- iv. Nigeria is the pivot for the African, Regional, and Sub-regional special interventions: ECOMOG, GoGIN, ICC, African Standby force, ESF, CRESMAC, CRESMAO, ECCAS, etc
- v. Nigeria, despite its internal problems occasioned by insurgencies of BH, ISWAP, Ansaru, IPOB, and Banditry, has made a significant impact on the operations of GGC towards amelioration of the myriads of GOG.
- vi. The current Chairman, The president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, elected in 2017 has pledged and set modalities in motion for the resuscitation of GGC in line with its mandates and establishment objectives.
- vii. The Executive Secretary, also a Nigerian, is steadily steering the GGC Ship with the tacit support of its home government, as indicated in the recent visit to the presidential villa for consultation and charting veritable strategy.
- viii. The GGC is still handicapped by a lack of cooperation, Inadequate funds, seeming suspicion of Nigeria, rivalries, and a lack of pragmatic leadership.
- ix. The National Maritime and Defence Policies are tailored towards addressing GGC and GOG challenges, as exemplified by the robust NN engagements and assets in the region.

Conclusion And Recommendations:

This study used a qualitative approach and methodology to determine Nigeria's roles in the GGC and, consequently, the GOG. The data generated were subjected to thematic and content analysis using the neo-functionalism methodology. Review of pertinent literature and works on Maritime Security, Regional Cooperation, ECCAS, ECOWAS, GOG, GGC, and ECCAS. Lack of data, difficulties locating key interview participants in GOG and GGC, and the classified nature of some data are the study's main obstacles. According to this analysis, Nigeria is essential to maintaining the advances made in the GGC through improved leadership ability, budgetary assistance, and supporting activities (ECCAS, GoGIN, ICC, MOWCA, etc).

Conclusion:

The primary RECs must work together in order for the GoG's marine security architecture to be effective. While no single state in the region—not even Nigeria—has the capacity to pursue a comprehensive maritime security program at the moment, a cooperative maritime security regime among those states must take into account their differences in order to maximize their most significant points of convergence, which are currently represented by the RECs. The collaboration of the RECs can be facilitated by a modified GGC and MOWCA without the states' or RECs' customary apprehensions. However, in order to handle these changes, diplomatic methods and



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efforts would need to be used, which would need compromises and trade-offs between nations, sub-regions, and the many current cooperation organizations (Eluwa, 2011). In the repositioning of the GGC toward regional cooperation, maritime security, and the sustainable development of the GOG and Africa, Nigeria remained crucial.

Recommendations

The study recommends that Nigeria in collaboration with other states should push for the following diplomatic initiatives strategies. An expanded GGC to retain and adhere to its primary role of collective harmonious maritime resources exploitation management and administration.

- i. Creation of relevant maritime security architecture within the GGC and ECOWAS and subsequent harmonization with that of ECCAS.
- ii. The adoption OF GGC and MOWCA as the body for coordination of maritime security, environmental management, economic cooperation and development in West and Central Africa of the GOG.
- iii. The establishment of a formal working arrangement between GGC ECOWAS and ECCAS for maritime security cooperation and GOG Blue Economy.
- iv. The modification of GGC and MOWCA statutes to accommodate navies in its maritime security structure.

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IAHERI

INSTITUTE OF AFRICA HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Maryam Abacha American University of Niger



Volume 1, Number 1, August, 2023

<https://iaherijournal.maaun.edu.ng>

ISSN (Paper): 2817-1673; ISSN (Online): 2817-1683

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